



Food for Thought

A collection of short stories and poems - 2018



SPEAK UP
A Voice for
Rural Communities





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Food for Thought

A collection of short stories and poems – 2018



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Primary

Grandpa's Life in the Campaspe Region

As Grandpa arrives in his hovercraft, Cameron runs to the front door in excitement! Grandpa comes inside and Cameron begs for Grandpa to tell one of his stories about his childhood, growing up in the Campaspe Region. Grandpa sat down in his old, but sturdy rocking chair and his tale began...

It was the year 2018, my birthday had just been and I had turned 11 years old. We lived in Echuca, one of the fifteen towns making up the Campaspe Region. A region that was naturally beautiful, warm, and inviting to all. There was always something to do or see in Echuca. Every Saturday, my father would take me to the Port of Echuca where we would ride on the PS Pevensey. We would cruise along the mighty Murray, Australia's longest

river. Dad would always tell me tales on how Echuca meant "meeting of the waters" and how Echuca was situated closer to the junction of the Goulburn, Campaspe, and Murray Rivers.

When Christmas arrived, a family tradition was to visit the Kyabram Fauna Park and see all of the 500 varieties of birds and animals. Kyabram is the second largest town in the Campaspe Region and home to the best vanilla slice. My mother always insisted that we take a walk through the town hall. My mother and sister loved that this hall was home to the amazing "A stitch back in time" – Isobel Harvey's collection of Edwardian clothing and accessories. If we were ever stuck for something to do, we would just visit the community information centre which was also the town's art gallery.

My most favourite holiday adventure had to be going to stay with Uncle Barry and Aunt Patricia on their dairy farm in



Lockington. When I wasn't helping Aunt Pat milk the cows, Uncle Barry would take me to fish in the depths of the extensive channel network in the middle of town, where we would try and catch or see the Loch Ness Yabby. Another one of my favourite things to do whilst visiting my Uncle and Aunt was going to see the Lockington and District Living Heritage Complex. This was a local history museum featuring a variety of heritage farming equipment. It was also home to the sculpture of Lockington's Shearing Champion, Kevin Sarre.

But there were challenges within the region. My parents would constantly remind me how important school was; as dad had repeatedly read that there were low levels of education across the region's population. Another challenge faced by our farming friends within the community was that it was becoming increasingly difficult to access water for their agricultural needs and affording water in general was a constant challenge. We were not sure if it really helped but we were always water conscious within the family home.

"Dinner's ready!" Diana, Cameron's mother called out. "Wow Grandpa, that was so interesting. I love our region even more now!" Cameron says. Grandpa chuckles as they head to eat dinner.

Cora Wilson, Year 5, Echuca Twin Rivers Primary School

Riley The Rice Seed.

It's strange. It's big. It's loud. My name is Riley. No, I'm not a person. No I'm not an animal... I'm a rice seed. I lived on a peaceful farm called Willum Park. There were lots of animals there too. Like Frogs, Dragonflies and (one I don't see often) Mr. Bittern.

And the old grumpy animal likes to take care of me - makes sure the water is right, keeps out animals and keeps out naughty weeds from growing in my space. I

was having a great day sunbathing, when all of a sudden ... A BIG RED CHOPPING MACHINE TOOK ME! I was in the back seat and the old grumpy animal was looking at me through glass. So I took a sleep.

When I woke up I was on a treadmill that was carrying me along. AND THEN A MEAN METAL HAND TOOK MY CLOTHES OFF. I WAS NAKED! I thought it couldn't get any worse. Anyway. I was dropped into a huge machine. When I came out, I was shiny! Then I was inside another big machine with lots of lights and electronics that magically removed anything that didn't look like me. Okay, so that wasn't SO bad. Then I see one of my mates.

"Hey Brownny!" I shout over to the other side of the room as I see him.

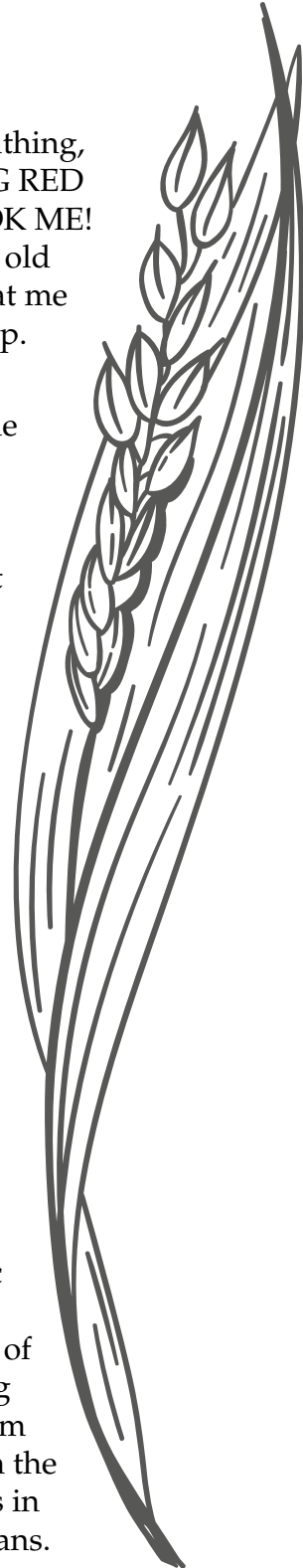
"Oh hey Riley!" he replies.

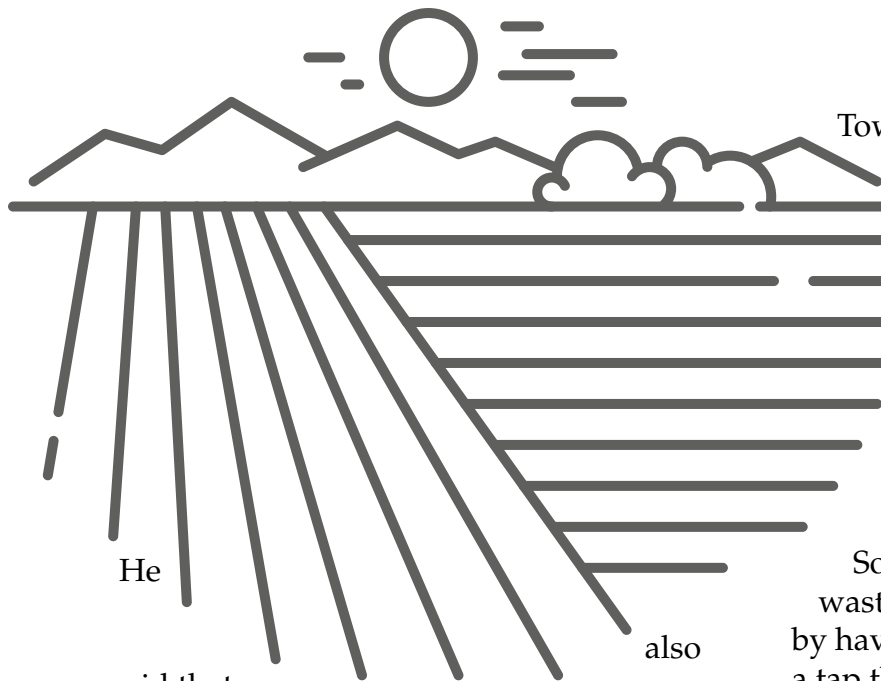
And then an animal picked me up and put me in a plastic room with lots of other white rice seeds. But I overhear one of the big animals say something about this bag of rice goes from one of the biggest rice mills in the world to one of fifty countries in the world - whatever that means.

Another animal carried me to a big building. On the top of the building it had some weird symbols. Here, I'll draw them for you.

S H O P

When I got there I realised it was a neighborhood. There were chips, eggs, water, chicken etc. I made a new mate by the way. His name was Breadwood. He was a brown coloured square shape thing that was very nice. He said he went through the factory two days ago.





He

also

said that he used to be a grain of wheat. But what grabbed my attention the most is that he came from the paddock beside me! Then a big animal walks in. But not just any old animal. IT'S THEGRUMPY OLD ANIMAL! He grabs the plastic room to a table. He hands over my plastic room to a female and she says-

"That'll be \$3.90 thanks."

The grumpy old animal hands over a purple piece of paper and groans - "Thanks."

Well I'm back home. I got sent on a journey to one of the biggest rice mills in the southern cross. Except I'm a little different. At that moment I'm in a dark cave with some other people.

Like, Eggwood, Breadwin and Chicka.

Jackson Scoullar

Speak Up - Open Letter

Imagine Australia with no farms, no farmers and no food. This is what will happen if the drought continues. I am writing this to explain the devastating effects the drought is having on our local community and what you can do to help.

Do you even know what is happening? There is a drought throughout Australia. Many farmers are losing jobs, animals are dying by the minute and crops are too. How can we let this happen?

Towns are trying to help by saving water with things such as having to have 5 minute showers. Lots of farmers are getting very stressed because there is no water for the animals or to water crops. It would be magnificent if people that don't live on a farm knew what it is like for the farmers during a drought.

So what can you do? You stop wasting water and start saving water by having short showers and turning off a tap that you see running by itself. You can Speak Up, so people know that this is happening and see its impact. I hope that in the future we have more rain and we all stop wasting water.

Angus Waters

SPEAK UP!

Speak up for our farming community

Protect our livestock

Encourage others to care for wildlife

Actions are stronger than words

Keep our farmers safe

Understand farming needs

People need to fight back for farming rights

Alex Harvey

My Letter

Dear Editor,

I am writing to tell you that farmers need more money for water for their farms so they can feed all of our nation. Our country all needs to help by donating some money.

Every animal needs a home and some of them cannot have one if the wheat is too dry. Animals are starving because they don't have enough food. This is because farmers don't have enough water for their crops and to grow feed for the animals.

All of the people in our community should help and donate some money for the farmers. The reason is because all the milk, rice, steak, chicken, chops, wheat and lots more all come from the farmers and we should all appreciate all of the work that they do for us.

All of the people in our region should help the farmers and support them for all of the things they have made for us. We should donate money for crops.

There has been a lot of drought in Australia, and now our region which means there hasn't been much rain and all the crops have gotten dry. So please everyone make a change and help the farmers make their food by donating money and giving them machines for their wheat and everything else.

Sincerely, Luella Astill

Deni Couplet

*We have a river called the Murray
The crops will grow in a hurry
In the fields, the crops will grow
Then you can enter them in the Deni Show
Or you can sell them in a shop
Then they will be on a shelf at the top
And you will smile
Because they're in supermarket aisles
But we cannot smile
And put our crops in the aisle
Because our water is low
So our crops won't grow
Beau Nielsen*

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THE NATIONALS *for Regional NSW*

Austin Evans MP
MEMBER FOR MURRAY

**If you would like an
appointment to discuss
any future ideas, projects
or issues you may have
please contact my office.**



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Authorised by Austin Evans MP
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Speak up Speak up

Farmers are important for us as they produce our food.

All around the world our produce is exported.

Rain is important for farmers to grow their crops.

Most of our food comes from farmers.

Every day farmers work hard to produce our food.

Rural communities would struggle without farmers.

Support our farmers and campaign for more water.

Bethany McCurdy

We Need Water

We need water to survive and grow crops!

Enjoy what we have and help the farmers!

Need water for farming and animals!

Easy is the opposite of what farming is!

Eating food that comes from farms is what we do every day!

Damage is what happens when we have NO water left!

We have the biggest rice mill in the Southern Hemisphere!

Abilities of farmers are extremely helpful!

Take what you have and be grateful!

Eat local and use water right!

Reduce wasting water!

Guess what? Most of us take water for granted, don't look after our water systems and pollute our dams, rivers and world of all our beautiful oceans. About 400 BILLION gallons of water is used each day. Can you believe that? The basin is home to 2 million people and covers 14% of Australian landmass. That's amazing

isn't it? Can you believe all this? I can't! I just need help to get the word out and help save water and most of all help farms that are going through terrible drought situations.

You can help by saving water by turning off the tap when brushing your teeth, have shorter showers, rinse the dishes and most importantly plug the sink in so you can wash other dishes after you're done. Then the water you are saving can be used by farmers who need it so desperately.

Chloe MacKnight

Speak Up

Farmers need help with their crops right now because there is a big drought going on right now so they need our help!

Our farmers need more water because we are all scared that their crops will cease to grow which means we will have no

wheat, rice, canola, cotton and more!

Our farmers are going downhill, there's no water to help the crops which means the farmers can't feed their livestock so we won't have any meat to eat.

Dairy cows are running out of food and water, so they don't have enough energy to produce milk, and people sometimes have milk with their drinks or food.

For a long time Australia has had a drought, so farmers are suffering just as much as people living in town are. I know we can make a difference, because everyone can decrease the amount of water usage each day.

Our farmers need as much water as we do, so we need to be able to supply that, and we can, because we can make a difference.

