

CAMPBELLTOWN

LITERARY AWARDS 2019

ANTHOLOGY

AWARD WINNERS

Overall Winner

Sandpit
Bethany Cody

Open (25+ years)

Gold **Praise Thy Voice**
Peter Richter

Silver **A Loud Voice Raised**
Yihong Gao

Bronze **Raise Your Voice
for Campbelltown**
Phyllis Fraser

Youth (15-24 years)

Drowning
Surpreet Jaiswara

Beanie
Akhila Peacock

The Speech
Rasandi Fernando

Junior (7-14 years)

The Land of Silence
Cleo Murray

A Dairy Animal's Life
Gamagedara Mayumdi Thasanya



Providing a quality lifestyle

CAMPBELLTOWN
CITY COUNCIL

Overall Winner

Bethany Cody
Sandpit

SANDPIT

Brooke's got bruises, misshapen and purple like overripe plums barely clinging to the branches of her parents' backyard tree. She used to climb the dark chocolate trunk of the age old plum, planted decades before their family moved in on Rosemary street, before her younger sister Lucy tried to monkey-see, monkey-do and fell on her head. Now the fruiting branches curl over and swoop down to touch the lawn, verdant and overgrown at the edges.

Brooke's got bruises from playing along Fifth Creek trail with the boys at school. They build rock mounds with quartz, joust with exposed roots from dying trees and when it rains enough to fill the creek bed, they swim in their school shorts. In the winter she comes home smelling of sand and mud and potent mossy water and leaves her sodden shoes by their front door to air dry.

In the school holidays she wakes in early morning, bringing an apple on her walk to the creek. The sound of crisp crunching and munching follows her path along hilly gravel footpaths flanked by looming gum trees. Her friends come in dribs and drabs after. There's a boy who never takes his jumper off, not for forty-one degree days or playing games of chasey in full sun. His name is Marcus and he's the tallest in their group. He doesn't talk much, shy, and always waits for the others in the carpark of the reserve, hands deep in fleece pockets. Brooke likes him because he walked her home on a badly grazed shin when she fell out of a tree peeking at a bird's nest while the other boys stood back and laughed.

At school they're in different classes on opposite ends of the grounds. During recess and lunch they reunite to romp and run. Their playground is wooden, set in the far corner of

the property next to a steep creek bed with a footbridge and bike trail. Sometimes they'll hang out by the chicken mesh fence and watch the odd person walk by with their dog, or bend the rules by straddling the fence, one leg in and out of bounds. Teachers aren't always looking.

They jump from the sun-hot slippery dip into the sandpit, a wood-lined square of multi-coloured grit and debris from the surrounding shrubs and trees. There's spots of bark chips from the floor of the playground and half-buried sandwich bags from long-ago lunches. Sandcastles are forged and obliterated in the next breath, their destruction just as exciting as their creation. Cold grit falls between their socks and skin and they take turns flinging loose specks at one another until their shoes are mostly clean.

Sometimes they trade the sandpit for a game of soccer on the oval. Brooke seems to always lose the game of rock-paper-scissors and is made to walk to the sports shed where she scribbles her name and the rough time of day on a sheet of paper to borrow one of the many faded, semi-deflated threadbare soccer balls. She tries twirling the sphere on her finger like she's seen the boys do but hasn't mastered it yet. She keeps trying.

Marcus stops playing after ten or so minutes, the stifling bulk of his jumper weighing him down so he overheats and feels nauseous. Brooke sees the discomfort on his face – pink, sweating, mouth pulled down at the sides. She knows she's not the first to ask, "Why don't you take your jumper off?"

Marcus simply shakes his head and walks off the oval away from their game. The bell is about to ring and he doesn't like being at the back of the line to enter their classroom with a rowdy group of boys.

There's a small crowd of girls gathered around a wooden bench bordering the oval, watching, and they taunt Brooke as she follows after Marcus.

Her, "Shut up." falls on uncaring ears.

She hates being at the back of the line too.

A week later and the girls begin teasing Brooke each day. What starts as whispers in the classroom between lessons becomes daily derision, goading glares out of Brooke and a deep throb in her chest, remarks that trouble her long after the school day ends and she's nestled deep in the warmth of her blankets, trying to get past the words to sleep. Accusations, insults, sneers. They criticise Brooke for her rumpled clothes and tatty shoes, her short hair that try as she might never grows past her shoulders.

"You're such a boy."

"Brooke's so dirty, she's a rat."

Her nickname behind teachers' backs is Rat.

With every goal she scores, guiding the battered black and white ball home between net-less goal posts, the cheers from her friends are drowned out by a series of shrill squeaks from the girls imitating noisy rodents.

Marcus treads closer and says, "Makes you wonder why they're so convincing."

They laugh together and Brooke scores the most goals, winning the game.

It takes a while to tell her parents and although they notice that her usual energy, her playful spark is dimmed, they don't see the depth of their daughter's distress until she comes home with a note from the principal in her wrinkled cardboard diary. Her dad reads the note

aloud in the kitchen, her mum listens, resting a hip against the countertop crowded with crockery.

“...three day suspension for hitting another student in the face.”

Despite her efforts, forcing out the truth in her defence in soggy stops and starts, Brooke is exiled to her room for the remainder of the night and falls asleep hungry.

Her return to school is harrowing. Students do one of two things; ignore her as if she's a ghost, a waft of unpleasant air, or they terrorise her with wounding words and pointed shoves in the back in the hallway. The group of girls generally ignores her and she's thankful for that at least. A small part of her dreads the calm before the storm.

Five weeks later and she should've listened to intuition.

Rain dampened silt is empty when Brooke and her band of boys descend upon the sandpit. It's a Wednesday afternoon and they've just been released for lunch. Marcus sits on an inadequately sized edge of the pit, the woody surface digs into his backside and turns his left butt cheek numb. Their friends are seizing handfuls of sand and mashing them into a makeshift fort for impending battle.

Brooke is the last to know, her friends too slow to warn her when the stick comes down hard on her back. She falls on her stomach in the cool, wet sand, her eyes open to the grit and stinging. She starts to cry, doesn't understand, hearing laughter from behind.

The girl Brooke slapped stands smugly with a large angular branch in her right hand. It takes a moment for Brooke to gather herself up. She feels her back where the stick made impact and shaky fingers disappear in a hole torn through the chequered fabric.

“*Oops.*” The girls hang there, snickering, waiting for Brooke to do something.

Another girl says, "You gonna cry to your boyfriend, Rat?"

Her face flushes hot and she screams, "Shut the hell up!"

The kids go quiet. Birds call in the trees above them, the wind carries leaves from the canopy to the ground and beetles crawl over them on their way to who-knows where.

