



MEDIA RELEASE

Issued 19 August 2011

STREET SOCCEROOS HEAD TO HOMELESS WORLD CUP

Australia's Homeless World Cup campaign kicks off in Paris this weekend, with the announcement today of the national team, the Street Socceros.

Represented by eight players from The Big Issue's Community Street Soccer Program, the team will join 64 teams from 53 countries at the Paris 2011 Homeless World Cup from August 21-28.

Now in its ninth year, the annual tournament uses football to raise awareness of homelessness and help participants overcome challenges in their lives.

"The Homeless World Cup is not only a great sporting event but an opportunity to break down stereotypes towards homeless and marginalised people, and start working together to find new solutions to homelessness," The Big Issue CEO Steven Persson said.

The Australian team was selected from hundreds of homeless and marginalised people involved in The Big Issue's Community Street Soccer Program. Through weekly training sessions, the grassroots program helps reconnect participants with the community and works to rebuild their confidence and self-esteem.

Announcing the team in Sydney, Attorney-General Robert McClelland, Representing Minister for Social Housing and Homelessness and Minister for Sport Mark Arbib, said the federally-funded program helped create change for some of Australia's most vulnerable people.

"We are proud to support this program and to see the enormous difference it is making to the lives of participants," Mr McClelland said.

"Street Soccer empowers players by promoting participation, inclusiveness and team spirit. The Homeless World Cup players have all made a commitment to the program week-in, week-out and now have the chance to stand on a world stage – a truly once-in-a-lifetime opportunity."

Football Federation Australia CEO Ben Buckley said: "We support football across all levels of the community from elite to grassroots and The Big Issue's program is a great example of how this sport can change lives."

Follow the 2011 Street Socceros on twitter www.twitter.com/thebigissue and Facebook www.facebook.com/bigissueaustralia

...ENDS...

Media contact: Eszter Vasenszky, The Big Issue, 0415 319 421 E. evasenszky@bigissue.org.au
For vision and footage from the Homeless World Cup, visit www.homelessworldcup.org

Head Office
148 Lonsdale Street
GPO BOX 4911 V V
Melbourne VIC 3001
Phone (03) 9663 4533
Fax (03) 9663 4252
bigissue@bigissue.org.au
www.bigissue.org.au

Media Contact:

Eszter Vasenszky
Media and Communications Coordinator
P: 03 9663 9136
M: 0415 319 421
E: evasenszky@bigissue.org.au

2011 STREET SOCCEROOS



Chris Paffard

Age: 27

City: Melbourne

After losing his mum to cancer at the age of 18, Chris found himself alone, depressed and on the slippery slope to homelessness. Through the Community Street Soccer Program in Melbourne, he has managed to turn his life around. "It gave me that bit of support to get my life back on track. It's a place where everyone looks out for each other. It's made me a more confident person."



Mustafa Housain

Age: 19

City: Melbourne

Mustafa was nine when his family fled Iran to seek asylum in Australia. A year later, he arrived in Melbourne to start a new life. Hailing from a family of soccer fans, it wasn't long before he started playing the game, first at school and then at the Community Street Soccer Program in Broadmeadows two years ago. "It's a place where people can build friendships - it puts a smile on everyone's face."



Cindy Chatters

Age: 32

City: Hobart

When Cindy joined the Community Street Soccer Program on a whim last year, she didn't expect to be flying to Paris as the Street Soccerroos' only female representative just 18 months later. "I was jumping around like a kangaroo when they told me," she says. Having experienced periods of homelessness in recent years, Cindy says the program has given her new-found confidence and motivation.



Roy John

Age: 48

City: Sydney

Roy was staying at a hostel for homeless men in Sydney earlier this year when he heard about a street soccer program starting up in the area. "It's done a lot for me," Roy says. "Living rough, you often don't get the chance to talk to people. But through the soccer, I've make new friends and I wouldn't miss it for the world now."



Nathan Whalen

Age: 22
City: Wollongong

Nathan's participation in the Wollongong Community Street Soccer Program has taken him from strength to strength both on and off the field. Nathan, who has a mild intellectual disability and a heart condition, says it has not only improved his soccer skills but increased his confidence.



Yussuf Mohamed

Age: 20
City: Canberra

Yussuf was the first person to join the Canberra Community Street Soccer Program two years ago. The Kenyan immigrant is excited to be given the opportunity to represent Australia in Paris. "It will be amazing - you won't get another chance like this in your lifetime."



Reece Lopez

Age: 23
City: Brisbane

Reece joined the Brisbane Community Street Soccer Program after hearing about it through an event for homeless and at-risk people. A year on, the program has helped him make new friends and develop his soccer skills. "I'm looking forward to going to Paris, playing and meeting all the teams."



Peter

Age: 18
City: Melbourne

At 18, Southern Sudanese refugee Peter is the youngest member of the Street Socceros. "I thought they were joking when they told me," he says. "It's going to be an amazing experience to represent Australia." The Year 12 student joined the Dandenong Street Soccer Program in Melbourne three years ago.