Right now our local farmers have an extremely short amount of water, so that



means they need a whole lot more, they need all the extra water they can get now, because they need to feed their livestock so we can eat.

The animals are not getting enough water or food, therefore we're not getting any meat, wool, eggs and much more and we need most of those to live each day.

Hay can easily be donated to farmers so they can feed their livestock for all of us, but we don't all have to eat meat each day or every few days.

On a regular basis, farmers are asking the council for extra help with all of the livestock or crops. Sometimes the council can't help farmers as much as they want to because they might have too many farmers to help. So when the council is unable to help that's where people in town can go and help farmers for a day or two

Understanding what the farmers need is important because I know people need milk, eggs, cotton, wheat and meat.

Governments need to be more aware of what our local farmers are going through each day, week and now months. Because we need to make a difference for our farmers.

Help our farmers in any way we can which means we can save more water each day and donate hay to our farmers.

Towns and even cities can make a difference and help all the farmers around us become stronger and stronger so the farmers have great crops to harvest and healthy livestock for all of us to eat.

We can make a difference, but only if we believe in each other, the farmers, but most importantly ourselves.

We Can, And Will, Make a Difference

Sophie Norris

Please Donate

Lots of cattle and sheep are in danger!

It would be amazing if you could donate money towards a bale,

Victims of the drought.

Everyone relies on the farmers,

Soon enough hopefully this drought will be over.

To donate got to <http://www.buyabale.com.au/donate>

Over 1 million farmers don't have the money to feed livestock.

Can you help us?

Knowing the fact that over 1 million farmers are having to euthanize their cattle is very sad.

Stella White



Year 7

The Farmer

It's a hot arvo, my bones are aching, I feel
dirt stuck in my boots

Splinters all through my fingers from the
old wooden shovel

I see crops as far as the eye can see

The smell of dust and dirt following up
through my nose

I hear the young pup bark at every little
thing

I go to calm him down with the feel of
soft dark brown fur running through my
fingers

My eyes start to water as some dirt and
dust particles fly in them

I wipe them with my old hard cracked
fingers

With the feel of crease stains on my
crinkled face and the wind blowing my
hat off

*Hannah Hetherington, Deniliquin High
School*

Katie's Question?

G'day I'm Katie, I live on a dairy farm
with my Dad, Mum, brother Jack and two
sisters Bella and Halle (of course I am the
youngest). We live around 35km from the
closest town and it's hard for my siblings
and I to get to school without being really
tired or just plain annoyed about the
beginning of our day.

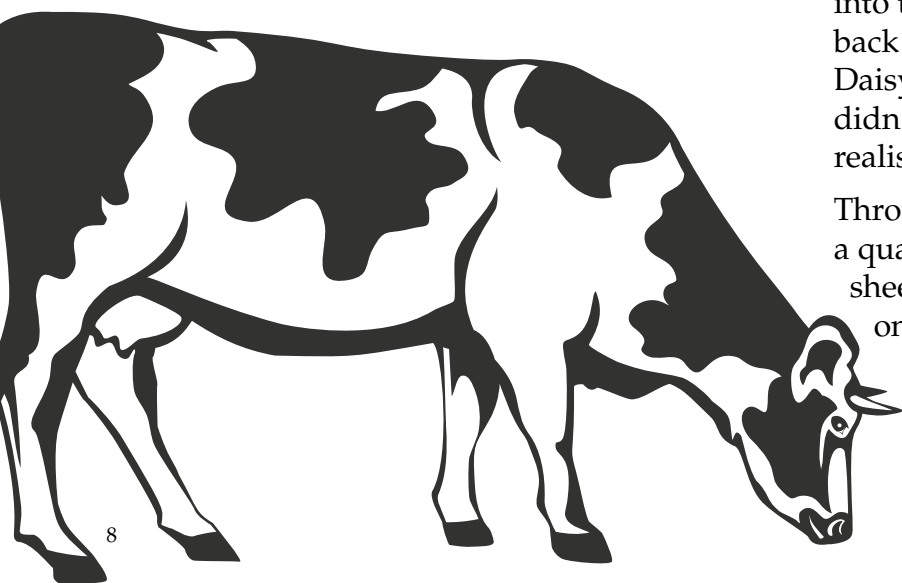
Lately my Dad and Mum have been
really worried and I just can't figure
out why. I've tried asking but they said
it doesn't matter. I know something's
wrong because mum keeps crying in her
bedroom.

Dad says we are only allowed 4-minute
showers and they are extremely short
showers, it takes me about 2 minutes to
get the water to the correct temperature.

I've seen dead cows by the fence close
to where the dam is but there isn't any
water in it anymore. About 2 weeks ago
dad took my favourite cow Daisy that I
fed carrots and grass to every night, down
into town with Pop. Once they came
back Dad and Pop said that they took
Daisy to a vacation down by the beach. I
didn't think much of it at that time until I
realised that Daisy won't be coming back.

Throughout the past 3 weeks we have lost
a quarter of our cattle and one third of our
sheep, I'm sure there is something going
on but I still don't know what.

Mum has now got a job at the school
as a student support teacher, I didn't



know she has had training but I guess so. I don't understand why mum isn't helping on the farm, maybe she is getting sick of living with all the cows and that's why she is getting rid of them.

Dad has been out at the farm for days and he hasn't come inside, Pop says that he wants to make sure the cows are alright. Nanny has been driving him sandwiches out on the tractor. On Saturday I went with nanny out to dad and all the grass was dead, so were some sheep and even more cows. I thought dad was looking after the farm?

I still don't know what's going on.

At school, on the news, in the shops everyone's talking about some drought that's affecting all farmers, and that's when I suddenly realised that our farm is in danger of running out of water. Straight away once we got home I asked Nanny or Pop to take me out to dad on the tractor. Pop took me down and I explained everything I knew about the drought.

Dad told me slowly that he was rounding up all the animals to take and sell, we were going to move and sell the farm.

That's how my family and I ended up in this new house in the middle of town. I miss the farm but now mum and dad both have jobs and everything is still going well and we are now a sort of happy family.

Abby Whitehorn, Deniliquin High School

Dry Times

I walk around the dry, drought ridden paddock, the farmer is walking the sheep dog there, he's excited to finally round up the sheep.

I stand there as he lets go of the leash, letting the dog run his heart out. As I watch him go I start to sweat, it is hot out and I start to drift off, the dirt feels different, the sheep are happy, and I'm not sweating.

As I come back from my daydream I realise that the farmer is calling me over.

AGSPARES

Farm & Industrial Supplies

201-205 Barham Rd
DENILIQUIN NSW 2710
Ph: (03) 5881 1255

One sheep has collapsed from the heat. I have to carry him back to the shed myself, and the sheep was probably dead.

Zoe Holloway, Deniliquin High School

Rain

Maddy came home from school with a massive grin on her face and told her mother how good it was to finally have 6 weeks of no school ahead of her. She could have friends over, go skiing on the river in her new ski boat and relax, not having to worry about any school homework or assignments.

Maddy had already arranged for Ella, her best friend, to come over and they could go for a swim and go kayaking on the river. Maddy's mum said that would be alright, except that it could rain tomorrow. Maddy told her mum that it'll be alright, it won't rain.

The next day Maddy woke up to the sound of the patter of rain hitting the roof and her window. Maddy walked tiredly out to the lounge room and looked out the big windows. The sky was grey and heavy rain splattered against the window. The wind was making the trees bend over backwards and leaves and sticks were flying everywhere. Maddy frowned and thought to herself that her day with Ella was ruined. With nothing to do Maddy sat staring at the window, just watching the rain fall in front of her eyes.

The next week had passed and the rain was still pouring down. The river was filling up and each day it climbed the river banks higher and higher. Maddy's dad came home from work with lots of sand filled bags and he started putting them up against the house. Maddy wondered why her dad was doing this? She asked him and he said there was a very high chance it was going to flood.

Two weeks had passed and the river was about 10 metres from her front door. The rain had stopped and the trees were half

submerged, she could finally have Ella over. Maddy and Ella went kayaking in between the trees and found a little bird's nest floating. It had 4 little eggs in it, so the girls kayaked it back and put it back into a tree. They hopes the parents of the eggs would find it.

Maddy's now had a fun school holiday story to tell all of her friends back at school. It was such a weird and amazing thing to be a part of, Maddy thought.

Annie Harvey, Deniliquin High School

No water

I could see the vast plain never ending in the distance with a single tree sticking out like a sore thumb with the shed the only protection from the sun.

I could hear crickets chirping and the wind blowing hot air into my face with the smell of a dead animal hanging in the air.

The dust blowing into my face. I was hot and thirsty and very lonely no one out there for kilometres and every thing was dead, no one in sight except a single tree and shed with no water.

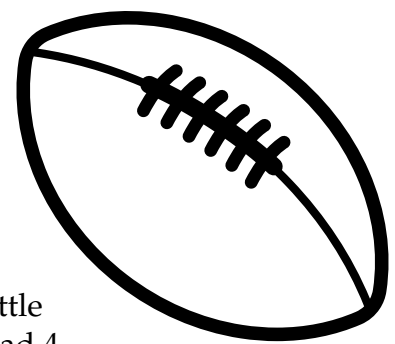
The water gone, never to be seen again.

Tom Charlton, Deniliquin High School

The Sporting Community

It was another early morning on Saturday. We had a big game ahead of us against an in-form team Tongala. I'm feeling mixed emotions before the game, such as very big nerves like butterflies in my tummy and excitement.

It was early in the second quarter and the ball was in dispute. I look and yelled "Charlie's footy"; there was an opposition player about to pick it up, but so was I. He bumped into me full pelt with his shoulder and I fell to the ground with a



big bang. I was out. They had to stop play. The opposition player had broken his shoulder and I had to go off. I came back on in the third. I ended up kicking 4 and we won. We went into the rooms and sang the song with joy. The coaches had their speech then gave out the awards.

This meeting is about next season. We won't have enough players which means we're not going to have Deni Rams any more. We have had a few people coming up and saying they have some suggestions to keep the club going. I think we might ask a club near by and see if they want to amalgamate into one team. If this works we will be able to have enough players.

"We are going to amalgamate with Blighty." Our home ground will be still at Rams. We will be in the same league and versus the same teams.

It's the new season and we are in the top 4. At the end of the home and away seasons we have finished 5th. That means we have made the finals. This is great for our community because our club is keeping the town going.

In the finals we won the first game but unfortunately we lost the second. That doesn't matter because we were proud to have a team but most of all make the finals.

Charlie Hillier, Deniliquin High School

Deniliquin, Our Home

Deniliquin is the Ute Muster capital of the world,

with circle work, blue singlets, singers and crowds galore.

It is the Ute on the Pole, the rodeo and the Fishing Classic.

Deniliquin is the Edward River, with swimming, fishing, skiing and house boats.

It is river walks with kindness rocks and McLean Beach.

Deniliquin is sport; AFL, netball, cricket and basketball,

Tennis, the golf club and croquet, the social lives of many.

Deniliquin is farms; wheat, rice, cereal, dairy, cattle and pigs.