Brooke advances on the girl, jaw clenched against the pain of her flesh and the hurt of her heart. She lands a few kicks and open-palmed smacks before Marcus intervenes and pulls her off and away. In the heat of the moment she elbows Marcus in the chest and he crumples inward with pain too strong to have come from Brooke's arm.

The teacher on lunch duty sights them and splits up the fight, taking the girl by the collar of her dishevelled dress and sends Marcus and Brooke to the principal with a hastily written note.

Walking shoulder to sand-dusted shoulder in silence along the hallway, with forlorn faces the pair passes an upper primary teacher on his way to the office. Brooke's mind is filled with questions, unafraid of what the principal might say about her behaviour, occupied only by Marcus's jumper and what lies beneath.

She remembers the jeers of the other students, "Uncle Fester!"

She remembers the days Marcus goes without attending school and the excuses he makes when he returns, his friends asking where he's been.

She remembers the mean look in his father's eye when the bell at the end of the school day sounds and Marcus rushes to their car, never seeming to get there fast enough for his liking. She remembers the taste of blue smoke expelled from the exhaust when they tear off down the road. She remembers wondering if she'll see him tomorrow.

Nearing Mrs. Cooper's office Marcus says, "I'll tell her I did it."

A flood of heat washes over Brooke, settling fiery hot in her belly. A few seconds pass before she explodes. She shouts, "Why are you trying to help me if you won't let me do the same for *you*?" Her voice echoes around them, from the pastel green Lino at their feet back to their faces.

Violently, she yanks open the zip on Marcus's jumper, the studs unthread effortlessly and the tab threatens to separate under her fingers from the force of her pull. Time slows, her eyes track the widening of the gap. She jerks his shirt up over his stomach and chest and then she stops.

Marcus's got bruises, misshapen and purple like the overripe plums barely clinging to the branches of Brooke's backyard tree.

Her throat constricts, convulsing to gasp. No sound escapes. Instinctively she knows these mishmash patches of discoloured skin are not souvenirs from play fights or tripping over rocks in the reserve or getting hit with a punctured soccer ball or bumping into the doorway at night sneaking out of bed in unsure darkness to use the toilet.

The principal is speechless in her shock as she exits her office, hands halfway to her mouth, open, frozen. It takes her a moment to find composure and redress the boy, movements measured but gentle. When he's covered, Mrs. Cooper tells Brooke to sit in the waiting area with their receptionist Linda while she talks to Marcus. Linda sees the worry on Brooke's tear streaked face and abandons her post by the phone to comfort the girl.

Her sobs are interspersed with, "I just wanted to know," and, "he wouldn't tell me," followed by a quiet chant, "I'm sorry."

Brooke remembers a brief stretch of time waiting for her mum to take her home and then a vast nothingness before she wakes the next day. She spends the weekend in her room reading, unable to absorb the words or follow the story. She sees the bruises on Marcus's chest and arms before she finds sleep.

Mrs. Cooper doesn't suspend Brooke again. She makes a time with Brooke's parents to discuss the events of the last week and on that day they sit either side of their daughter in the carpeted office on uncomfortable, ugly upholstered chairs. They are told Marcus is being treated in hospital for two broken ribs and extensive bruising, his father is alleged to be responsible for the abuse.

Brooke listens with an unpleasant feeling on the nape of her neck, the sweat that comes with knowing something was happening but she didn't know how bad it was, or who she should tell. *How*. If Marcus is okay. In the end Brooke is warned against using violence to solve disagreements with her peers and is told the girl who struck her with the branch will also be cautioned.

Their house is still when they return. Her mum watches TV holding Lucy without taking any of it in and her dad sips from a mug of black coffee by the kitchen island. Brooke feels helpless.

At night when the family has gone to bed and Brooke lies awake for hours too worried to sleep, her parents appear in the dimly lit doorway and come sit by her bedside. Propped against her pastel pillows, she listens to her parent's apology and takes comfort in her mother's hug.

From her temple comes her mother's voice, "It's important you tell us when something or someone's bothering you from now on. We don't want you getting into fights, we're sorry we didn't listen when you tried to tell us earlier."

Her dad chimes in, "Just speak up, we're here to help when you're not sure of what to do or how to stop someone from hurting you."

Brooke asks, "What about Marcus?"

Her parents share a look.

"He's being taken care of, don't worry about him, he's going to be okay."

"He's lucky you did what you did."

The, "*Otherwise...*" is left unsaid.

She nods against her mother's damp chest and is shortly put back to bed.

Brooke's nine years old, she's got bruises from playing with the boys at school. They'll fade with time, and she wonders how long it will take Marcus's to heal. She wonders if she might've saved her friend's life.

Word count: 2, 209

Open Writer (25+ years)

Gold Winner

Peter Richter
Praise Thy Voice

PRAISE THY VOICE

2033 A.D. will mark the 2,000th Anniversary of the death of Jesus Christ and Reality TV planned to commemorate the occasion by staging a worldwide search for a new Messiah.

Perhaps this should not come as any surprise. In a world where more and more people watch what they want when they want it as individuals, as opposed to a time when most people tuned into the next great big television event as a communal activity, what was left of commercial television decided it was time for the Second Coming. And revealing the identity of the new Messiah demanded to be broadcast to the world as an event of great historical significance.

Entitled *Praise Thy Voice*, the televised talent quest invited prospective Messiahs to appear before the world, to see if they could convince everyone to follow them into that promised land still referred to as *The Future*.

There were three judges known collectively as *The Trinity*. They included Executive Producer, Simon Monkhood, Morgana Johnson, the transgender singing nun who believed she represented a God, and not any organised religion, who truly loves everyone equally and comedian Barry Glib whose job it was to keep the studio audience entertained during commercial breaks.

Behind each judge sat a group of twelve *Followers*. Though having some autonomy of thought, these apostle sized groups had their actions largely dictated to them through the LED instructions that flashed up on the backs of the judges' thrones.

Each week the judges and their Followers travelled to a new continent to conduct their search for a new Messiah. Britain was allowed to temporarily rejoin the EU and mainland China was allowed to compete separately from Europe despite sharing the same landmass. Though it should be noted that being a communist country, China made a poor showing anyway.

Africa, North America (including Canada) and South America all enjoyed separate weeks to themselves. Israel of course abstained from the competition because they refuse to recognise the

original Jesus as being the Son of God, deeming him just another prophet and so could not condone a search for his return to the earthly plane.

The last continent to compete was Australia, though some fuss was made by the international community over how small the population was residing on the southern landmass. That somehow there was an unfair advantage in assembling the cream of the crop of so small a gene pool, especially when much more crowded territories (indeed, all of them by comparison) had to forsake some truly gifted contestants due to their own swelling numbers. The judges, however, were more concerned the opposite would prove true, that Australia would produce few candidates worthy of inclusion.

