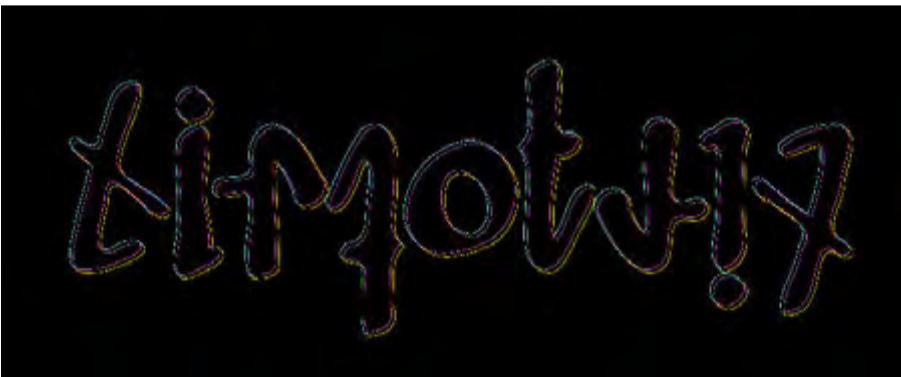




Challenging
perceptions
through
reflective
fashion



SPOTLIGHT

At 28 Andrew Lorimer-Derham is a dynamic force to be reckoned with. His mission in life is to challenge the world to see things differently. His raison d'être is to make people think, he invites young people to be curious, to ask questions, not just accept the norm, to truly see other people, not just follow along like sheep. At first he did this through teaching. Now he's doing it through a funky clothing line – [Mirrorgram](#) – the world's first 'reflective' clothing line, and we don't mean reflective in the high visibility sense!!

Young people have really got it stacked against them. They're desperate to be liked for who they are, yet are constantly being told to be someone else. And most of them live in a virtual world on their mobile phones and computers, which is totally removed from real life. While they are "connected" online they are disconnected from real people in real life, and that is worrying. In fact it's dangerous.

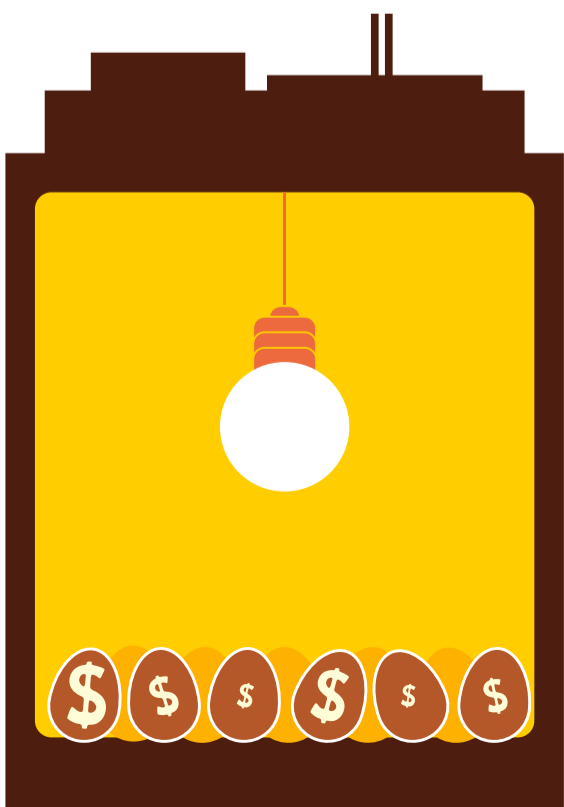
After studying at universities in Australia and America, Andrew returned to his native Australia and taught maths and PE for four years at a High School in country Victoria. He wasn't your average teacher. He did it outside the box, he was a teacher to remember. The school initially didn't want to hire him. Was it his dreadlocks? Or the yellow crocs he always wears? Both are intrinsically part of him and his 'trade mark', so much so, he wore the crocs at his wedding!

Growing up he was the skinny, intelligent kid who went to church and believed in God. He hid his faith - it wasn't cool and didn't help him 'fit in'. It took him years to realise that being real was what mattered. As an adult he draws on that experience daily, and as a result, it's the perceptions of young people that he is most keen to challenge.

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worrying. In fact it's dangerous. How will they develop the skills they need to relate to and communicate with one another? The pressure to conform is even greater online, with many young people spending hours perfecting their profile picture, or making sure everyone else knows what a cool party animal they are. I really want to challenge their thinking in a new and creative way through my clothing line.'

