

MEDIA RELEASE
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MENTAL ILLNESS JOINS FOOTBALL WEST INCLUSIVE PROGRAM

Football West recently commenced working with Mental Illness Fellowship of Western Australia (MIFWA), a not-for-profit organisation providing advice and support for West Australians with a mental illness, as well as their families and friends.

The past two months has seen fun indoor football (soccer) sessions at Loftus Recreation Centre in Leederville on Monday afternoons, with venue costs supported by Reclink.

Reclink Australia is a charitable organisation whose mission is to provide sporting, social and arts activities to enhance the lives of people experiencing disadvantage.

Targeting some of the community's most vulnerable and isolated people – those who experience mental illness, disability, homelessness, substance abuse issues, addictions, and social and economic hardship – Reclink Australia has facilitated cooperative partnerships with a network of over 200 member agencies nationally who are also committed to encouraging participation by a population group under-represented in sport and arts programs.

Football West recognises the importance of being an active contributor to all sections of the Western Australian community and respects and shares the vision of MIFWA which is to seek a better life for people affected by mental illness.

Thanks to this partnership, up to 18 men and women of varying ages in each session have enjoyed the opportunity to participate and develop football skills and interact with new friends in a friendly environment.

Football West Inclusive Development Officer Gordon Duus said: "The success of the ongoing program is evident in the participants that keep returning each time to be part of the group.

"I have heard of sport being an excellent social and therapeutic tool for people to embrace and get something positive from, but in 13 years in the sport locally I've not seen a grassroots program take off so naturally and score so many goals for the participants with friendships forming, blossoming teamwork and friendly competitiveness.

"This is another in a long line of positive steps for Football West living out the 'Football for all' ideology."

Football West has provided free coaching courses for two volunteers assisting the program and has assisted in coaching and with directing skills activities and games.

Following feedback provided by the participants, the partnership is set to continue with Football West committing to help with further volunteer training, ongoing supply of equipment, a donation of playing shirts and assistance in arranging friendly matches.

Alan Cock & Nick Maisey of MIFWA added: "The Group has shown the benefits of people who experience disadvantage uniting around a sporting activity. The opportunity to learn new skills and be a valued part of a team whilst having fun has shown significant benefits to



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physical and mental health. In just five sessions the participants are now taking a leadership role in its future direction, with a kit manager appointed this week and rumours of a team name, Dasvidania”.

For further details contact Alan on 0439 559 837

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