As the night of the Australian heat wore on, the judges' fears appeared well founded. The second to last act for the evening was wrapping up his monologue to a largely stony silence. Going by the name Rhesus Feist, he wore a monkey suit that only left his face visible and was spouting the tenets of Darwinian Evolution. He posited that science was God's language and therefore the true prophets of history were the great names of science, including Galileo, Newton, Einstein, Hawking and of course, right smack bang in the middle of them all, Darwin.

Yet, no matter how cogent an argument he put forward, preaching science to an audience seeking spiritual enlightenment was not the smartest of moves. Rhesus, who in retrospect was probably wise not to use his real name, was not even a scientist himself. Quite the oversight if he was to fulfil the function of Messiah according to his own logic.

No, Rhesus was proving such a resounding failure that every Follower angrily thumped at their red *Burn in Hell* button on the left armrest of their chairs. Not even one contemplated pushing the blue *Ascension* button of approval located at the end of their right armrests. Exhausted and humiliated by the experience, Rhesus could only curl about him the tail from his monkey suit and skulk from the stage.

A young man sauntered onto the stage to fill the void left behind by the failed Darwinian, Perhaps in his late twenties or early thirties, he wore a white linen suit and white shoes. His

lustrous, shoulder length brown hair and neatly cropped beard was perhaps a little bit too on the nose for a competition of this nature. After all, it's not like the judges were looking for an impersonator or even looking to put together a tribute band.

The new contestant came to a halt at the front of the stage and faced the judges. He stood with a humble, almost contrite pose, his right hand clasping his left wrist, the gesture poised just above his belt buckle.

Simon Monkhood, sitting upon the most imperious of the three thrones, asked the pertinent first question. "And who might you be, my good man?" Despite the nearly blasphemous audacity of the previous contestant, Simon had to assume most of the contestants who had entered the competition had done so with the best of intentions.

The man with the serene stance introduced himself. "My name is Sherman Yonder-Mount," he said with a deceptively soft voice that rang clear with a graceful power and could be heard all the way to the back of the auditorium.

"And where are you from, Sherman?" Simon further enquired.

"I'm from Campbelltown, a suburb of Adelaide, South Australia."

"And what makes Campbelltown so special a place it might dare think to give rise to a possible Messiah?" Simon challenged Sherman with a hint of sarcastic disdain.

"Campbelltown is not, nor needs to be a more special place than anywhere else. I, like everyone in Campbelltown, is capable of having the dreams and aspirations to better oneself, as can every human being on the face of this planet.

"Furthermore, to dismiss Campbelltown as you may have derisively intimated, would be like denying Jesus' credentials as the Son of God because Nazareth might never have actually appeared on a single map of antiquity. At least Campbelltown can be found in great detail in a street directory."

Simon smiled at the answer and the passion and the thoroughness with which Sherman had imbued it. "The floor is all yours," he beneficently deferred.

Sherman stared into the audience as if making eye contact with each and every one of them, yet he saw none of them. He was immersed in his thoughts, channeling them so that he might give life to them as the spoken word.

“The Devil is at large in our world and he is winning. How do I know? I see his influence all around me in the way people isolate themselves and ignore their neighbours. I believe the Devil to be meaningless noise. His trick is to prevent us from hearing each other, let alone listening to what needs to be heard. He encourages us all to talk incessantly about things that do not matter. I can but hope my words tonight will resonate within you with proper meaning. And beyond tonight, I hope you will be able to listen to each other with renewed interest and appreciation.

“When most people are asked how they are doing, they normally answer with a humbly dismissive *fine*. It is usually a lie or a deflection. Do not let them get away with it. Gently poke and prod them into proving it to be true. If it should prove a falsehood, try divine if you can help them with their problems, even if the best you can do is simply lend them a sympathetic ear.

“We also need to listen more closely to our elders, not only to reassure them they are not unwanted or forgotten. They have a gift to bestow upon us. The gift of wisdom and experience. It is a gift that will enrich our own lives.

“And always listen to and acknowledge the questions of children. Let them know you value their existence. Answer their questions to the best of your ability, sharing with them your access to the world around us. Assure them the future is a place that awaits them.

“Listening to all and sundry is the key. Not that you are obliged to accept or agree with every opinion that comes your way. It is important, however, to give each new opinion its due consideration. But to cut through the noise, you must seek to have these conversations with people one at a time so that your conversations will stand a chance of being meaningful.

“Thank you all for doing me the honour of listening.” Sherman bowed his head in servitude towards the audience.

The spellbound audience slowly stirred from their awe inspired inertia, first by letting their right hands lower in unison to press the blue *Ascension* button to signify their reverent approval. They then followed the example set by the judges who had already risen to their feet and all offered up their applause.

And so Sherman Yonder-Mount made it into the finals.

In the week that followed, there was much debate in both the media and social media whether Sherman was odds on favourite to win. Suspicions of a fix were raised due to the botched assassination attempt on Sherman's life by a still aggrieved Rhesus Feist.

Then there was the furore caused by a hate group who took metaphorical aim at Sherman's main rival, Magda Delon, the French soprano who beguiled audiences with her angelic voice. They insisted she could only ever run for the position of Anti-Christ, whom they believed was scheduled to appear alongside the Second Coming.

Apparently the proof lay simply in the fact Magda was female. With all deference to the presence of Morgana Johnson amongst the judges, no one was prepared to accept that the Son of God would return to Earth having had a sex change operation. The hate group therefore deemed the winner must be male and that if an Anti-Christ should also be revealed in the process, then the guilty party must prove to be the opposite of Christ in every way, including gender.

Luckily, the state of gender politics having become what it is, though still far from perfect, soon quashed the more extremist dissenters' attempts to have Magda disqualified from the competition.

No, what won it in the end for Sherman was the surprise inclusion of the sick and the infirm, a veritable parade of the young and old in wheelchairs, who were invited to join the live audience. It was a calculated dare by the judges. And Sherman rose to the challenge.

Focusing on the children in particular, Sherman veered into an unscripted speech on how the birth of every child was the result of their mothers and fathers having seen all the magic in the world in each other upon their first meeting. He descended amongst the specially invited attendees

and drew upon the magic passed onto them at birth, curing each and every one of them of their ailments. He even cast out Simon Monkhoo's head cold.

There was no topping Sherman after that. (One might argue Rhesus Feist had already proven that beyond all reasonable doubt!)

So began the cult of Sherman. He endured a raft of puff piece interviews on breakfast television and calmly held firm during the more hard hitting interviews on evening current affairs programs. There were myriad panel discussions pitting Sherman against prominent members of the clergy of all religions. He shamed them all into admitting they were more interested in real estate and crowd control than bringing people closer to God.