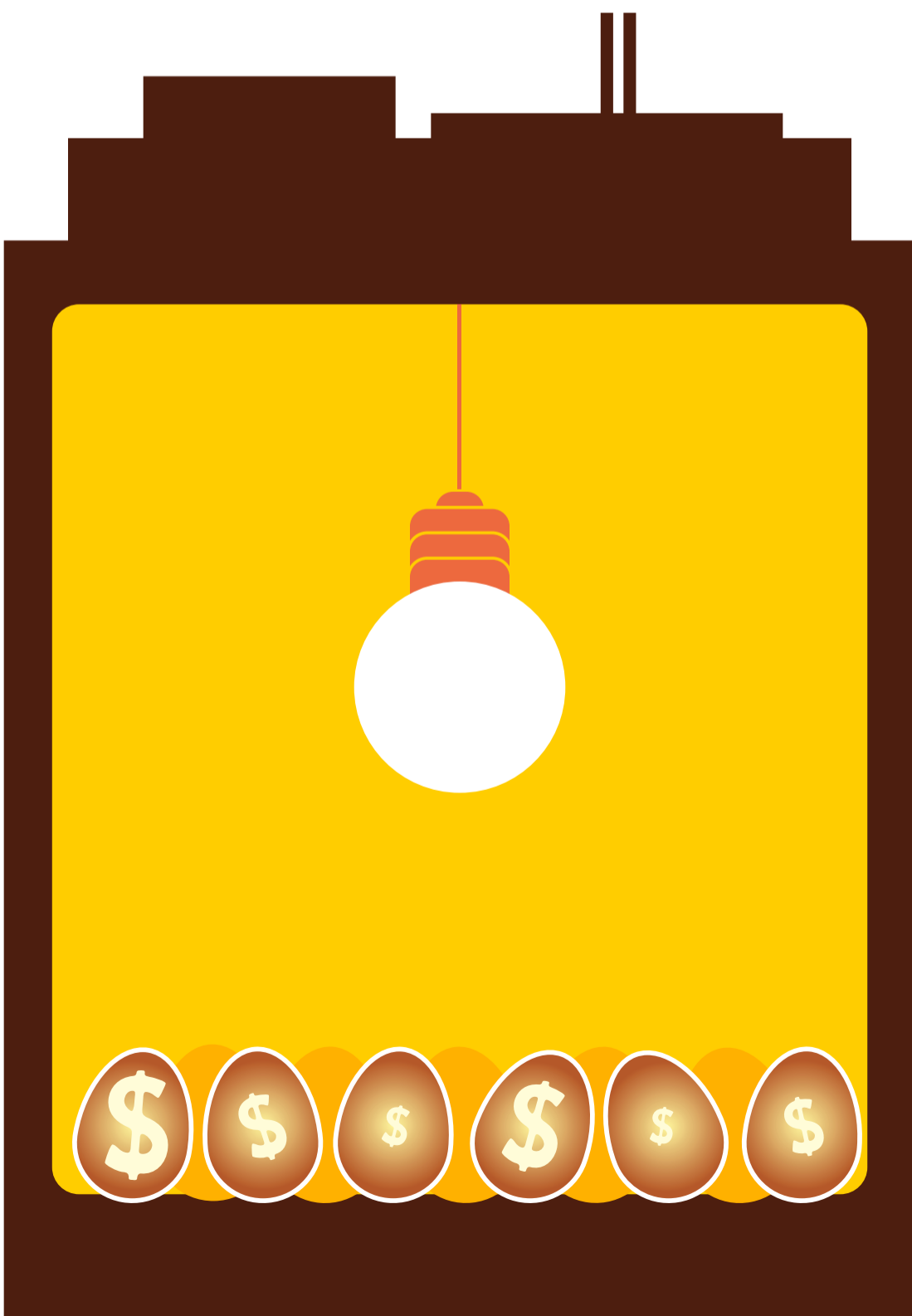
He first discovered [ambigrams](#) when reading Dan Brown's best seller *The Da Vinci Code* and taught himself to create them. Most people design ambigrams in a calligraphic style. Not Andrew, his style is nearer to funk. Once he'd learnt the art, he became addicted and his brain rewired itself to interpret everything it saw as an ambigram; every sign he read, he redesigned in his head as an ambigram, everywhere he went he drew people's names for them, as an ambigram. And then it struck him - to take it one step further - have the word read one way and then 'say and mean' the opposite in reverse! Defeat Evil spells With Love in reverse. Loser becomes Legend. Dork becomes Cool. Stereotypes becomes Don't Judge Me. To blazen it across your chest on a hoodie seemed a natural next step.