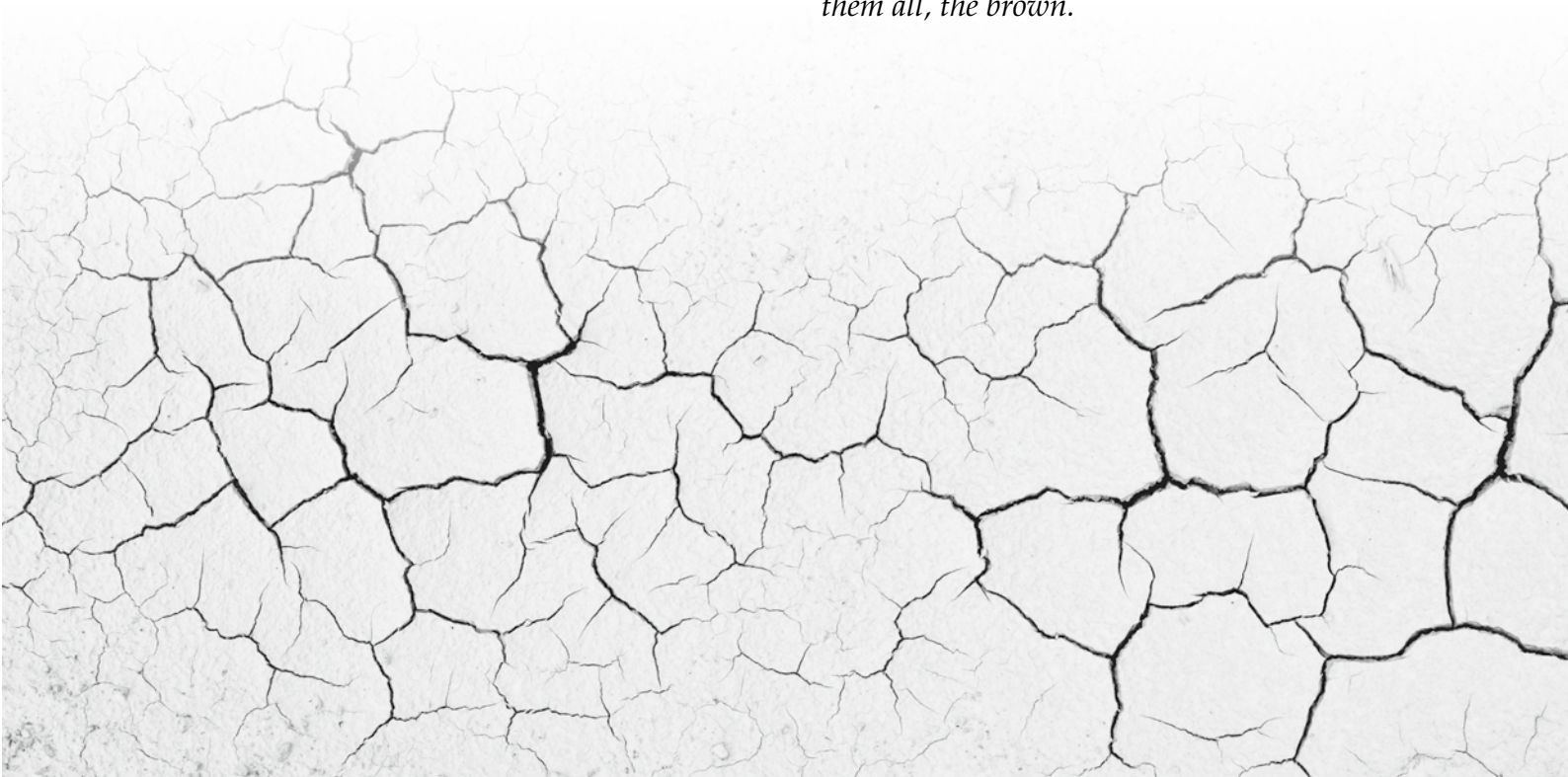
Water is our life line.

Deniliquin is the Truck Expo, the Cruising Nationals, the Sheep Expo and the Show N Shine.

It is the Pretty Pine Father's Day Market, the Conargo Mother's Day Market and Naponda Farmers' Market.

Deniliquin is the local wildlife; the roos and foxes, emus and echidnas,

Ducks, platypus, koalas, rabbits and snakes; the red-bellied black, the tiger and the king of them all, the brown.



*It is the cockatoos in the Gulpa Forest,
the hawks and wedge-tail
eagles over the plains.*

*Deniliquin is the Easter
Art Show, Muso Night, the
Mayor's Christmas Party and
Carols by Candlelight.*

*It is dust storms, floods
and droughts, and hairy
panic aplenty.*

Deniliquin is our town, our home.

***Sara, Drew, Alisha and Cyrus,
Deniliquin High School Support Class
(Year 7 and 8)***

Travelling

In 1953 my Great Grandparents moved to Australia from Europe due to my Great Grandad getting a job in Deniliquin, They went on a boat as big as a house, sailing across the ocean.

When they arrived they bought a big lot to run a dairy farm to provide milk for families and their own. They had eight kids to help milk the cows.

And now the dairy farm is just a big building owned by my uncle and is no longer a dairy farm. He now farms cattle and crops.

Monique Flannigan, Deniliquin High School

The Dry Land

No rain to be seen,

The water had left,

it was not coming back.

In a few days the birds have left

All wild life was slowly dying.

From green to yellow to yellow to brown,

All I could dream was rain pouring down.

One glass of icy cold water would make my day,

The bore water was smelly and dreadful,

It smelt just like my dad's dirty socks.

*The once fat cow called Daisy
Soon turned into an underfed
and skinny cow.*

Days and weeks had passed,

No rain to be seen,

Still drinking bore water

*But tomorrow was going to be
the day.*

The day for the rain.

The day which I would never forget.

The day I could stop drinking bore water.

The day the birds come and

We saddle up the horses,

to move the cattle,

The ground is dry the ground is flat,

Try to move to cattle to the yards,

But we can't work in the heat,

Our famers pray for it to rain,

*So that we can grow crops and grain for them
to eat,*

There is nothing for the cattle to eat,

Even the grass is crunching under their feet,

*We start to get thirsty there's not much to
drink,*

The dams are starting to dry,

Our hay supply is getting low,

*The sheep need shearing but it's too hot to
work,*

So we wait for night to come,

Maybe then we can get something done,

The dams are thirsty for rain,

*The moaning of the cows waiting to get
milked,*

I can hear the milk trucks coming already,

The gust of wind brings up the dust,

This makes it hard to see,

Rebecca Fraser, Deniliquin High School

Dry Paddocks

I look around and see dry paddocks, no food for the sheep as they walk around searching for some dinner.

You can hear the sheep baa as the wind blows, I breathe in smelling sheep poo as I do. I see a sad man sitting on a red grain holder.

The sun is blazing, no sign of rain. Farmers all around here are in drought. No crops, no food, no money.

Everyone is trying to help but not much can be done.

Eliza Bradford, Deniliquin High School

My Home

My home that thrives through summer,

With the Edward River that entertains all.

As the sun begins to rage

People tip toe along the hot sand.

As the day continues campgrounds fill,

The beach is quickly plastered with people.

As fishermen set afloat for a long day out,

And the keen skies show off their boats.

Mothers are down the street to catch up with some friends,

Relieved to finally get away.

As the sun sets and the animals nest,

People slowly waddle off the beaches suffering from severe sunburn and chaffing

When night comes families huddle around a table refuelling themselves after the day.

Campers try and outlast the mozzies waving their hands like crazy,

But are defeated and head inside to bed.

All of this repeats until the summer holiday ends.

But when my town finally winds down,

Utes with fox tails hanging off the aerials and stickers on windows come marching down our street.



Branch Manager/Wool

Clyde McKenzie.....0427 842 342

Livestock Agents

Jason Andrews0428 629 399

John Fitzpatrick.....0408 500 182

Dick Douglas.....0412 982 366

Ian Geddes.....0428 577 855

Agronomists

Adam Dellwo.....0417 576 664

Matt Barker0428 329 565

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Agri Finance Manager

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Sale Support Officers

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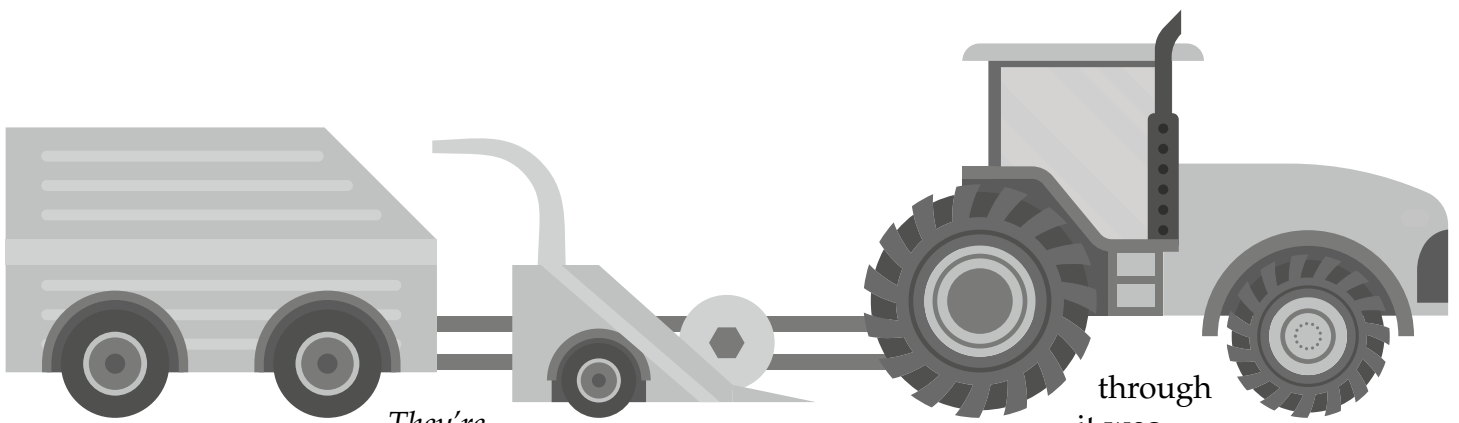
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Email: deniliquin2@elders.com.au

Supporting Rural Australia!





*They're
heading for the*

*Ute Muster site,
Where music blares,
Bull buck,
And people come to show off their utes.
As people of all ages start to gather the
entertainment starts,
With heart pumping rides and bumper cars,
Kids, ladies and gentlemen race to cut wood,
People line their utes up competing for the
best,
People buy blue singlets to participate in a
record
As food is steadily stuffed into people's
mouths.
The music is constantly blaring,
With famous people or bands pelting out a
tune,
Getting people out of their seats and having a
sing along or dance.
My town is always busy,
There is never a dull moment,
With sporting events, fetes and more keeping
me busy.
My town is the place that I love,
I wouldn't change a thing,
My town is where I have lived all my life and I
hope that won't
change.*

Elena Mulham, Deniliquin High School

On The Farm

I was feeling happy that all the crop
was coming up well, the water rushing

*through
it was
cold, wind*

pushing up against my hands. The rice
and feeling the cold condensation - this
has been one of the best years.

You could smell the water and the crop,
it smelled good. The sheep in the other
paddock had lots of wool on them and
will be ready to shear in a few weeks and
also ready to be sold are the cows as they
have been fattened up probably to be
killed by other farmers.

**Miller Fitzpatrick, Deniliquin High
School**

My Farm - 'Granada'

*Woof, woof- I can hear Molly barking excitedly
at the sheep.*

I'm on my horse,

Mustering them.

I get off my horse.

*And I look around at the dusty, dirty and dry
paddocks.*

We start penning up and drafting the sheep.

I get the ear tags ready;

It's lamb marking time.

*Vroom, vroom- I can hear the New Holland
t7-220 start up,*

I can smell the dust,

I can feel the bare, water - lacking ground

Beneath my feet.

I get the canola seed,

And I help Dad fill up the air-seeder.

I jump into the tractor with Dad,

We head to the canola paddock;

*It's sowing time.
 I hear the clippers start up,
 I can see the sheep all daggy and woolly.
 I quickly get the broom and sweep up the belly
 and the dags.
 I open up the Esky and get my Vegemite
 Sandwich out,
 It's finally smoko time.
 I pen up the final sheep for the day;
 It's shearing time.
 Vrooom, Vrooom, I can hear the header and the
 chaser bin.
 I can smell the dust the machinery is making
 As the rice is being harvested.
 I can feel the heat of the sun beaming down on
 the paddock.
 I get on my motorbike
 And ride down to the rice paddock.
 Into the truck I get.
 Dad and I are off to the rice mill.
 The rice mill is packed with twenty trucks
 in front of us;
 It's harvesting time.
 I can hear the galahs squawking,
 The boats roaring,
 I can see the dry land.
 I can feel the heat of the sun
 Shining down on the dusty plains.
 I can't smell any rain,
 All I can smell is dust.
 This is my life,
 This is where I live,
 The Riverina.*

Hannah Dunmore, Deniliquin High School

Drought

I wake up once again to a hot house, my
 dooner's kicked off and I've only got my

sheet left on, I'm sweating like a pig. I get
 up in my boxers and go to the cool kitchen
 to have breakfast.

I get dressed and then put on my muddy
 boots to go help dad in the shed. This is
 what I do nearly every weekend morning.
 It only takes about 10-20 minutes until I
 pull off my jumper and I'm in singlet and
 shorts.