Eventually junking the junkets, the globe trotting Sherman started interrupting journalists who specialised in reporting from war zones. He exposed the fact they did nothing more than exploit people's suffering for ratings. Reporting such events to a shell shocked and arguably powerless general public a world away instead of using their evidence to petition the United Nations, the very organisation designed to rectify all such political strife in the world, was inexcusable in Sherman's eyes.

Sherman then went on to meet with the most despotic of political leaders, asking them to explain to the world how they justified ruling their respective peoples with cruel and unjust iron fists. Would it not make more sense to see their peoples prosper as individuals, each contributing to their nation's well being, both culturally and economically?

As no one could satisfactorily answer Sherman's simple and straightforward questions in a way to exonerate their past indiscretions and callous indifference, so began the ripple effect. Sherman's gentle confrontations with those in positions of power saw a shift in how wealth was distributed between all the people on Earth. First the essential provision of food was made available to all, then the guarantee of shelter. The ripple threatened to become a tsunami of genuine equality.

At long last Sherman was invited to give a speech before the United Nations, tipped to be the crowning glory of his meteoric rise to fame. Anticipation was great that Sherman would outline

the next step in improving human civilization. It would mean the United Nations could go right on avoiding the job it had been set up to do since the end of World War Two. Only Sherman was not about to let them off the hook.

As ever, though, Sherman demurred from shaming anyone through anger, instead doing so with his familiar graceful calm. He finished by saying, "It is now time for me to thank you for having allowed me the great good fortune of temporarily being the most important voice in the room. But it is now time for all of you to again make your own voices heard, provided you are honest with yourselves in declaring what you believe it will take to continue making this world a better place. This will only work if your voices are the equal of mine."

Though not expecting any immediate return comments, Sherman remained on stage long enough to bask in the glow of receiving the most well earned applause in history. Even if it was due to the assembly before him being diplomatically obliged to do so. Though keenly aware they would now have to actually do their jobs, they could not risk a lack lustre response to Sherman's speech lest they all lose face.

Once Sherman left the stage, he disappeared into obscurity, away from public scrutiny. Occasionally a blurry image of someone who looked a lot like Sherman would be posted online, though no one could ever really confirm if it was him.

2033 is still a dream away from our reality, though if any of this were to come to pass, any would be Sherman Yonder-Mount must already walk among us. But do we have to wait for him to make his presence known? Why continue dreaming of such a day? Why not start living the dream today?

Open Writer (25+ years)

Silver Winner

Yihong Gao
A Loud Voice Raised

A Loud voice Raised

Li migrated from China to Australia several years ago. He had been a Campbelltown resident ever since. One weekend afternoon, he felt restless, because he didn't have anything arranged. Then he decided to drive to the beach to catch crabs. Before he left, he said to his wife, 'Look, people are fishing or catching crabs on the jetty, all have their wives with them. Can you go with me?'

His wife shook her head, laughing, and replied, 'No, I don't want to go there. I'm only interested in cooking the crabs and eating them.'

Li wasn't happy with her reply. He was tempted to question her, 'Why can't you go there? Why do you choose to stay at home all the time? Don't you know that you should go out and have fun?' But he thought for a while, and then decided not to utter his complaint, because he knew it was futile to persuade her to go out, because he had tried many times before—it was always the same answer—'No'.

Li shook his head and left his wife—she continued to chat with her relatives and friends back in China on the Wechat App. Li thought to himself, 'She has her own way of entertaining herself. It's better to leave her alone. I can enjoy myself without her.'

On the way to Grange Beach, Li was expecting to catch many crabs—crabs were indeed cute creatures. When kids observed a crab struggling in the net, they would clap their hands and shout at them. One boy even tried to touch it, even though he was fearful of its claws.

For Li, he always felt like laughing at crabs' multiple clumsy legs—they looked so foolish, when they crawled.

People in China would describe an arrogant man as a crab, because on the road, this kind of man prefers not to walk in a straightforward manner, but horizontally, like a crab; he either deliberately blocks other people's paths or deliberately crashes onto a pedestrian, provokes that person and then bullies him, demanding money for compensation. Surely, as China leaped from being one of the poorest nations up to being the second largest economy in the world, the bulk of Chinese people have become well fed and much reformed. So you are unlikely to encounter such men any more. But having crabs for a meal is still a big luxury.

As far as Li was concerned, catching crabs had become an entertainment. Whenever he felt inclined to go to the beach, he would tell his wife that he was about to catch crabs. It was a valid excuse to obtain his wife's permission to be able to drive to the beach and stay there for hours.

Today he was very excited to see the sea again. 'What a beautiful day!' He exclaimed. But he caught nothing at first. Three hours later, one crab happened to climb into his net. He was overjoyed and put his prize into a box.

Then a white man came. He claimed himself to be a volunteer with the fishery authority. He then began to check the fish boxes one by one.

He didn't wear any official uniform, nor did he show his identity card, but all the owners of the fish boxes were cooperative. At the beginning, he seemed to be polite—

before he opened the cover of the box, he would ask whose owner it was. Then he started to pick out the small size crabs and put them back into the sea, while criticising the offenders. Li was surprised to find that a white male offender kept silent when criticised, but his partner would argue with this self-appointed examiner, questioning this man's true identity.

Li had laid his box close to the wooden rail. When the man searched for small crabs in the boxes, he didn't worry, because he was sure that the crab in his box exceeded the required size. But he still preferred not to talk with this man.

When the man came to his box, he asked again and again whose box it was. After many times of demanding its owner to appear, Li decided to come over and claimed it, 'It's mine.'

The man opened it and found only one crab, he saw the measurement and started to measure it. He suddenly shouted at Li, 'Look, this is a blue crab, it is only 10 centimeters, do you know you can only catch a blue crab of over 11 centimeters?'

Li was worried, 'No, this is a sand crab. I have already measured it, it is over 10 centimeters.'

'No, this is a blue crab. You have caught a young one, its size is not more than 11 centimeters. You don't have water in your box. Look, you've killed a young life. How cruel you are! You've killed this cute creature.'

Li felt trapped — words stuck in his throat, his head ran black, and his memory of English had been wiped out. The man came closer to him, shouting at and cursing him.

Li was frightened, he could smell the overpowering smell of wine from the man's mouth—this man was at least 190 centimeters high, he stood like a steel tower. Li felt threatened. It dawned to him that his wife was right to stay at home. Li panicked and then mumbled. At last he came up with a thought, and said, 'Ok, throw away the crab.'

The man picked up the crab and threw it into the sea. He left Li and started to check another box.

Before he laid his finger on this big box, its owner aggressively approached him, he was a young Australian Vietnamese, he shouted at the white man, 'Lay your bloody hands off my box.'