Stick to one idea at a time. I know I'm an ideas man, and if I could make money by having huge creative ideas, I'd have made my first million by now. But I've reigned myself in and know that if I don't stick to one idea at a time, all these incredible ideas will amount to nothing.'

It is just six months since he started his business. It has grown steadily and is well on target; his clothing line is already in five outlets and he has an international following and client base. Yet operating on a shoestring is the part of the challenge Andrew enjoys most. 'My wife is incredibly supportive and not only is she the breadwinner at this stage of the start-up, but she also agreed to us sinking our savings into this project.'

At the initial planning stage, he worked out with business coach Deb Shugg, of Iron Your Own Undies, which aspects of the business he could learn to do and manage in-house. This was necessary to keep costs to a minimum and he surprised even himself by designing and creating his website himself. 'It was a steep learning curve, but it was also the area I could make the most difference financially. And as you know, I'm all about making a difference!' he says with that disarming smile.



Working with young people and seeing them grow and change is what he finds inspiring. The magical pyramid effect, where one person is inspired and in turn inspires their peer group, family and friends and then they in turn influence theirs, and so it grows.

Working with small business mentor Deb shone a light on Andrew's most challenging areas. 'Deb pointed out that whilst I personally may not be motivated by money, my business absolutely needs to be. It not only needs to pay for itself, but the more money it makes, the more people I can help. To people in business that probably sounds screamingly obvious, but for me it was a real 'light bulb' moment. It's motivated me in a totally new way.' He started up the business with no prior experience (with the exception of the cookie drive he ran in Year 11, baking 720 cookies in 12 hours, netting him an impressive \$36 profit!). It was a logistical conundrum and he recalls wondering where to start? Deb taught him to break his plan down into achievable time-driven segments. He's naturally a list maker and effective with time management, but even he is amazed at what he achieves in just a day now with this approach. With goals documented and broken down into one, three and six-month timeframes, he feels as much in control as an entrepreneur can! Andrew wants every aspect of his business to be eth-

ical. He uses [The Print Bar](#) to print his shirts - they are Australian, sweat shop free, use environmental friendly inks and offered on demand printing - so tick all his boxes.

He operates a trial and error philosophy because he's a realist. 'There's no rule book is there really? You do your research for sure, but then you also have to take a punt and put it out there, ask questions, see what feedback you get, see if you're pedaling in the right direction, and if you're not, you try going a different way. That's the beauty of doing business in this day and age where we have direct conversations with our clients in social media; we learn all the time from our target market.'

When asked what is the best piece of advice he's been given or has to offer, Andrew replies 'Stick to one idea at a time. I know I'm an ideas man, and if I could make money by having huge creative ideas, I'd have made my first million by now. But I've reigned myself in and know that if I don't stick to one idea at a time, all these incredible ideas will amount to nothing.'

Working with young people and seeing them grow and change is what he finds inspiring. The magical pyramid effect, where one person is inspired and in turn inspires their peer group, family and friends and then they in turn influence theirs, and so it grows. From talking to Andrew you get the sense that to him, what's important is not knowing how all the pieces will fit together, but being genuine and passionate about who you are, including others along the way and sharing the journey. In closing, I ask Andrew if he's pulled any PR stunts to promote his clothing line. 'I printed up 1500 ambigrams and handed them out to the crowd at the Australian Open, to get them seen on TV. And I want to be endorsed by people who inspire me, so I've sent some key players a hoodie. Todd Sampson, CEO of Leo Burnett. Hamish and Andy, Logies award winning comedians, who started out as radio DJs and now have their own TV show. And I'm going to see if I can meet up with Richard Branson when I'm in England and give him a shirt too. Arnie was my hero growing up, so I'll get a massive one made just for him. Because that's an image I'd LOVE to have on my website for all to see.'



If it moves me, I'll gladly write about it. Helen Collier, owner of Just Words, writes for businesses, magazines, philanthropists and always ...for pleasure.