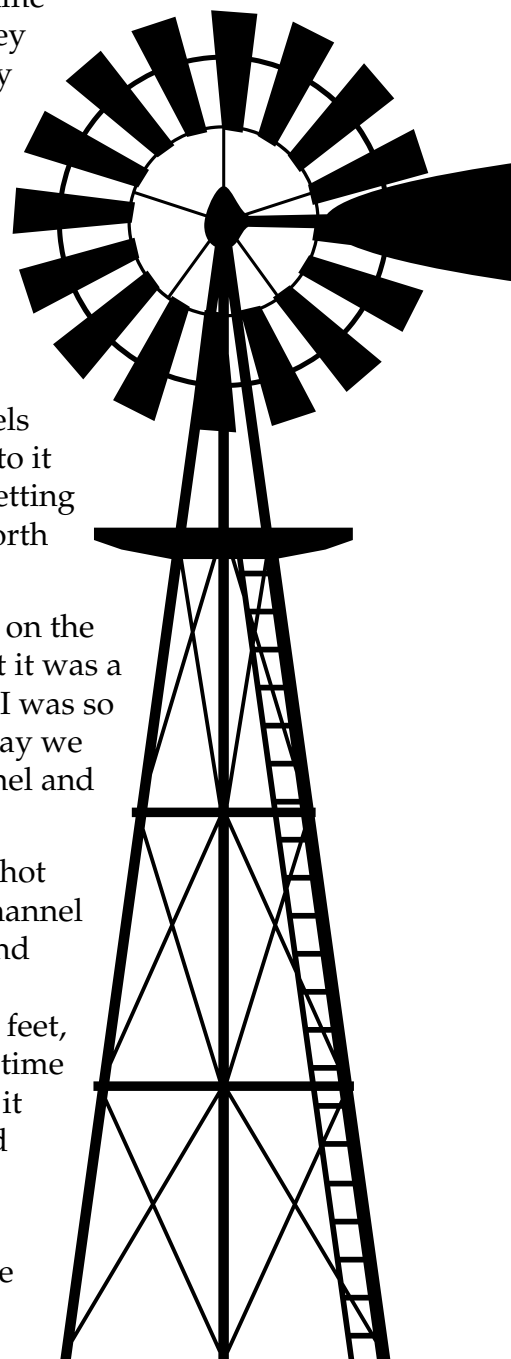
My brother and sister finally come outside
 and nag me to play with them while I'm
 in the middle of helping dad. When I'm
 free I get a zooper dooper out the freezer
 and jump on the tramp with them.

I love spending time
 with them but they
 get annoying very
 quickly. We have
 a leather couch
 and the lounge
 room's always
 the coolest room
 in the house. I
 sit on it to cool
 down but when I
 try to get up it feels
 like I'm glued onto it
 and my back is getting
 ripped off, it's worth
 it though.

I woke up to rain on the
 tin roof, I thought it was a
 dream, it wasn't. I was so
 happy, the next day we
 went to the channel and
 went for a swim.

Ever since it was hot
 we went to the channel
 every day. Dad and
 I would pick up
 muscles with our feet,
 I loved spending time
 with dad, even if it
 was cutting wood
 and doing stuff I
 don't like to do.

I thought we were
 out of a drought



completely but we haven't got much rain this winter and we're in another drought, a small one, but there's still a drought. We don't have that much water to use. For me that means quick showers, and I hate quick showers.

James Bridge, Deniliquin High School

On The Farm

I see an old rusted windmill next to an old wooden stock yard surrounded by green trees and grass. Behind this is an old brick building that is at least 100 years old. This is all surrounded by a green metal fence.

I hear the old windmill creek and squeak and the wind in the trees gently swinging them around, I can smell the freshly cut grass, leaves on the trees, the dust from the shed and the faint scent of sheep in the yards.

James Selleck, Deniliquin High School

Drought

'Bang.'

The ute flies up in the air and lands back down on the ground with a 'thud'.

The dogs bark and we pull the ute over.

"The tool box fell out again," I tell my Dad.

He doesn't say much but somehow I know what he wants me to do. I walk over the hill and get the tool box.

As the wind hits my face and the dirt blinds me for a few moments I walk smack bang into a tree. Must've been the only tree in miles.

Hawks circling above me eager for a dead kangaroo or something. What I wouldn't give for a drink. Life plays out the same every day. We walk, we herd, we get a bit and we drink a bit. It's horrible in the drought.

Henry Michael, Deniliquin High School

I'm Back Home

I'm back

Passing by the rusty Deni sign,

I enter into my little town

I suddenly realise I'm back.

Seeing the wide flat horizon with crops growing everywhere on my land,

Hearing the echo of animals beaming off the large shed,

I see headers in the paddock, a trail of dust following behind

I'm back.

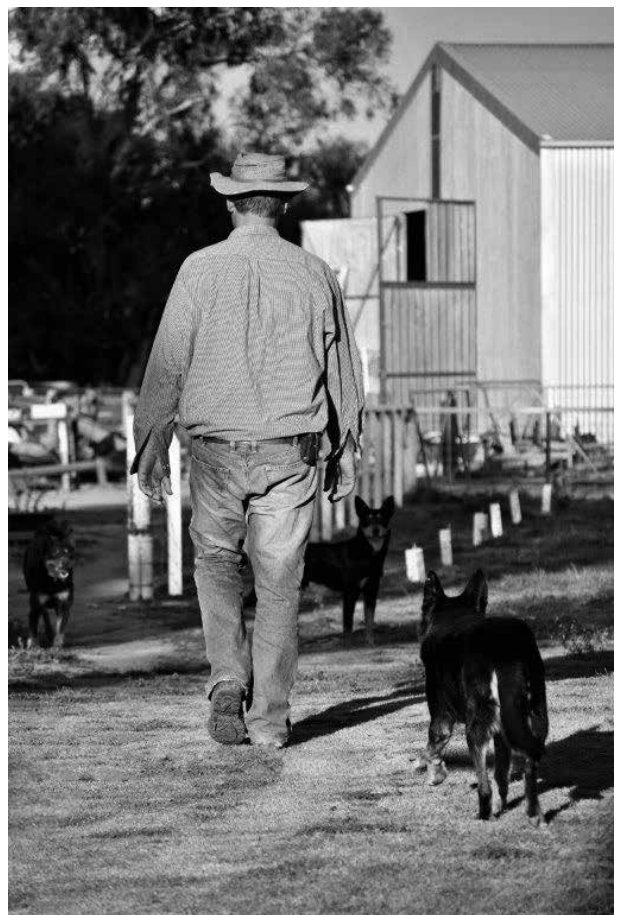
Passing by the river I see the trees bowing at my arrival,

The rattling of the gum tree leaves flow throughout my hair,

Gushes of country breeze make the crunch sound of dead leaves on the dirt road

I'm back.

Going under the bridge, boats power on the



*river surface to catch cod,
I hear the beaming sound of trucks going
through my ears,
When I reach the top, I see the shiny Ute on
the pole and a bright shimmer of the mosaic
Ute, that represent the Ute Muster.
I'm back
Passing by the rusty Deni sign
I enter into my little town,
I suddenly realise I'm back home
Marisa Hovenden, Deniliquin High School*

Our Town

*As the sun sets fire to the clouds in the
distance,
The tractors 'clunk' to a stop,
The buzzing of the rice mill instantly stops,
The shops close their doors.
The town is quiet,
The shine of the street lights start to fade,
It is now night time,
The fog starts to spread,
Everyone is asleep except for me,
I'm looking out my window watching the owls
awaken,
As I breathe the fog spreads in the air around
me,
My eyes are slowly closing,*

*My head is getting heavy,
But my body is refusing to let me sleep.
The beauty of the town slowly awakens again,
The trucks rev their engines once again,
The kangaroos lay under the lonely tree,
The shops open the doors,
The birds do their daily routine around the
Memorial park,
The focused girl runs around the block,
The highway is getting louder,
The spring flowers are looking at the sun,
The cool breeze is crawling down my spine,
My eyes begin to water with the wind blowing
in my face,
The sun is out but with no real heat yet,
Time feels like it is only just passing,
The smell of the roses spreads through the air,
The grass clippings blow around my yard,
The frost on my grass is slowly melting,
My lips are cracked and peeling,
The smoke from all the fires was spreading in
the morning air,
The beautiful sun was finally shining,
The buzzing of the rice mill begins again,
This town is beautiful,
This town is my town.
Olivia Redden, Deniliquin High*



Year 8

The drought

Farmers have been struggling with the dry and humid climate for too many months. The drought this year has been the worst drought on record. The federal government is giving twelve thousand dollars to farmers who are in intense drought; they will be giving the money to the farmers on the first of March and the first of September. One hundred percent of New South Wales is in drought; twenty-two percent is in intense drought, forty percent is simply in drought and thirty-eight percent is affected by drought.

Unfortunately, it is not just New South Wales, it's also Queensland, who is fifty-seven percent in drought. Due to this, drought feed prices have sky-rocketed and with only ten millimetres of rain this month, it's going to get worse.

Rain is critical for farmers this year, for crops and livestock, and even for water at home for showers, drinking water and washing clothes. This time of the year should be at its wettest but instead it's dry, rugged, hot, and dusty.

Tom McCallum, Deniliquin High School

One Summer's Day

*I remember that day,
that one summer's
day,
the day that brought
the drought,*

*that boiling sun dried out the land,
there is no green grass scattered about.
I look at the trees they all look so bland,
There is no water left in the dam,
the town is so dried up, there's not even
enough water to give to the lambs,
the cattle lay on the ground, whilst others walk
around,
there is not enough food to feed cattle,
at this point it's become a losing battle,
I watch the stock die,
I can 't help but sigh,
what a wonderful place this used to be,
now what do I see?
I see a place that has no hope,
I don't know how some people cope,
I can 't help but think what a wonderful place
this used to be,
my family is breaking apart,
but I know they will always stay close to my
heart,
they have gone searching for fresh water,
although I know that hot sun will slaughter,
what a cruel place this has become,
I believe some of us have become succumb,
succumb to hope, hope of being able to live in
these conditions,
as more stock die,
their bodies lie,*



*I dream as if could see one little rain drop
 coming towards me,
 I take another look around,
 but somehow my eyes made it back towards the
 ground,
 what a wonderful place this used to be,
 what I would give to hear the pounding of the
 rain,
 what I would give to see the dams full again,
 to see little birds soar in the sky,
 as I watch the cattle pass by,
 what I would give to see this place beautiful
 again,
 I want to be able to walk outside and see the
 green grass,
 I want to hear the tree's leaves rattling in the
 soft breeze,
 but now I see, I have to give up all those hopes
 and dreams,
 but I still remember that day,*

*that one summer's day,
 but its winter now, and oh how I wish that
 one winter's day will just wash this drought
 away.*

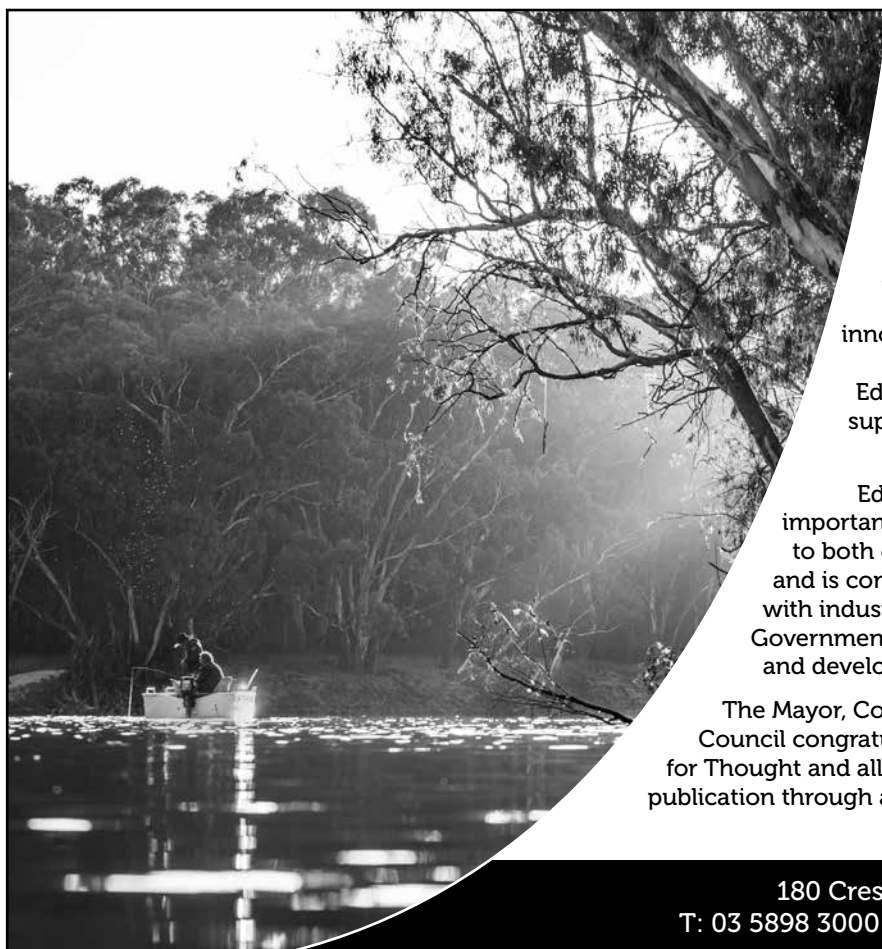
Storm Barlow, Deniliquin High School

The Drought

The past 72 days have been hell. The vast country side of New South Wales dropping like flies, from green to brown from crop to dirt, the drought has taken over. The average amount of water needed per month is 25ml but receiving less the 10ml is devastating. 10ml isn't even enough to create a puddle in the back paddock let alone grow a crop for the stock to feed off.