He even edged close to the white man, his eyes glared at him. This Vietnamese guy also looked tall and strong, his English sounded like a native speaker. His voice was fierce, he was poised to fight anytime. The white man was thwarted and said in a lower voice, 'I'm just helping the fishery people to do their job.'

The Vietnamese man raised his voice, 'You can't touch my box. It is my private property, OK?'

The two men stared at each other, like two cocks. They stood close but didn't fight. Li felt inspired by the Vietnamese man and came over to them, and said to the white man, 'Go away.' The white man listened and went away. Li felt victorious—it was the first time that he raised his voice against a white man, and it was so good to do so.

People who had been fishing and catching crabs gathered together, talked and laughed about the white man, accusing their shared foe of being an arrogant drunkard.

Open Writer (25+ years)

Bronze Winner

Phyllis Fraser

Raise Your Voice for Campbelltown

RAISE YOUR VOICE FOR CAMPBELLTOWN

I have lived in the north eastern area all my life. I currently live in the suburb of Paradise, in the council area of Campbelltown and have done so for over 19 years. As I live near the river I am concerned with the state of our local waterway, namely the River Torrens or creek as my Sydneysider husband calls it.

Twice within this time there has been excessive rain to the point that the river has burst its banks. The last time was several years ago when the playground, on Greenglade Drive, in Paradise, was covered by the flood waters. The water level reached just short of the top bar of the swing set!

When the water sub-sided there were numerous plastic bags and other debris caught in the reeds and around tree trucks. I was left shocked as this rubbish would normally have been washed out to sea.

I have always been an active recycler but more so now. I have tried to pass this on to my children but it is my grandchildren who will suffer the result of our legacy if more is not done to reduce waste going into the oceans and into landfill.

Marine and bird life are dying excruciating deaths from eating waste that should be discarded more thoughtfully. Recently two deceased whales washed up onto the shore in NSW. When examined, their stomach content averaged six tonnes of garbage.

To support recycling, our local council of Campbelltown is proactive in providing households with three bins.

Blue lid bin for general waste.

Green lid bin for garden waste such as prunings, weeds, lawn clippings, cut flowers, leaves and weeds. Food scraps in compostable bags, shredded paper and even pizza boxes.

Yellow lid bin is for glass jars, food cans, drink cans and bottles, pots and pans. Newspaper, catalogues, flattened milk cartons and cardboard boxes. Any plastic that holds its shape can be recycled if it has a recycling symbol on the base. Soft plastics, such as pasta, biscuit or chip packaging can all be dropped off at Coles or Woolworths for recycling through an independent recycler.

Food waste makes up 40% of material placed in the general waste bin. The best way to avoid this is to compost or have a worm farm. The by-products are great for the garden and potted plants. The diluted worm wee can be used as fertiliser.

Also, households are entitled to one free hard rubbish collection, at call, per year and one free mattress collection.

Scrap metal has unlimited collection but fees apply.

Ewaste, such as printers, computers, microwaves, televisions and small appliances can be dropped off behind SES headquarters near the corner of Montacute Road and Newton Road at Campbelltown.

Printer cartridges, also can be recycled at Australia Post outlets.

With all these available options there is absolutely no reason why old furniture and appliances should be dumped kerbside but people still do it.

We all must do our part to help improve the state of this planet by recycling as much as possible. We need to reduce waste by avoiding it in the first instance.

Some things we can do are:

Reduce junk mail, if you do not read it, by placing a "NO JUNK MAIL" sticker on your letter box.

Reduce food scraps you discard by setting up a worm farm or compost bin or place in the green bin using the compostable bags supplied by the council. One roll of bags is no charge anymore that are required can be purchased.

Reuse materials and containers where possible.

Recycle products to save natural resources such as boxes, tins and glass containers.

Buy recycled products where possible.

What I love is that schools encourage recycling in practical ways. Many also have vegetable gardens and compost bins. This teaches children to enjoy growing fruit and vegetables and encourages them to try foods they may have never tasted.

Some schools also have chickens. The chickens have a dual purpose of scratching up and turning the soil. They also eat snails, slugs and bugs so keep the garden mainly pest free and they also eat food scraps. Best of all they lay eggs and they are pets too.

Creative ways are being found to recycle plastic products that would have damaging effects on the waterways. This by-product is now used in marine environments such as, wharfs, boardwalks, jetties, pontoons and walkways. It is also used for bollards, fitness circuits, outdoor furniture, signage and more. These products are water and termite resistant, will not rot, splinter or crack like wood. They also do not need painting so no ongoing maintenance costs.

Also, some plastic components are being trialled in municipal road infrastructure here in South Australia.

If we do NOT recycle, rivers and oceans will become increasingly polluted and our marine life will inadvertently eat plastics and they will die miserable deaths. This happens to turtles, dolphins, seals, whales, birds, large and small.

Landfill will be too massive to sustain and toxic chemicals will build up in the atmosphere from Styrofoam, batteries, plastics, paper and more.

If we do NOT recycle, our future is dire!

Global warming is a major world issue. Recycling can massively help in this area.

“Global Warming is a term used to describe a gradual increase in the average temperature of the Earth’s atmosphere and its oceans. A change that is believed to be permanently changing the Earth’s climate.”

Climate change is the change in the climate of a region, which occurs over a long period of time.

The use of fossil fuels has been a major contributor to polluting our environment, climate change and the extinction of wildlife species. Depletion of the ozone layer and increased air pollution are a few of the problems affecting our environment.

Global warming is a global problem and an urgent and serious problem but each individual can help by adopting a more responsible lifestyle starting with little everyday things. RECYCLING!

Youth Writer (15- 24 years)

Gold Winner

Surpreet Jaiswara
Drowning

Drowning

I'm drowning. I really am, not like in the nightmare. This time, it's really happening.

I read somewhere that if you feel like you're drowning, you need to relax and you'll float. I try, and by god, I try hard. But it's just not working. I'm still drowning. I shut my mouth, even though I know I need to cry out for help. If I open it, more water will go into my body, and make me choke on salty remarks. The tip of my nose is just above the water, any minute now and my entire head will go under, and I'll lose my only supply of air, my only support. I try to relax, think clearly, try to remember what I learnt at those weird *What to do when you're drowning* workshops mum made me attend at the Campbelltown Library. I can't. I just can't. It's too much to think about, the pit's too deep to dig for the answers. I don't have the strength to fight it anymore. I think for a second, maybe I should just give up. Maybe if I do, it'll be better for everyone. Actually, I thought this as soon as they threw me off the boat. It hurt to think that the ones I loved, the ones I trusted with everything, plunged me into this cold, cold place. I thought that maybe if I just give up, maybe if I just stop trying, the hurting would stop, the endless hours I spent in this raging sea of anti-depressants taken in the girl's toilets after school would finally calm, and let me enjoy the cold sun that stared down at me, chuckling as it watched me struggle, day after wretched day. But how could I? If I did, wouldn't I just be forgetting all the work I put into creating a smile that looked so genuine that it fooled everyone? All the blood, all the tears, all the pain I put into making that girl, the one I wasn't, that outer shell that seemed so positive and happy; was that all for nothing? The long nights I spent contemplating whether I was important, whether anyone I loved would ever love me back, whether my friends would ever appreciate me, the real me, not the manufactured Barbie Doll with an unfaltering smile, were those nights ultimately useless? The mornings I spent, thinking about the one person who bought me any joy, the one person I could turn to for help, where

was he? Where was he when I needed him, where was he when I was so weak I couldn't even move my eyes from the two roads that lay ahead, one filled with darkness, the other filled with equal darkness and just the slightest tinge of live-giving red?

