

# Les makes his name on the cup

WHEN it came to striking a name of a perpetual street soccer trophy, there was only ever one person in the running – Les Fishman.

At 64, Les is the oldest player in the state, possibly the nation, but that hasn't prevented him from attending training every Tuesday morning at the Long Gully Reserve.

"From day one, I've been coming to training," Les said. "It's my thing. I love it."

Many people will recognise Les as the bearded bloke selling *The Big Issue* in the Hargreaves Mall.

And it's through *The Big Issue* that a national community street soccer program began, kicking off in Bendigo in May, last year.

Street soccer uses the power of sport to promote social inclusion and personal change for those who are homeless, marginalised and disadvantaged – people like Les, who was himself once homeless.

Next Friday, August 7, as part of Homeless Persons Week, Bendigo's street soccer team, including Les as their striker, will play a team from either Shepparton or Ballarat and a team made up of com-

munity service workers for the Fishman Cup.

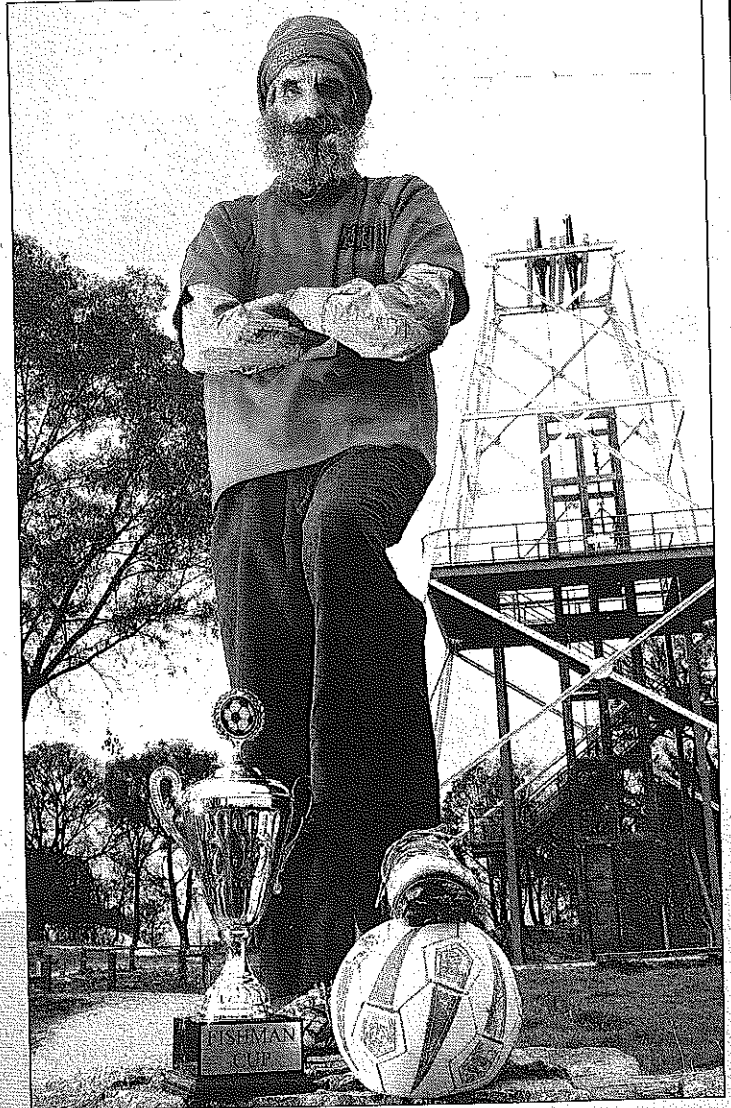
The round-robin matches and final, and street soccer clinics for school students, will be one of the highlights of a Community Awareness Day event at the Tom Flood Sports Centre.

Other events on the day include a free sausage sizzle lunch from noon for more than 500 people, cultural dancers and singers, roving entertainers, street performers, static information displays from Bendigo and district's leading community health and welfare groups, a special performance by Camp Hill Primary School and evening rock concert.

Gates open at 11am with free activities and staged entertainment scheduled through to 9pm.

For more information phone 5444 9066.

■ **TOP TROPHY:** Street soccer stalwart Les Fishman. Photo: ANDREW PERRYMAN. More photos at [www.bendigophotos.com](http://www.bendigophotos.com)



# Problem worsens for the homeless

By ANTHONY RADFORD

BENDIGO'S and Australia's homeless problem is getting worse, and there is a long road ahead before things get better.

That was the assessment of Loddon Mallee Housing Services chief executive officer Ken Marchingo on the eve of Homeless Persons Week.

Mr Marchingo released some disturbing figures to back up his claim.

The number of people seeking crisis accommodation in Bendigo rose by almost 60 per cent last financial year.

Almost 500 people sought crisis accommodation at Loddon Mallee Housing Services during the 2008-09 financial year, up from 313 the year before.

More than 9650 people visited LMHS' client centre last financial year, a rise of 10.6 per cent on the previous 12-month period.

"Demand is large and there simply is no supply. It's not a matter of demand outstripping supply, there is no supply," he said.

Mr Marchingo said there was an emerging

category of people he called houseless.

He said they were low-to-middle income families and individuals who were affected by the global recession, loss of income and a loss of home.

"The focus of the week is to try and make the point homelessness is not as people believe it to be, symptomatic of people's failings," he said.

"The great unthinking populations mentally point at homeless people and think 'they are just not having a go, if only they applied themselves'.

"Nothing could be further from the truth."

Mr Marchingo said there were those who were homeless by choice, but they only made up a small percentage.

"We are probably looking at 10 to 12 per cent of people who choose to push their supermarket trolley around with their rainbow-coloured plastic bag and they just don't want to be part of the modern world," he said.

IN City of Greater Bendigo area, 381 people were recorded as being homeless in the 2006 census.

146 (38 per cent) were temporarily living with relatives or friends, while 117 people (31 per cent) were living in homelessness assistance accommodation.

66 people (17 per cent) were living in caravans, while 47 people (12 per cent) were living in boarding houses with no separate bedroom or living room and no private kitchen or bathroom facilities.

A further five people (one per cent) were living in improvised dwellings or on the streets.

There are more than 1500 people on the public housing waiting list in the region.

More than 50 per cent of homeless singles and couples are accompanied with children, more than 50 per cent of these children are between 15 and 25 years of age, of this group 80 per cent are under the age of 16 years.