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## Eye Contact Photographic Exhibition

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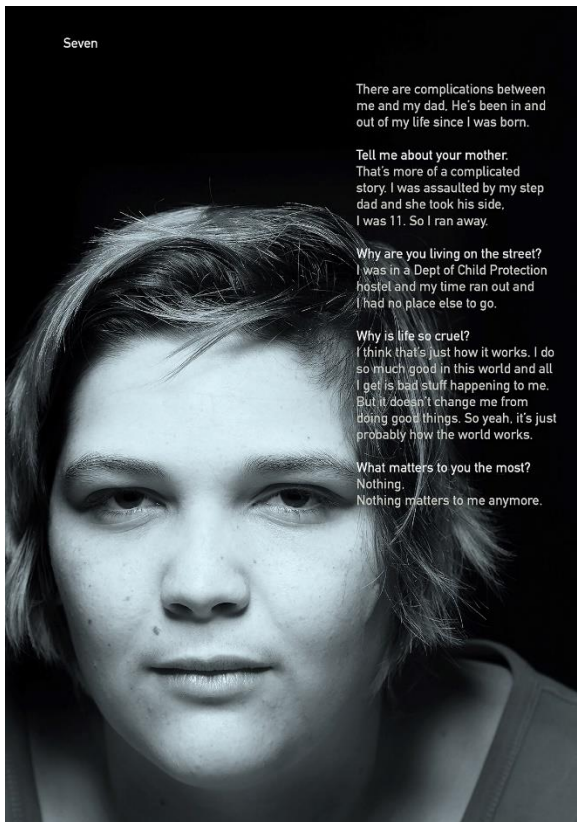
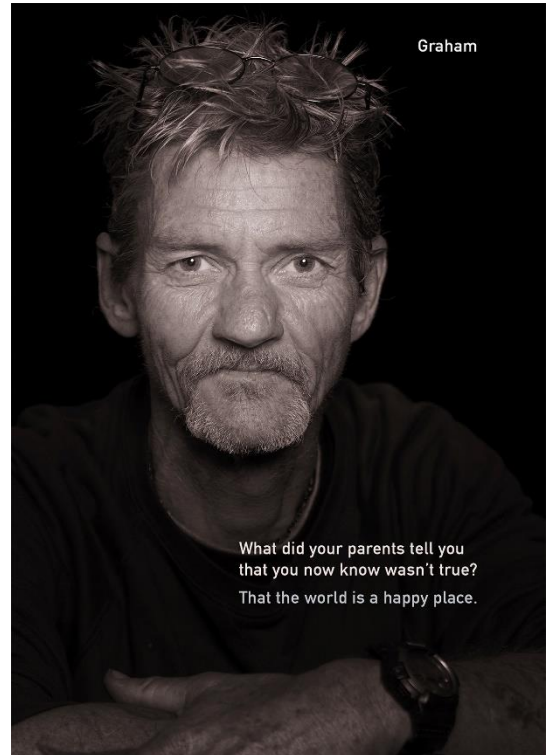
Most people hurry past the homeless, casting their eyes away, or simply ignoring what is a familiar sight on our streets. Sadly, they believe the problem is intractable. This attitude stymies the necessary community support for addressing the problem and percolates through to State and Federal policy.

Photographer Phil England's series 'Eye Contact', initiated by the Rotary Clubs of Perth and Heirisson, has sought to change this with the creation of 20 larger than life portraits of homeless Western Australians, each locking viewers with an arresting gaze. Short written snapshots of their experiences accompany the powerful portraits, enabling confrontation of the issues they face in life on the street. There is a story behind every homeless person. The purpose of the portraits is to help viewers recognise the humanity in homeless people and help bring about changes in attitude in our community.

Here's what Phil has to say on the project:

*"Eye Contact - it's what we do when we want to make friends, want someone believe what we're saying, or when we need to understand someone.*

*"Eye Contact - it's also what we seemingly don't do to the always increasing number of homeless people that are populating our streets.*



*"We all know that to solve a problem we first must acknowledge it. Look at it. Sometimes, if we're brave enough hold its gaze it'll look us straight back in the eye and we can then see that it's not so scary, not so difficult to deal with.*

*"What are we looking at when it comes to the homeless situation on our streets? In so many ways homeless people are just like us, they've had hopes and dreams, families, friends, opinions, something to offer. In short, all part of the big, sprawling thing we call humanity.*

*"Eye Contact - it's also a photographic exhibition focussing on the people who live on our streets that brings to the forefront the basic humanity of the homeless and in doing so will also ask us re-examine our feelings towards these people.*

*"It's not the kind of exhibition that focuses on the negative, it's not the sort of exhibition that glamorises. It just aims to strip away some of the prejudices that are preventing our community from addressing this sad issue. The exhibition, using large two metre high, stylised black and white images incorporating revealing question and answer artwork that points out the fact that given equal opportunities, everyone is the same.*

*"The purpose of the exhibition is to start a new conversation about homelessness, a conversation that re-focuses on the basic humanity of the problem and how as fellow humans we can help a less fortunate group of people."*