Drought has taken over.

Another day passes and another 56 cattle drop dead rotting away to the bone. He's struggling with \$7000 a week needed just to feed the cattle but still one starving



**Edward
River**
COUNCIL

The Edward River region is one of Australia's most productive agricultural regions. Our economy is underpinned by a diverse and innovative agriculture industry, which is also the largest employer in the Edward River local government area, supporting just over 15 per cent of all jobs in our region.

Edward River Council recognises the importance of a strong agriculture industry to both our community and our economy, and is committed to working collaboratively with industry, community and other levels of Government to support the continued growth and development of our agriculture industry.

The Mayor, Councillors and staff of Edward River Council congratulate Speak Up on producing Food for Thought and all those who have contributed to its publication through a short story, poem, prose or other written piece.

180 Cressy Street, Deniliquin. NSW 2710
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to death every couple of hours. He can barely afford to put tucker on the table for his three kids and wife let alone run a cattle station with over 8000 cattle.

He's broke, he cannot afford to pay bills and cannot make a single profit, he cannot sell off his cattle because they're starved and worth nothing. He's stuck in the middle and it's coming to the stage where he can only afford to keep going for a fortnight then the only real option is to shoot the cattle, so he sets off on the long painful haul hoping for a miracle to come his way.

Two weeks pass like a blink of the eye; he has word that a sudden downpour is tracking around his region an estimated 32ml over 7 days. Enough water to grow a crop within a month, enough to keep his stock alive. It's at the point where his following year income is on the line and his mental health is poor, poor enough to do himself over. The family's struggling the kids are down no longer attending school doing all they can and more to keep the farm from going under. The bores are bone dry the paddocks are dust and the crops are killed over dead as a door nail; good for nothing except to bale up for fodder, which will keep the stock alive. By this time 17 more cattle dead, rain is 2 days away and crop under harvest at this stage there's enough crop to harvest 100,000 round bales estimated \$20,000,00. Enough to keep his remaining 7650 Angus alive for 6 months and make a profit to keep them from going under.

4 weeks on. Finally, the tides have turned and he has saved his beloved cattle station and secured income for next year. His station is once again green full of feed, the 8000 Angus are once again fat and worth

money. Old Jimmy's back to his old self and the drought has finally past.

Thomas Bradley, Deniliquin High School

Drought

*The red dust blows,
The green grass goes,
The drought keeps going,
The farmers stop sowing,
The sheep stop and stare,
The farmers sit in despair,
The stock keeps on moving through the heat,
The farmers disbelieving to complete,
The wind blowing a gale,
And everyone forgot their ginger ale,
It's been 2 years since the start of the mighty drought,
The dust and sand always blowing south,
The cows and sheep getting skinnier by day,
And everybody is running out of hay,
Every step on the side of the highway,
The old drover's beards are going grey,
Spring is coming soon,*

The men thinking of it every afternoon,

Every town the old boys go and get the local paper,

and would you believe me they'd finish it in an ache.

Eimear Gogarty, Deniliquin High School

Farming

June and July are my favourite months of the year. I ride my push bike; Dad drives the ute and Tommy? Well he doesn't

really do much. We chase the ewes and their lambs inside. We sort out the ones that cry out for their lost families. My Dad calls them orphans. We keep them in the shack where the cold nights can't get to them. This year we don't have many. Dad uses term 'cull' when we have to get rid of some. Some sheep just go. I don't see any trucks come to pick them up. They're there one day and gone the next. They just disappear.

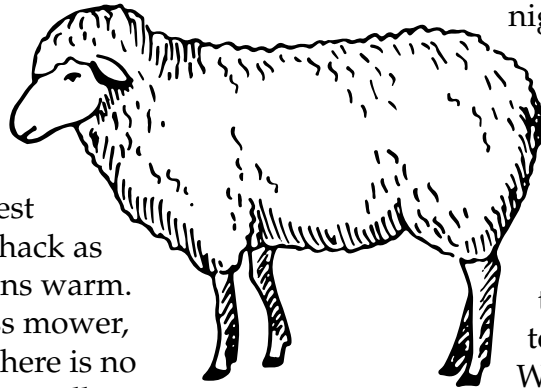
I have a sheep called Laura. I called it Laura because my name's Lauren. Our names are quite similar. She is my best friend. She sleeps in the shack as well to keep all the orphans warm. Mum calls Laura the grass mower, but I continue to tell her there is no grass, there's nothing. Mum tells me, "one day Lauren, one day." Laura is my best friend; in fact, she's one of my only friends. Tommy is my second best friend, only because he eats my dinner when I don't want it. Mum yells at me and tells me that I should be appreciative of what I've got and that I shouldn't be complaining. I don't understand what she means. Tommy is just a fat dog who sleeps all day. Dad calls him useless, but I don't think he's completely useless.

Every morning at 6am, Dad, Mum and I get up. Mum does paperwork, Dad feeds the big sheep and I feed the lambs. We only have six at the moment, including Laura. I'm meant to only feed the baby ones but I still give Laura some milk every so often. Last year was better because the ewes had given birth to a number of lambs. We don't this year. We don't have much water or food. The dirt looks like the world is cracking apart. Dad says we're in drought, but I don't know what that word means.

The sheep get fed once a day if they're lucky. We hand feed them. I go and see them sometimes. We have about 1000 sheep at the moment. We used to have

three times that in years gone past. Mum tells me I shouldn't go and see the sheep when dad is with them. I don't know why.

I used to have a baby cow too. We had to give her to my Uncle Lorie. He lives in a place where food is aplenty. Uncle Lorie comes and visits sometimes. He helps me with my schooling. I get home-schooled because Mum and Dad are far too busy to travel a few hours every morning and night, to take me into school.



I can't see my friends from school anymore. Uncle Lorie brings my cousin, Annabella, when he sees us once a month. He brings some food for the sheep but not enough to feed them for the month.

When Annabella comes to my house, she tells me how dry it is here. I tell her that Mum says it will rain one day and the world won't crack apart anymore. I tell her I've tried everything to make it rain but it won't. It's like the sky is broken and the clouds won't fill the sky anymore.

I wish the ground wouldn't crack. I wish the sky wasn't broken. I wish there was more food and water. I wish there were more lambs, but most of all I wish we had enough time.

Charlotte Strong, Deniliquin High School

A Day in Deni

Farmers have been struggling

Around - all of NSW

Fifty-seven percent of Queensland

In the drought

The government is giving aide

Companies are giving aide

Aussies are giving aide

To farmers

In the worst drought on record

*Rain will be critical for these farmers
In the drought
For the crops and livestock
Hay is becoming more expensive
Crops are getting harder to grow
Crops are dying
Crops haven't been planted
Crops are needed
Cattle are needed
Livestock is needed
For our Livelihood
Darcy McManus, Deniliquin High School*

Letters from Mum

I watched the cows graze on very little feed as I lay on the hay bales. Their figures were slim, they weren't going to make much money. I knew we would have to sell them and everything else soon. The drought had dried up the water and our bank account.

Roast lamb was for tea, we ate in silence. Dad never talked much and mum was in a fragile state.

Mum stressed too much. Work, money, kid, food, sad husband. After our meal I sat in the lounge room watching Home and Away. "I wish we had that much water here." Mum disconnected from her phone and chuckled.

"We should move there shouldn't we Dale, oh wait we have no money, because there's a drought, and you won't sell, even though you have a family to care for."

"You just don't get it do you, this is a sixth generation farm, and I am not selling! I don't care if we're going broke, you can go live with your sister if this is too much stress for you. I am keeping this farm! I know it will get better and I want to pass it down to Pippa," Dad fired back. I never knew it was this bad; it was as if their marriage was falling apart. I liked it here; I didn't want to go live with Aunty Sue.

All my friends were here, my dad was here. I knew I would have to go with mum if she took the suggested 'break', dad can't even look after himself let alone me.

"Maybe I will stay with my sister, Pippa can come. It's holidays anyway," she said in a glum tone. Dad stormed out and left me and mum glancing at each other. I didn't know how to feel. How long would I have to stay in Tamworth with Aunty Sue?

Two weeks later and I'm living in Tamworth without dad. I don't like the fact that dad's home alone. Not only is he miserable but mum is too. You can see she misses him, I wish they would just get over it. Marriage is about commitment and love. That's when I had the idea to write him love letters, pretending I'm mum...

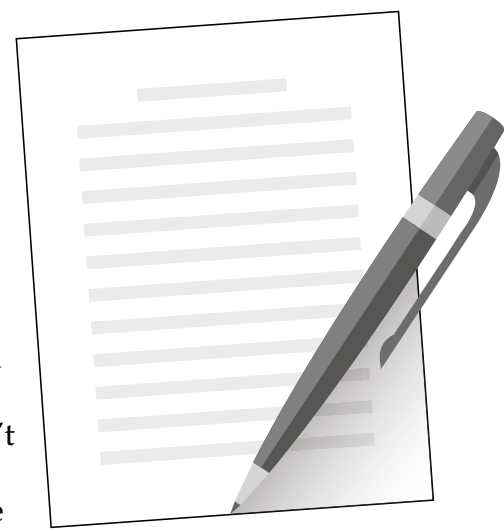
My plan was working, he would write back saying how much he loved her too. Part B of my plan was in action, all I had to do was show her the letters and we would move back home and be a happy family. Once plan B was a triumph and my parents had a really long talk, we planned to go back home.

Arriving home was the best feeling. I missed the smell of dust, my own bed and watching the cows from the hay bales. I walked outside to grab the last of my bags and I couldn't believe what happened next. It rained.

Sophie Willis, Deniliquin High School

Fighting for our Aussie Farmers

Our dairy farmers are struggling with drought throughout New South Wales



and Queensland. New South Wales is one hundred percent drought declared and Queensland is Fifty-seven percent declared in drought.

Our dairy farmers are in desperate need of more food for their livestock and more rain is desperately needed because these dairy farmers' animals are dying because they are not getting enough nutrition from the grass and hay because of this terrifying drought.

This drought is killing our livestock in New South Wales and half of Queensland. This drought is impacting on the environment. This devastating drought has been going for five to seven years in parts of Australia.

These Australian dairy farmers are in desperate need of financial support from people all over Australia. These dairy farmers need rain desperately. This drought is affecting our farmers all over Australia. The Australian landscape is dry and dusty. These conditions are impacting our livestock and farmers' livelihoods.

Farmers now have to heavily rely on donations and handouts from the Australian government and these donations are adding up to millions of dollars to support the entire dairy farmers over Australia. Australian farmers are very anxious and hoping there is heaps of rain coming in the latter half of this year.

These Aussie farmers are stressing out way too much and are feeling frustrated because there is no rain to help the Aussie farmers in this devastating drought. This drought is killing our environment by killing all the farmers' grass. Having no hay for the animals to feed on and having no water for the farmers and the animals, having no food and no water causes death, dehydration and starvation. These

Aussie farmers are dying for rain because they need all this rain for the animals and for all their crops.

These crops are often processed to make up the ingredients that go into making cereal for all the kids and the adults to have breakfast in the mornings. If there are no crops to grow, it is not only devastating for the farmer but it also hurts the Australian economy.

All Australian farmers in the drought are in a bad financial situation because they can't pay their loans, can't afford to put crops in because they're in debt and can't afford to run their machinery because they don't have enough money to fill their machinery up. In a few months popular stores are donating millions of dollars to support the farmers in the drought and all this money will be sent to the farmers to help them grow crops and fill up their machinery so they can harvest their crops when the rain comes. It's a great idea but more needs to be done now.

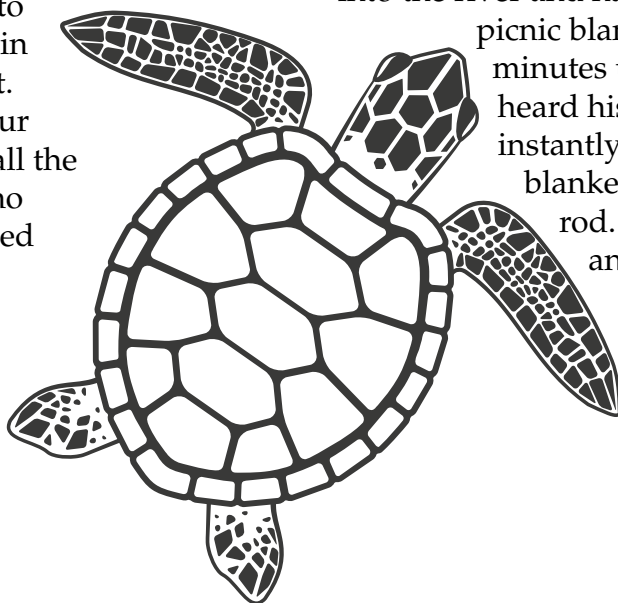
Dominic Read, Deniliquin High School

The Turtle

As Hunter and Addi lay at their favourite spot on the riverbank they watched as the sun set; they watched the waves ripple calmly and ate their raspberries they had bought down to the river at their favourite picnic place.