I kept fighting, I knew I had to. But I was so weak, *so* weak. It was hard for me to even breathe steadily, my breaths came out in short, detached huffs. How much longer before I gave way? How much longer before the cold, the somehow inviting cold, took me to a place where I thought I would be happy?

It felt like a roller coaster of anger, sadness, loneliness, guilt, shame; all masked by a smile and a hearty laugh, put on loosely like a quick spritz of perfume.

Something, I don't know what, curls around my foot. I feel it pulling me lower and lower, but I don't resist. I know, it is time. It's time for the pain to stop. It's time for me to be free from this pretence of being happy with what I have. I know, I know. I close my eyes, stop breathing. I can't bear to look down, but as my eyes fall below the water, I open them for less than a second, and catch a glance of what is pulling me down. It's horrible. It's something so terrifying, I can't look away. The salt stings my eyes, but I force them open. But why does the creature look so human-like? Why does it look so....*handsome*? That smile, it looks so beautiful, like one of angels. I can't stop looking at it in awe, its amazing smile, that smile I've been needing to see for such a long time, ever since I've started fighting this endless battle between myself and my mind. I smile, but not out of happiness. No, that's an emotion I'll probably never feel again. I smile, out of satisfaction, like when you finally finish an exam and you exhale with the knowledge you've done your best and its time to stop trying and relax. I've been fighting too long, way too long. I can feel my entire body sagging as I am pulled deeper and deeper into the

cold water. I close my eyes for the last time, hoping I'll be okay. But I can't expect anything. But I hope, I hope with the last little bit of hope I have left. I open my mouth to scream, hoping that before my time is up, someone, anyone, will hear me and come for me. My hair floats in the water like a dying flame as I am pulled down lower and lower, my shrill but silent scream resounding in the empty water.

Then, suddenly, my hair feels a tug. I open my eyes, and try to move my head to look up. I see an arm, but nothing more. I feel another tug, and realise this arm is trying to pull me out of the water. I make an effort, and use the last bit of strength left in me to pull my arm up, and loosely hold the hand. It grips onto mine, and pulls and pulls with such might as I have never before seen. Some hope rises in me, hope I didn't know I had. My head starts to rise through the water, slowly but surely. I don't know if this will work, or if this person wants to pull me out just to use me to their advantage. I don't know, but I cling to the hope of getting another chance at life. The creature dragging me down bursts out into malicious, hoarse screams. I struggle to get out of its grasp, kicking my legs and thrashing my body everywhere. One of my legs finally gets free. I use the strength I have left to kick the creature in its beautiful face, and it shouts in agony, but thankfully lets go of me.

The person pulls, and with one final and strong pull, my head is above the water, and my hands are firmly planted on moist wood, warm but powerful hands holding mine down. I look up, and a face smiles at me, one I don't recognise. The sun is behind the face, and it creates a halo around it. It beams, and through my salt-filled, bloodshot eyes, I see its lips open and I hear something I thought I'd never hear again, *I'd never let you go, I heard your voice calling for me and I came. How could anyone ignore a cry for help from a soul as beautiful as yours?*

Youth Writer (15- 24 years)

Silver Winner

Akhila Peacock
Beanie

Beanie - Friday

The soccer players three rows back were firing spit balls at me as I hopped off the bus. Every day when I get off, I run home to see Opal in the front yard; basking in her daily dose of Vitamin D. I make my way to the path that's been created after months of trenching through the over flowing garden of weeds, and into my house.

I sit in front of the dirty mirror in my bedroom, and pluck each of the sticky paper balls out of my silky black hair.

Every day is the same: the bus, the kids, my sister.

My sister is sick; Mum says it's because life isn't treating her fairly. She says that Opal's illness controls her most days- tells her not to eat, not to leave the house. When I get home from Primary School, Opal always asks how my day was;

"How was school, Bee?" more out-of-habit than interest.

I reply with my usual, "Great, but I missed you."

I always miss Opal, even when she is with me. I miss my sister, the one who woke up my parents and I early on Christmas mornings with mega enthusiasm, even though she was older than me. My sister who painted bees on my bedroom ceiling and lady birds on all the cabinets in the kitchen. Opal, who read books as often as she breathed.

Opal.

She doesn't attend school anymore; Mum and Dad say that high school is a risk they cannot take. They say they don't want to put Opal under that type of pressure while she is unwell, that she can go back to school when she is ready. For everything Opal misses out on, it is

Beanie

because she is “too sick”. I wish I understood what was wrong with her. We used to be best friends, now I barely see her. This afternoon I decided I would rather get in trouble for not doing my homework, than shy away from Opal’s presence in the yard.

She is having a good day; she is smiling.

I drop my backpack in my bedroom and stroll into the front yard. Opal is sitting on an aging bench under our great tree. I call it the great tree because it is green and mossy, as if stuck in its own era. She has her head tilted up at the sun, her eyelids closed. I take a moment to remember the way she is in this moment- alive, awake, beautiful. Her pale skin lightly glows under the warmth of the sun. I sit down next to her as her eyes flutter open.

Luis - Friday

My friends and I were shooting sloppy spit balls at Beanie Verne. I’m the one who started it at the beginning of this year. They were originally meant for a boy a row ahead of her that had tripped Beanie over intentionally that day, but it landed on top of her hair instead. A couple boys behind me followed my unintentional lead and started firing their own. I didn’t feel brave enough to tell them to stop, that it was not meant for Beanie, but I didn’t want to look weak in front of my friends. I had always admired Beanie- that she could sit by herself every day and be as kind and thoughtful as she is.

That day, Beanie turned around and glanced at my friends, then her eyes drifted over to me. Her gentle face saddened as I imagine the invisible punch in the gut I must have hit her with. She turned around and dropped her head.

That was the last day Beanie smiled at me.

