



Hon. Karen Struthers MP
Member for Algester

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**Minister for Community Services,
Housing and Minister for Women**

A world-first soccer program helps young offenders kick goals

In a world-first, the Arsenal Soccer Schools program has taken its coaching and mentoring program behind bars at the Brisbane Youth Detention Centre to help young offenders get their lives back on track.

Community Services Minister Karen Struthers said Arsenal Soccer Schools ran programs in eight communities across Queensland and 20 countries globally.

“This is the first time they’ve taken their coaching program into a detention centre. Teaching soccer is secondary. It’s really about helping young people believe in themselves, respect themselves and each other,” Ms Struthers said.

“It’s a pilot project, and if all goes well the program could expanded to the Cleveland Youth Detention Centre in Townsville and to some Indigenous communities in remote areas,” Ms Struthers said.

“There are 12 young people taking part in the Arsenal Soccer Schools project in the centre – nine boys and three girls.”

Aston Bell, Director of Football Pathways Australia and Arsenal Soccer Schools Australia, said sport was a great vehicle for social change.

“The program has always been very community focused and the opportunity to be involved with the youth offenders is a world-first for us,” Mr Bell said.

“We want to help instil confidence, belief and self esteem back into these young people so they can have a more fulfilling life once they leave the centre.

“It’s been a humbling experience for me and my staff. We’re seeing a real difference in the kids already,” he said.

Media Inquiries:

Aston Bell, Football Pathways Australia 0419 737 812