The two boys had cast their fishing rods into the river and had been lying on the picnic blanket for at least 10 minutes until Hunter suddenly heard his rod rattling. Hunter instantly jumped off the blanket and ran over to his rod. Addi soon leaped up and followed him.

As Hunter started winding his rod in he noticed it was really heavy. He was explaining to Addi



that he didn't believe it was a fish. Hunter had been fishing his whole life and was teaching his new friend, Addi, how to fish seeing as he had just moved from the city where there are hardly any rivers.

It took Hunter a good four to five minutes to wind his fishing rod in and at least two snags. As the creature got closer and closer to the surface Hunter now knew for a fact it wasn't a fish. He was so exhilarated to discover what it was he was pulling in.

Finally Hunter wound the rod right up to the top of the fishing rod and Addi shrieked. It was a turtle. Addi had never been up close and personal with a turtle, only when he was driving to his new country town and his Mother nearly hit one on the Cobb Highway, swerving her way off the road so the little creature would survive.

Hunter was so surprised with his catch he started running home with the turtle in his hand, leaving Addi chasing behind him trying to pick up the picnic blanket and raspberry container.

The run home was at least 2 kilometres long. Both of the boys were puffing, trying to catch their breath.

The whole run home Addi was yelling out to Hunter to slow down, but Hunter was so delighted with his catch he couldn't



help himself he would slow down and run with Hunter for about thirty seconds and then run off in front of him again.

The boys finally got back to Hunter's house, realising that the turtle had died in Hunter's arms.

Ellie Parks, Deniliquin High School

Drought

There is a drought, there is heaps of doubt

There is no hope, nobody can cope

All we need is rain, there is too much pain

Animals are starving, the farmers are calving

The hot dusty land, I thought to be grand

But in the drought, everyone is out

No food, no water, it's just getting hotter

The climate is bad, it is so sad

Please donate to the farmers today

@fighting for our farmers

Sophie Hills, Deniliquin High School

The Drought

Holly and I walked into room 12 happily, knowing it was a Friday. Our teacher asked us to go to room 32 and write about 'the drought'. Holly and I already knew about the drought as we both live on farms in NSW, farms that are struggling.

One hundred percent of New South Wales is in drought and fifty-seven percent of Queensland is too, and so I began my story.

Farmers, including Holly and I, are financially and physically struggling to provide goods for the small community we live in. The drought has had a massive impact on the public. We need water; to grow food, for household uses like washing dishes, cooking and bathing, and water is also used to help make electricity to run the lights in our homes.

Many companies are losing business, like many of our local businesses that depend

on water transportation. A number of fishing businesses have closed down, seeing that the rivers and lakes are dried up. There are no places to fish. The drought has caused higher chances of wildfires, which depend on water to be put out. There is high risk of extinction for wildlife. We are concerned.

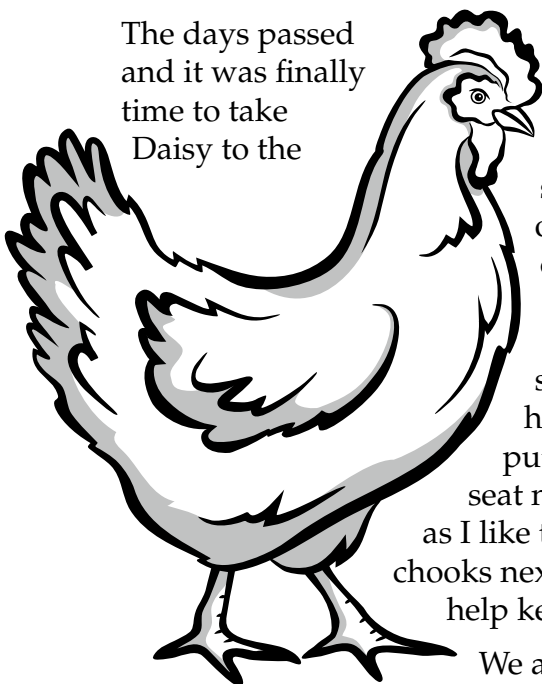
Sienna Jenkins, Deniliquin High School

Daisy

The sun glared through my window and the roosters crowed waking me for another day of hard work getting the chickens ready for their show this weekend. I got out of bed and walked to the kitchen and made some toast, I slathered some butter and vegemite on it and chewed down. I chucked my plate in the sink and ran out the door with my hat in hand and Max running behind me.

I ran to the chook shed to prep Daisy for her big show this weekend. I caught her, cleaned her legs, clipped her eyebrows, washed her body and sprayed under her wings. Daisy was the only one who had made it through this year, which wasn't normal, normally at least three or four of the chooks make it through, but I still have hope that Daisy will take home the blue ribbon.

The days passed
and it was finally
time to take
Daisy to the



show. I put
on my good
clothes and
grabbed
Daisy and
sat her in
her box, then
put it in the
seat next to me
as I like to have the
chooks next to me to
help keep me calm.
We arrived at

the show and took Daisy to the stage; we arrived just in time as Daisy was up next. The judges inspected her to make sure everything met their standards, everything looked fine then a look of shock hit the judge's face and she walked off without further investigating.

Dad and I walked over to Daisy and looked where the judge had first been surprised, it was fine till the wind picked up her feathers and that's when I saw it, a bright red mark just above her leg.

Dad and I quickly drove to the vet and got her checked out, it turned out that she had an allergic reaction to the new soap we used to wash her. We took her home and gave her the medication that the vet gave us. I could barely sleep that night just knowing that Daisy was irritated and sore, I only managed to get a rough two and a half hours of sleep.

I went out to Daisy to check in on her and give her the medication, the vet said that it would take about a week for the rash to go away, which meant a week of Daisy being in pain, which I hated the sound of, but you've got to take each obstacle as it comes.

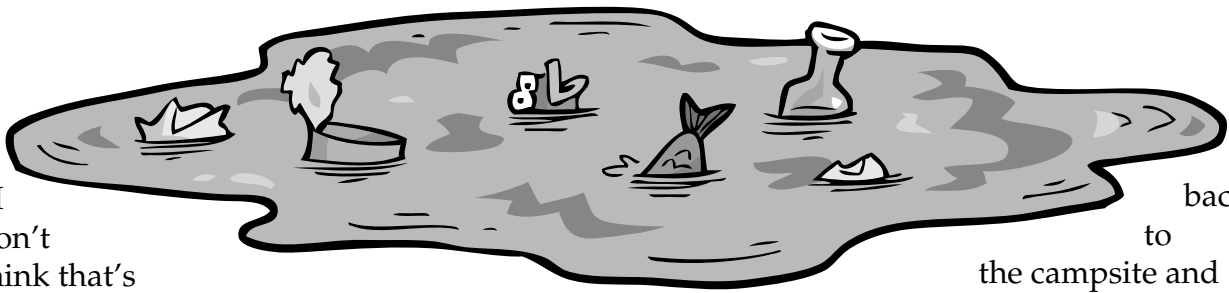
A week passed and Daisy's rash had gone away like the vet said it would. I'm just so glad that Daisy is back to her old self and we are taking her to another comp in just three weeks!

Ethan Simmons, Deniliquin High School

Toxic

One day in the middle of Spring, two siblings were walking around trying to find a good place to fish when they stumbled upon an old row boat stranded up upon the bank. As they walked over closer they noticed it was surrounded by rubbish.

"Look at that bird in the water I have never seen anything like it," Gracey said. Dougy walked over to the water to get a closer look.



"I don't think that's a bird Gracey," Dougy said as he grabbed the closest stick he could find and reached out and hooked it "That's a milk carton," Dougy said. They both walked over to the boat. "Looks like the fish got caught up in the rubbish the poor things," Gracey said. The two of them stopped, curiously looked around, seeing nobody they stepped in with a sly smile.

They rowed out further and then stopped. "Where are all the fish? I haven't seen any jumping out of the water this whole time and the last time we were here there were so many." Dougy said. Gracey leaned over the boat to look down into the water to see if she could spot anything.

"There is nothing down there except lots of dirty water," she explained. They both baited up their rods and cast them out. They sat there for a while waiting. "I got something!" Dougy yelled. While reeling his line in he noticed that it wasn't trying to swim away, so he thought there must have been a small fish.

As the end of the line drew nearer he noticed something weird. He pulled it on board. "What is that? It looks like some sort of mutated fish," Dougy joked. Gracey leaned in for a closer look. "Dougy, this is not a joke, this is serious. That's a fish wrapped inside a plastic bag. The poor thing must have died like that, just like the others on the bank," Gracey said sadly.

"We have to do something about this. I'm taking us back to the camp."

"But we were told to catch some fish," Dougy said confused. "Do you think we are going to catch anything out here?" Dougy look around. "There is nothing here except lots of dead animals and rubbish," Gracey said.

As they got back on the bank Gracey ran

back to the campsite and grabbed a plastic bag and was about to leave when her dad said.

"Did you catch anything?"

"Rubbish, rubbish and more rubbish and even a dead fish," Gracey said.

"Any bites?" he asked. "Nothing at all," Gracey said.

"Well then where are you off to in such a rush?" he asked.

"I'm going to make a change. Have you seen the water? There is rubbish everywhere. The fish are dying while we just sit here and watch," Gracey said as she walked away. Gracey cleaned up the bank and decided it wasn't good enough, so when they got home from their camping trip she wrote a letter to the council about recycling and cleaning up the town and so once a year they have a day when they all get to gather to clean up the town.

Izzy Warren, Denilquin High School

Drought

Dry dirt

Deserted dusty dams

Death Dead

Fired, hungry, hot animals

Skinny, bony, underweight skeletons

Lack of water, limited rain

Dying of thirst... thirsty stock

Busy, struggling, stressed, depressed

Anxious, hopeful farmers

People pausing to pay attention

Help is needed. It finally comes.

Buy a bale

A Parma for a Farmer

Donatons

Frustrations

It affects me how?

My family has a mixed farm.

We really need it to rain.

It affects us all.

Think about it?

Sofie Dunn, Deniliquin High School

Help the Farmers

There's dry, crusty land and dry creek beds. This is too bad and our farmers are struggling.

The impact that this has had on our farmers is critical and they need help urgently.

All of their livestock are dying and are in need of water and food.

The government have said they will give the farmers twelve thousand dollars, six thousand by the first of September and another six thousand by the first of March. For our farmers to recover from this event it will take a lot of time and a lot of rain. They need help to get them through this tough time.

Farmers have been forced to sell some of their stock, to get money to feed their families and to feed the other animals. The weather is terrible. It is hot like a Ranga's head and no rain is forecast and the stock are forced to starve, even die. One hundred per cent of New South Wales is in drought and fifty-seven per cent of Queensland is also in drought.

If the farmers choose to sell some of their stock underweight they have to sell them very cheap. Some don't have a choice. They just need to get money to feed their families.

It's getting desperate.

This drought needs to stop NOW!!

Patrick Westcott, Deniliquin High School

Poppy's Story

My name is Poppy. I live on a farm on the outskirts of Deniliquin, NSW. My family and I are struggling with the worst drought on record. My dad is really stressing out about it. He's afraid that more of our cattle are going to die because there is not enough water for them to drink and we have to buy heaps in before there is none left.

My mum is getting really emotional because we have worked really hard to get to where we are. My sister and I have been wondering why our household hasn't been as happy as it used to be but now I know that it is because of the drought. I wish I could just give them more money and lots of water just to make my parents happy again.

As I rode around on my four-wheeler recently I saw dead cows and raced to my dad as fast as I could. I told him that the cows were dying. I saw a worried look on his face. He said that the drought had struck. We tried to keep all our cows alive and healthy. So far only twenty of our two thousand cows have died.

I went to the local IGA today and I saw that they had less of most things. The town looks dry and dead. The river is lower than ever and everybody walks with sorrow.

Holly Amor, Deniliquin High School

The dry land

The dry, crusty land and the dry creeks and dams is bad and heart-breaking for our farmers. The farmers affected by the drought are struggling to keep their stock alive. The impact of this is the farmers' need for rain is critical. They all need help.



Their entire stocks are in need of water and food. People affected in Queensland are lucky. They have a resource called salt bush, which their stock can eat.

All the farmers will get gifted twelve thousand dollars by September. It will take lots of time and rain for our farmers to recover. Some farmers are being forced to sell some of their stock so they don't suffer. 100% of NSW is affected and 57% of QLD is affected.

Everybody feels sorry for the farmers in the area. It is so terrible and hot. We joke that it is as hot as Pat Westcott's red hair. Humour helps us cope.