Beanie

Beanie runs off the bus as soon as the driver puts his foot on the brakes. She does this every day, it makes her look weird. Her backpack bobbles along with her and disappears through the gates to a property with weeds and flowers poking up from the ground everywhere. I remember when Beanie and I hung out after school on hot summer days – her entire family would join us in the front yard while we played in the dirt. We would sip on cold lemonade that her mum and Opal made in the mornings, and her Dad would weed the garden beds around the variety of exotic flowers and mow the lawn. Those days were full of fresh watermelon, laughter over board games and hiding in Opal's wardrobe when my parents came to pick me up. Though, they found me every time.

"I'm surprised Beanie can afford to come to school, her home looks like a junkyard," Jasper teases, his mouth full of *Jumpies*.

My stomach churns – *how could I possibly let people be mean to her? What have I become...?*

"You don't know her," I remark, Jasper and the rest of our flock throw disgusted looks at me, "just saying, have you ever tried being nice?"

On my left, Elliot laughs, "you sound like a girl. Stop being weak."

They're right; I shouldn't show them any of my feelings towards Beanie, or any feelings at all. It's not cool.

The bus comes to our neighbourhood of mundane houses. Elliot, Jasper and I get off the bus and head towards the lake.

Beanie - Friday

That night at the dinner table, accompanied by Mum's best dish; spaghetti, Opal announces that Ella's birthday party is tomorrow night. It shocks us all.

"It's going to be really fun, and I haven't seen her since last month. I can't miss her birthday – that would make me a shit best friend. I feel like I'll be okay to go," she explains. Mum and Dad glance at each other, and Dad says, "as long as you're careful."

Opal's smile is wide and shows a little piece of herb wedged between her front teeth. I shove a spoon of spaghetti into my mouth.

"What did you learn at school today, Kiddo?" Mum asks, turning towards me.

"Uhm..." I wrack around my brain for something interesting, "I learnt in Science that a flock of butterflies is called a kaleidoscope, and a group of caterpillars is called an army."

"Did you find out anything on Bee's," Dad jokes, and I consider throwing a piece of garlic bread at him.

"Actually, I did. Did you know that the queen bee lays up to two-thousand and five-hundred eggs a day during summer?"

Mum and Opal laugh, and Dad raises his eyebrows, "wow, that's a lot of kids!" we laugh in unison and we finish our plates in slurps and munches.

The night after, I sit in Opal's room and watch her apply makeup to her clear skin. Her mirror is spot-free, like the entirety of her bedroom. I lay on my stomach, hands propped underneath my chin, her fluffy white bed-spread beneath me. Opal draws on eyeliner, which makes her eyes look glamorous, and applies a glossy peach lip and powders her face. She looks stunning.

Opal gets up from her dresser and walks over to her wardrobe, “Bee, what do you think I should wear?” On her left, she holds a low-cut blue dress, and on her right, she holds a white jumpsuit that has cut-off sleeves.

“The jumpsuit, it’s pretty and you won’t get hot or cold in it,” I say, she smiles and slips it on. Opal matches it with black heels and her look is complete.

“You look amazing Opal, I really hope you have a good time.” Opal sits next to me on the bed, and senses that something’s up.

“Is everything okay?”

“You haven’t been out in a while,” I say. The last time Opal went out with friends was last year for a fundraiser. The photos that captured that thrilling day are plastered around her mirror.

“I know, which is why I’m excited to see them again,” Opal admitted. The doorbell rings and Mum calls out for Opal; “Ella’s here!” We both jump up and she nods at me on her way out the door – “There’s a bar of chocolate in my top draw for you. Love you,” and she disappears.

I was deep asleep in my cotton pyjamas and underneath my soft quilt when the banging at the front door startled our house awake. I stumbled out of bed and walked into the hallway – but Mum and Dad had bet me to it. Our oak door was open wide, and under the porch light outside stood two police officers.

“Sorry to wake you at this hour,” the lady officer with blonde hair started, “but are you the parents of Opal Verne?” I could hear Mum gulp in the pin-drop silence.

“Yes, is there something wrong?” Dad stutters, half asleep.

The officers look at each other – they're face growing mournsome. I recognise that look, and I'm not prepared for what comes next.

"We're very sorry. Something terrible has happened," the other officer explains as my body shuts off, tuning out the voices of sorrows and my parents shrieking cries.

Luis - Monday

My group gets on the bus before me, eager for tonight's soccer game. They head to the back row, but I ditch them to sit at the front. I want to sit with Beanie. Jasper turns around looking for me, and catches my eye, "what are ya sitting there for?"

"I have a headache," I say quickly, hoping to avoid the underlying answer. Jasper nods and takes his seat. I sigh and turn back around, searching for Beanie in the crowd of kids on the footpath.

Eventually, everyone clears the path and heads in their own directions. The automatic door closes, and the bus takes off down the street.

Then, I realise; Beanie never showed at school today.

Youth Writer (15- 24 years)

Bronze Winner

Rasandi Fernando
The Speech

The Speech

The crowd is silent, anticipating the performance she is about to give. Teresa Kay Williams had just moved to Australia (Campbelltown specifically) with her mother and little sister Penny all the way from Ireland. With just a week of settling in, she already off to school. Now she stands on the middle of the stage, looking down at all the eager faces waiting to see what she will do.

Her voice has failed her. Her knees are shaking and her hands grip the microphone to stop trembling. The speech that she has memorized seemed to have turned into a hazy blur with words floating around aimlessly in her brain. Her stomach churns for the hundredth time that day. Forget butterflies, her stomach has been infested by raging, storming sense of nausea. She opens her mouth to speak but her tiny, frail; quavering voice has drowned in the silence. No one can hear her. The teacher gestures for her to start speaking but she can't. Her vision goes blurry with tears and the microphone has been abandoned. Her footsteps echo through the silence of the Auditorium.

As she walked home she replayed the scene over and over again in her head as she kicked nonexistent pebbles. Useless. She thought to herself. You could have just given the stupid speech. But something about those faces waiting to see what she was going to do, something about them unnerved her. When she looked around, her brain would turn into mush while the bile rose to her throat. She would cough and try to force the words to bend to her will. Her head is a chaotic rush of frenzied thoughts and ideas waiting impatiently to be let out. When she opens her mouth to speak, the words come rushing out but they stop when they hit a dam. An inhuman sense of nervousness has taken over the only sane part of her head.

The next day as she headed to school, she decided she would lay low for a few weeks until the whole event had blown over. The clock kept ticking closer and closer to her doom. There were only five more minutes until the dreaded bell rings. The rusty old bell began its incoherent ringing and hordes of relentless, nearly-feral students rush to the doors in a battle to get inside, once again ignoring the half-hearted efforts of the exhausted teachers.

