



Social Futures
Northern Rivers Social Development Council

For Immediate Release

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Homelessness through the eyes of the homeless

**Homelessness Exposed Exhibition opening
4.30pm Wednesday November 16th at Flock Café, Lismore**

Get a completely different picture of homelessness at an exhibition of photographs taken by people who have accessed Social Futures' Connecting Home service.

Homelessness Exposed: sharing the stories of people who have experienced homelessness is a photographic exhibition that aims to raise awareness of the changing face of homelessness, challenge negative stereotypes and promote the Connecting Home program.

Team Leader of Connecting Home's First Response Team, Holly Loveday, says we need to change people's perception of homelessness.

"The exhibition came about for the first time last year because I'd done some googling around the media's representation of homelessness and found that it was really just reinforcing the stereotype that homelessness is only about rough sleeping. Sure, sleeping rough is an issue here, but more often it is the hidden homelessness and the secondary homelessness that we don't see. People sleeping in their cars, ten people sharing a two bedroom house, kids couch surfing – I don't think anybody realises the kind of people we're working with – homelessness can affect anyone. Additionally it was a great opportunity to raise awareness of our program and give the people we work with an opportunity to have their voices and experiences heard."

"The demographics of people in this area who are homeless or at risk of homelessness are somewhat surprising" says Connecting Home, First Response and Youth Team Manager, Niki Gill.

"Many people who present as homeless have experienced unforeseen circumstances which have contributed to their situation. Some people have professional backgrounds and are pilots, lawyers, teachers or police who have had their situation change and have found themselves homeless or at risk of being so.

"Often unexpected health issues have contributed to homelessness and almost all people who presented to Connecting Home suffered from financial and housing stress. People don't realise how close they are to homelessness. It could be a lost job, a cancer diagnosis or a broken relationship away" says Niki.

"The face of homelessness includes young people, older people and children. The trajectory for young people or children is very disconcerting if we can't get support and safe housing in place quickly."



“We handed out some digital cameras and asked people to document their experiences of homelessness, drawing attention to both the negative challenges faced by people living out of bags and cars, couch surfing or in tents but also the positive aspects around support and what has sustained them,” says Holly.

“There’s something really important about giving people a voice. It isn’t easy for people living in a tent with their kids for example to get their voices heard, so we wanted to support them to speak creatively about their experiences” says Holly.

Social Futures is committed to changing the face of homelessness in the Northern Rivers, both by providing real and practical relief, and by advocating for change. “These people are part of our community and our community really needs to come together to support them. We want to encourage people to donate locally, and to look after each other”, says Holly.

Donations to the Connecting Home Program are 100% tax deductible and all donations are allocated to direct costs, for example:

- \$20. Can buy food vouchers
- \$30. Can buy essential items (like nappies, toothpaste, sanitary items etc.)
- \$40. Can buy clean sheets and towels for a family
- \$50. Can purchase a phone and credit so people can stay in touch with their case worker, with family and with work.
- \$120. Can buy one night in emergency accommodation for someone in need
- \$500. Can help to pay rent arrears for people who are struggling to stay afloat.

To support Connecting Home please contact our Finance Dep on 66170017. You can donate over the phone, by PayPal, cheque or direct deposit.

STATS

- The Northern Rivers is home to 20% of the State’s rough sleepers
- During the past year The Connecting Home Program has worked with 3,004 program participants and has recorded 29,585 interactions with clients over the past year
- Almost half of the people who come through our program are families with children
- 13% reported issues of domestic violence
- 18% reported with mental health issues
- 15% reported having some form of disability

Homelessness Exposed will run for a month in the arcade at Flock Cafe, 16 Nov – 16 Dec 2016.

The opening is Wednesday 16th November 4.30pm with delicious nibbles provided thanks to Flock Café. All welcome.

Please RSVP or direct any queries to holly.loveday@socialfutures.com.au

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Social Futures is a community-based not-for-profit organisation that promotes fairness and social inclusion in the Northern Rivers region of NSW.

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