Jay McCully, Deniliquin High School

Fighting for our farmers

Farmers have been going through depression trying to keep their stock alive.

This has been a tough fight and a lot of farmers have had to sell their stock underweight. One hundred percent of New South Wales and fifty-seven percent of Queensland is in drought. The government has one million dollars to give away to the farmers; each farmer will get a wage of twelve thousand dollars.

Additional aide will give the farmers deferred loans and will make them struggle next year too. The farmers have

twelve months until they must start paying back the borrowed money.

A lot of farmers have had to sell their stock underweight or will have to kill them if they are starving. These hot and dusty conditions are affecting the farmers and their stock. This has been a disaster.

Some farmers have had to get water trucked in to

fill up their tanks, and this has been a massive challenge and expense. Farmers have had to get up every morning and have had to feed and move their stock. One day off in the heat and their stock may possibly die from dehydration. This has affected the land, farmers and their stock, and ultimately it affects us all.

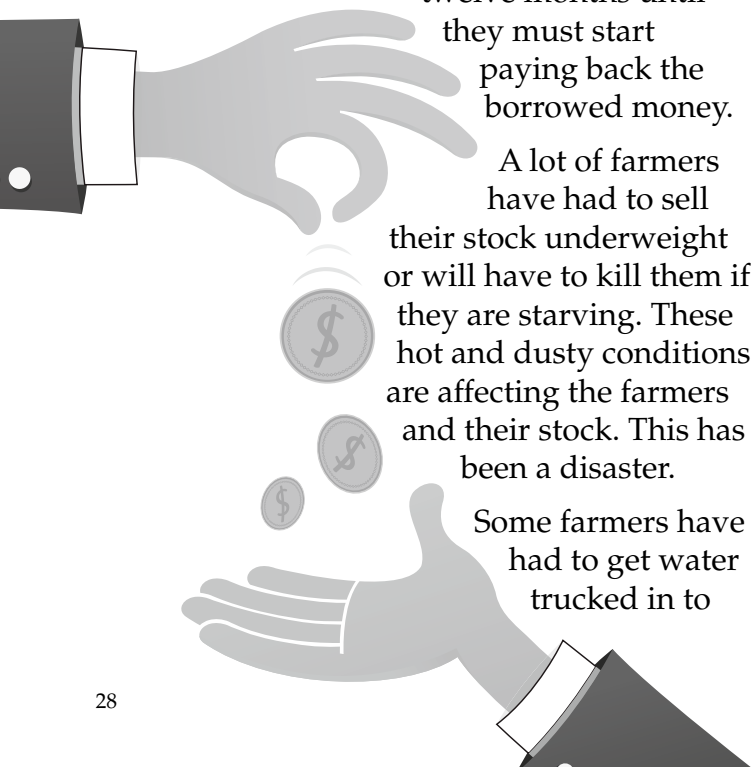
Jacinta Williams, Deniliquin High School

Farming

The stock won't stop dying, it's hot and there's no water. The farm is getting worse every day and we are down to just 199 sheep from 600 at the start of the year. As I walk around there's no grass but dirt, cracks in the ground everywhere and dead sheep. Dogs gasping for air; as I look over to the house there's sheep drinking water out of the bath tub in the bathroom. Down the valley I see crows eating eyes out of the dead sheep. There are dead sheep in every paddock. As you look across the horizon the farm next door is as green as anything and it looks great but not this one.

This poor old farm looks like it is not going to be here in a couple of months because there is absolutely no water for the farm's stock. If there is some rain around it needs to come soon for these sheep so that the farm can then get back to normal, but right now the farm could be up for sale soon. It looks like the owner has been trying so hard to get some water; he leaves the water for the sheep, surviving on the remainders that drip from the rusty tap in his kitchen.

Some water had appeared, as if by miracle, but he was down to 196 sheep. The water filled his farm, turning his paddock from an array of yellows to something closer to green. He was starting to put sheep out onto some of the back paddocks and getting water into some of the troughs littered about the farm. The sheep were skinny though and were struggling to walk, but the good thing



was that they were getting some water into them. They were starting to lose their wool but it has been growing back as the sheep are starting to get healthy.

The farm owners across the state are losing a lot of money because when the drought comes then the farmers can't keep on track. The farmer has been losing a lot of ground for the sheep to go on because in a lot of the paddocks there are too many cracks and holes in the ground, and some of the more clueless sheep become stuck in the cracks and die if the farmer is not quick enough. The loss of more sheep means that the farmer has to sell some of his farm. A farm that has been with his family for generations now. Bones litter his paddocks, bringing with it the stench of death.

When there are dead animals, that's when the predators come out and feast; they eat some of the lambs who can't walk lifting the kill count higher still. The farmer would lose his money and if the foxes keep entering, it looks like this poor old farmer won't have any stock by the end of this drought. All of his sheep are still drinking out of his bath tub and he hasn't had a bath for 5 days. I hope this farmer can survive this drought and that he has enough sheep to keep his farm in good condition.

Jai Ezard, Deniliquin High School

Struggling farmers

Farmers are struggling because of the drought. They have been going through depression while trying to keep their stock alive. So much of New South Wales and Queensland is in drought. Farmers at this point must defer loans. The government has one million dollars to divide between the farmers, so this means that each farmer will get a wage of twelve thousand dollars.

Due to all the support and help from Qantas, Westpac, Cotes, Woolworths and other businesses the money to help all the farmers is rising and this means that they can get more than what they have been pledged over the past few days from the government. This drought has been very tough to handle for the farmers. Some farmers have had to either sell their animals or kill them.

I love living in Deniliquin because it's a very peaceful place and full of loving and kind hearted people. I have lived in Deniliquin for six years.

The drought has affected me because it affects my friends. A family I know has been buying stuff to plant underground to see if it grows so they can feed their animals. I am hoping it grows!

Jareida Williams, Deniliquin High School



Drought In Australia

As I hop off the motorbike, I land on all the cracks and crevices. All you can see for miles is just dust upon miles of dust. It has appeared to be the worst drought in over 100 years.

The livestock are suffering, they are unable to walk. There's no water to give them, there's barely enough food for the cows let alone to be able to feed myself and my family.

I feed the family first, then if there is enough left I will feed myself, but that rarely happens nowadays. We go to bed every night and think will it rain tomorrow? Will it rain ever again?

I wake hoping for just a drop. I look out the window and all I can see is exactly what I saw yesterday and the day before. Colours of browns and yellows that seem to stretch out to the horizon.

All I want is to be able to wake up and see water everywhere; to be able to wake knowing that today I can have a break, but with this weather that is all but just a dream.

The money we would normally make is just ending up just going back into the costs of running the farm. All the equipment needs fixing, the bills need paying, but sometimes there is barely enough to pay for everything.

The closest town is about 2½ hours away. So supplies have had to be cut back this season. We live off practically nothing and have done so for the last year and a half. The workers from the abattoir have to come every week to take the cattle away. It's devastating to watch what you have worked for just disappear down the drain.

I guess the only reason I ever get up in the morning is to try and keep this farm alive. When it used to rain I would get to sleep in but that hasn't happened in I don't know how

long. I'm getting old and I want this farm

to be able to go on for generations, but at this rate, as the drought continues, I think it will come to having to say goodbye.

Goodbye to everything that we have worked for. I still have that hope that one day it will rain and it will rain good just for us farmers in need.

Charli Gray, Deniliquin High School

Enough

It was a hot, dry day

No water in sight and everyone's standing in the shade.

"We haven't had rain for months" Farmer Chris said, "and grass, there is not a blade."

"Our ground has cracked, and the animals are starting to fade."

The stalks were stiff, dry and the grass was not mown

And most green turned into brown, and the crops have not been sown.

"How am I going to pay this bank loan?"

"We owe them so much, but our crops just won't grow."

Life living on the land is tough

The future without rain looks rough

Drought is not a diamond in the rough

Emotionally and financially, I've had enough!

Please donate to the farmers today. It'll make a difference:

@ Fighting for our farmers today

@ Rural aid/buy a bail

@ Drought angels

@ Salvation Army

Katelyn Marshall, Deniliquin High School

Year 9

The Importance of our Land

Dear Reader,

Do you truly know the importance of the farming area in the Riverina? Our farmers help to provide for millions of people all over the world, producing many quality resources including Lamb, Beef, Wool (one of the most important fibres in the world), Cotton (also a very important fibre), Fruit and Vegetables.

These all provide food and clothing keeping us healthy and clothed. Look around you, are you eating? What are you wearing? At least 90% of the fresh food you are eating is from Australia and our area largely contributes to this number.

We also produce the largest amount of rice each year with the largest rice mill in the southern hemisphere located in the town of Deniliquin. Most is then sold to Asian countries to provide them with food.

Our region helps to produce large amounts of resources every day putting food on plates and clothes on people all over the world. Simply Amazing.

From Adrian

Adrian Mulham, Deniliquin High School

Dreary Skies

Her vision is divided with treacherous ribbons.

Ribbons tied so tight they fracture the earth.

Small canyons rupture with every step. Carcasses of past plants lay strewn across the desolate plain.

Pale wooden guardians watch over them with skyward stretched arms, praying for a downpour.

Solemnly they stood strong against the darkening horizon. A coma-like state enveloped their dry skin giving her the impression they were waiting for something precious. Forgotten homes, bound in cobwebs, lay sprawled between the leafless wooden arms. Haunting silence coated her surroundings. No sign of life had revealed itself to her. No rustles in the leaves, no shadows in the sky and no echoes through the trees.

Nothing stirred, sadly. Raising her gaze to the sky, memories flickered across her pupils. It hadn't been long since the sky had been darkened. Not darkened by cloud, but smoke. The day had been hot and the sky clear. With window down to catch the breeze she had been doing her rounds, checking the parched herds and thirsty crops. While she mourned over

another loss, a shadow passed overhead.
Her heart had skipped a beat.

Her sense of smell caught the acrid stench
before her eyes had found the cause.
Sombre smoke ascending into the clear
sky. In the distance, orange flames had
danced over the branches of a dying gum
tree. It had been so dry the simple sun
rays had set the wood alight.

In a streak of luck the fire had not spread
due to there not being any growth for it
to burn. Lowering her gaze, she let the
memory slip from her mind. A bout of
distress overtook her as she fell to her
knees. What was she to do? Animals and
crops were dying.

She had nothing left. The money had
stopped almost immediately when the
rain did. Selling her herds had been hard
enough. Now the whole idea of selling her
property had been thrown on the table.
The mere thought of this idea enraged her.
Why should she have to throw away her
livelihood? Why her?

Yes, the surrounding farmers where in the
exact same predicament. But this was her
whole life that could possibly be thrown
into the dust. Her past filled with family
camping trips in the paddocks, lessons
about driving machinery, bottle rearing
lamb and calves. All tossed away like
rubbish just because the sky refused to
shed a tear.

It wasn't hard for
her. The tears
flowed as easily
as the creek
once had.
They fell from

her muck coated skin onto the dry earth.
Watching as the moisture disappeared
as soon as it felt the dirt. She knew there
wasn't anything left here for her anymore.
But hope was still evident in her posture
as she rose to her feet.

Suddenly her eyes caught the horizon.
Night coloured clouds were stalking their
ways in her direction. Maybe she would
survive after all. All because of the hope
she still held in her heart.