As she painfully makes her way into the classroom, a wave of silence washes over the normally chatty class. She developed a sudden interest in her shoes as she walked, slowly, towards her table. All the glances felt like swords, stabbing her skin. The eyes burned holes in her back. The whispers were poison, oozing into her ears. The frozen lump of anxiety in the back of her neck turned colder as paranoid thoughts slowly fill up her head. It didn't help that the teacher told her to come see her privately. Fear's cold finger traced down her spine and she shivered.

"I know yesterday's speech didn't go entirely as planned," the teacher started carefully, "but it shouldn't discourage you from trying again. I understand that you are a naturally shy person but you should step out of your comfort zone a bit. The other students won't judge you for who you are. They're mature enough to understand that everybody is different. They won't laugh at you, you'll still have friends, but never ever be afraid to speak out to the world; to let everybody else know what you're feeling, thinking; to show them your perspectives and your opinions; because what you say isn't more or less important than what anybody else does. Your opinions aren't worth more or less than anybody else's, so raise your voice." And Teresa Kay Williams smiled for the first time that day.

The crowd is silent, anticipating the performance she is about to give. Teresa Kay Williams had recently moved to Australia (Campbelltown specifically) with her mother and little sister Penny all the way from Ireland. With just a week of settling in, and another week of

encouragement from her persistent teacher, she's back at school. Now she stands on the middle of the stage, looking down at all the eager faces waiting to see what she will do.

Junior Writer (7-14 years)

Gold Winner

Cleo Murray
The Land of Silence

The Land of Silence

Lucina had just borrowed her ten books from library - no wait, that wasn't enough books. Wait, errmmm thirty books, yes that was right. Anyway, she had just finished a book called "Science - A Complete Encyclopedia!"

Then she picked up another book called "The Land of Silence".

Suddenly, bam!

The book opened by itself onto page 47. There, on the page, was a picture of a queen. She had long black robes, pure white hair and a red stare. Oh that stare! It could freeze the strongest man in the world in five seconds!

Suddenly, woosh!

Lucina vanished from the library!

Lucina was falling through a world of light when suddenly smash! Everything went dark.

Hours later, Lucina awoke.

She saw a giant mother bird in front of her! She screamed and tried to get away but the bird held her tight.

"Where am I?" she asked the giant mother bird. "You are in Campbelltown," said the bird, "otherwise known as the Land of Silence. Now we cannot speak unless we are in hiding."

Then Lucina asked curiously, "Why can't you speak unless you are in hiding?"

"Because," the bird began, "because Campbelltown used to be a happy place, ruled by the fairies Hope, Grace and Faith, until an enchantress overthrew them and now that she rules, she believes that she is the only one that has the right to speak."

Lucina stood up and said, "Now that I trust you, my name is Lucina Bell." "Lucina Bell," the bird said, "Bell was Faith the fairy's last name, so that means it is your job to overthrow the enchantress!"

So a few hours later Lucina was getting ready to go. After the bird had given her a rucksack, she set off.

Finally she had reached the castle at the top of Morialta.

There were no guards at the gate so she walked slowly inside. Finally she reached the throne room. Suddenly she remembered something the bird had told her. "The queen's stare will turn you into stone if you stare her in the eye." She knew that she must free the Land of Silence from the queen.

Suddenly she gasped. Someone was looking at her from a throne from the front of the room! She quickly looked down.

The queen said, "So you're the girl that's come to defeat me. I have been watching the readers of this book for years, but none of them were right for me to defeat. But you are perfect." Then she snapped her fingers, click! A guard ran up and she said, "Take this wretched girl and put her in a cell in the dungeon."

He nodded and took Lucina by hand and forced her to the dungeon. When Lucina was alone in her cell, she took out the book "The Land of Silence" to see if there was anything in there. There was. She read it and smiled - it was just what she needed.

Later the queen requested to have her company. As she walked towards the throne, she got ready to sing and before the queen could start to use her stare, she stared to sing.

Lucina's rich, harmonious voice swept through the hall.

All of the guards stared in awe.

Suddenly the queen remembered to use her stare. She stared Lucina in the eye but as it started to engulf her, it broke off as Lucina sang the last note and the queen burst into a million pieces!

Once Lucina made the journey back to mother bird's nest, she put the "Land of Silence" book out in front of her and said goodbye to mother bird. She disappeared.

As she sat back down in the library, she sighed happily. She had given the people in the Campbelltown a chance to raise their voices and now they could laugh, play, sign and talk forever.

Now everything was the way it was supposed to be.

Junior Writer (7-14 years)

Silver Winner

Gamagedara Mayumdi Thasanya
A Dairy Animal's Life

A Dairy Animal's Life

(Warning: Some readers may find this text distressing)

Hi! As an independent, I would like to draw your kind attention to the main farming industry in Australia. Today I am going to show you a dairy animal's life at a farm, from cows to goat to sheep. You may think this is all untrue but in fact it is all true. I have been staying at a farm for a week and saw what is happening around the farm to tell you information. For some head start information the farm I was staying in is called The Smiths Family Farm which has been running for generations. I could explore this farm for a couple of days and then started exploring a few farms that surround The Smiths Family Farm.

While I was walking around the farm I could see some good things that the farm's staff were doing to help the cows, like feeding them on time so they won't get hungry or starve, leave water tubs in the grass and fill them up if they are empty so the cows don't get dehydrated, bath the cows so they are clean and not smelly and unclean, and give them freedom to graze on the fields and relax but only a few farms do this to their cows and farm animals, mainly the small scale farms do these good things to their farm animals.

While I was walking I also saw lots of bad things happening in the large scale farms, like no freedom to go outside and just have to stay in the shed for the rest of their lives, to get milk, farmers by force pull out immature babies of their mums tummy so they can produce milk faster, also when a calf is born the calf is only kept with its mother for one hour before it is thrown into the truck as dog food but this only happens to males as females are kept to produce milk for the farm, farmers also feed cows fat and heavy foods so they become fat and are ready to be made into meat or beef for us to eat. One important note is that it is not just cows that are harmed there are many other dairy animals like sheep, goat, buffalo's and even oxen.

My feelings about this situation are very sad for they are also living beings and have a right to live as we do. To me it's like killing a person in my family or someone that I love. When a calf is taken away from their mother you can see tears forming in the mothers eyes. Imagine about what you would feel about all of this. What would you feel if you were in the shoes of this dairy animal? I bet everyone would feel sad about these events and hope they wouldn't be happening but it still is.

My personal solution to this is to build small scale farms to reduce harm to dairy animals so others can have a job as well or career and use less machines to have hands on experience with dairy animals. I think small scale farms are doing the right thing and everyone needs to follow to make life fair for all living beings. So raise your voice for those that need changing.

Apply the Golden rule for all.....