Zara Macdonald, Deniliquin High School

Drought

Cracks stretching upon the earth's surface

Trees reaching towards the sky,

Their preys unanswered

Dead carcasses coat the ground like snow

The clouds hover above but don't let out a cry

The only water that can be seen,

is the tears of the farmers' wives

This devil like drought won't leave them alone

The farmers slave away,

Working hard for little in return

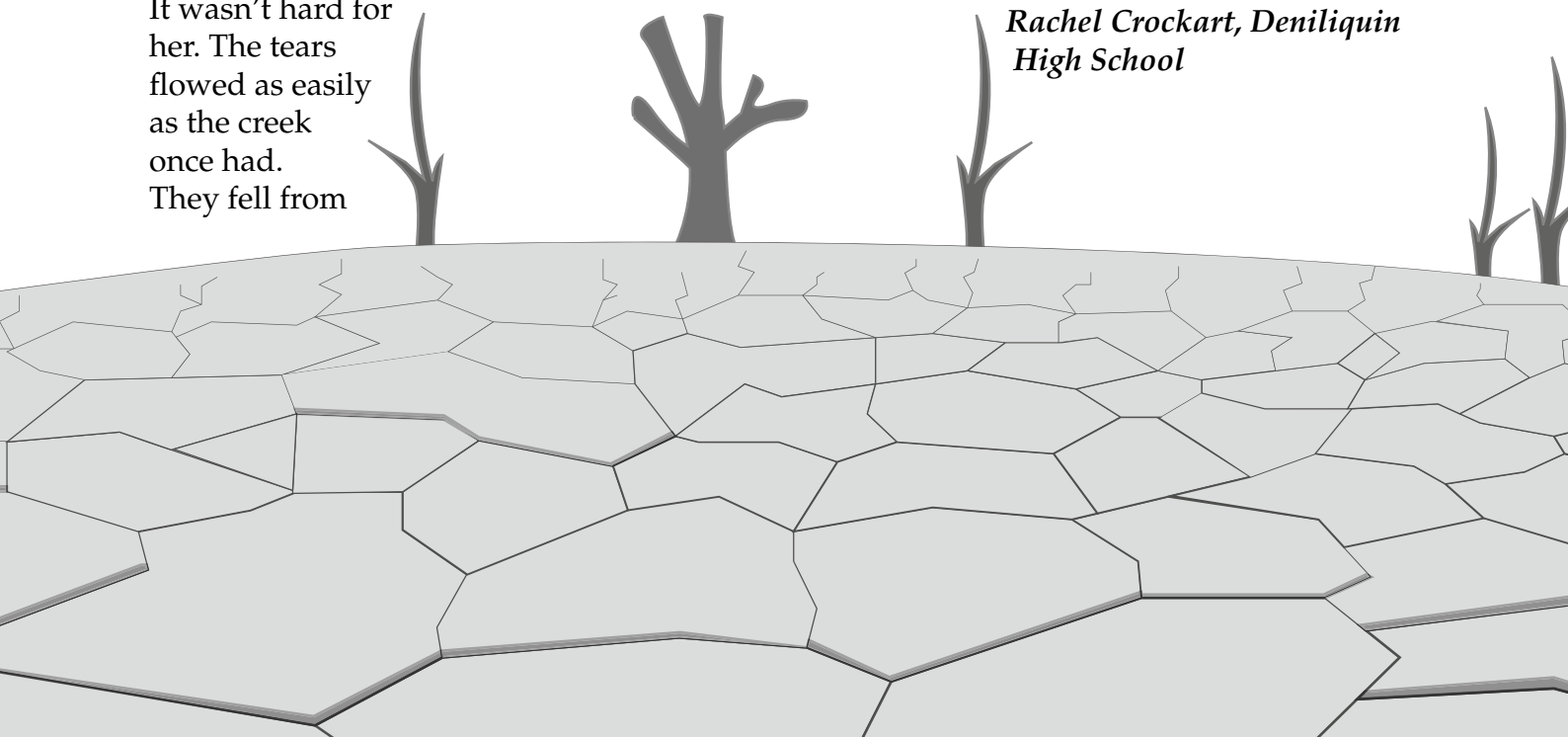
Farmers need help from us

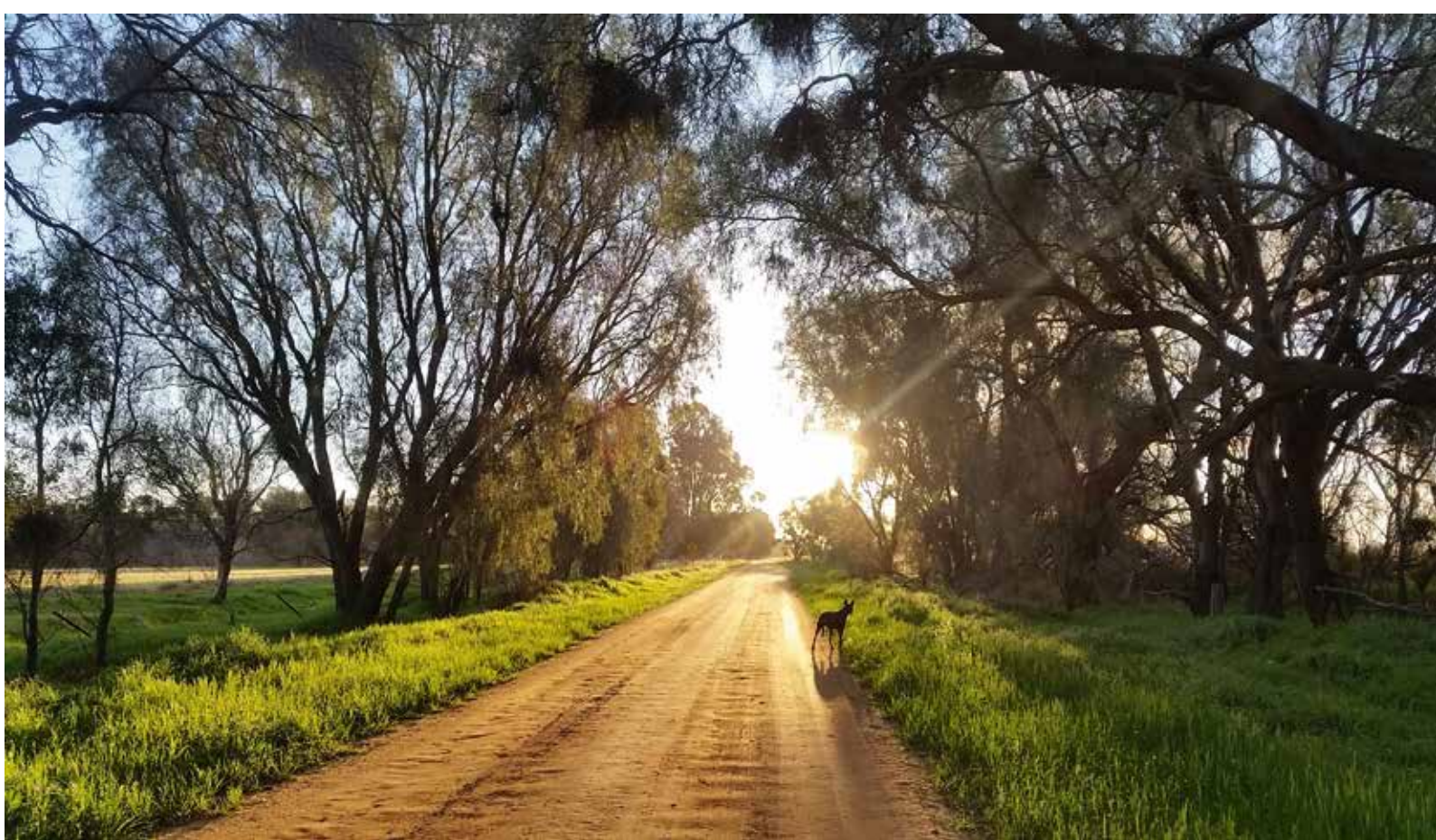
They cannot do this themselves

We cannot watch them fall

As they are the ones that feed us all

**Rachel Crockart, Deniliquin
High School**











The land that I live on

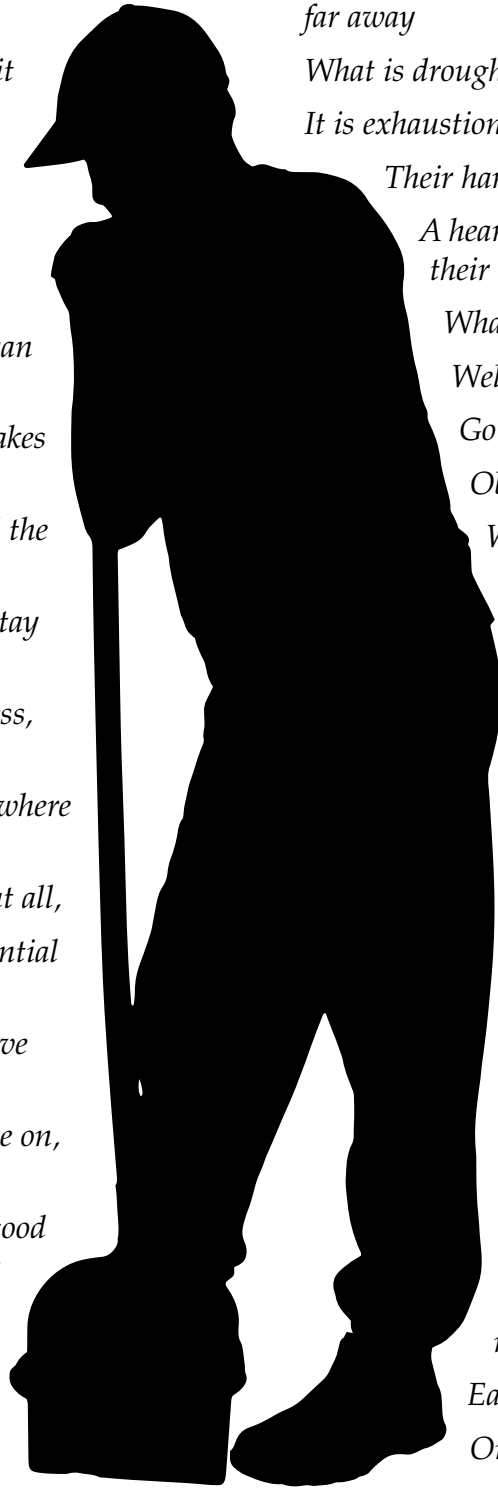
*This land that I live on, it shapes my life
It feeds my children, takes care of my wife.
This land that I live on, it gives me a home
It provides security, like Homer
Simpson and his dome.
This land that I share, I give it
my all
I keep it nourished, adhere to
its call.
This land that I share, it's
where I come from,
Chicken salts a must, if you can
afford some.
This land that I care for, it makes
me whole
I'll use its food and water, till the
day when I grow old.
This land that I care for, I'll stay
here till I die
Yet even with our great success,
the NBN's a lie
This land that I farm on, it's where
I stand tall
Hakuna Matata, no worries at all,
This land that I farm on, essential
for my future
Those who come and visit, have
sure delayed departure.
For there's this land that I live on,
centuries in the making
Bless the convicts who withstood
such torture, unless of course
we're faking.
For there's this land that I
live on, it makes me who I
am
All jokes aside it gives me
pride, for I am Australian.*

**Bayden Thompson, Deniliquin High
School**

To us

*What is drought to you?
You hear about it on the news
Read about it in books
It's just some phenomenon that affects worlds
far away
What is drought to them?
It is exhaustion and anxiety
Their harsh reality
A heartbreaking scene playing before
their very eyes
What does this mean for you now?
Well, you wake up
Go to work
Oblivious to it all
What does this mean to them?
They'll wake up
Watch everything they've
worked for crumble at their
feet
Unable to escape
Why would you care?
Why care about the very food
you eat
Families trapped in a
whirlwind of debt
Income to small communities
becomes just as scarce as rain
If only the skies were as grey
as our minds
Why wouldn't we care?
So next time you watch the
news
Eat something locally grown
Or shop at your local store
Think
What is drought to us?*

Sophie Hay, Deniliquin High School



Letter of Notification

To the Australia Government, Department of Agriculture and Water Resources

The drought situation in the Deniliquin Region is growing more dire each and every day and this can no longer be tolerated as no results have been achieved to conclude this problem. In fact NSW has been essentially deemed drought territory and the Deniliquin region is a part of the area that requires help.

Every hard working farmer within this town is unable to grow and sell their produce. These are the classic, working class, Aussie men and women that make this country turn. For example a friend of mine is purchasing only one more load of hay for his sheep until he is able to sell them as he can no longer afford to keep or buy them food.

I myself am struggling to bring food to the table in my house. Amongst other farmers in the Deniliquin region we request help to aid in this problem to prepare, manage and recover from drought.

We kindly ask that the Deniliquin region be made open to a reasonable amount of the numerous activities in the Agricultural Competitiveness White paper such as concessional loan. We kindly ask you take this into account as the Deniliquin region and many others like it require assistance to deal with it.

Sincerely

Shannon King, Deniliquin High School

The Sterile Demesne.

*Impuissant, unable to effectuate a thing,
Bar perch back and descry.*

*Sweeting whilom gingerly hatched,
Will whittle away and die.*

*An engaging chaplet of milky cartilage,
Framing frangible barren rhizomes.*

*No wonder the exorbitance of the wine in our
paddocks.*

*No wonder the sheer tangible dearth in our
homes.*

*Euphemistic with those above,
Are the pneuma laced in the threads of esse.*

*Beaten, broken, bruised at the heart,
with a state of abhorrent finesse.*

*Our land is a hierodule suckling heartily atop,
A cascade unduly spurning to weep.*

*A quietus in the undraped eye,
That runs fathoms deep.*

*A shiver aggregation of olden Panax,
A step caked amidst the infructuous pounce.*

*A sentient soul amongst many-a course,
Heavily laden with coldest renounce.*

*You opine you are unencumbered,
From the damage once upon they reap.*

*Yet what ultimately becomes of you,
when there's but aught to eat?*

*Calypso McKenzie, Deniliquin High
School*



Early demise

The land is withering away. Any life that struggles to stand before me is hurting, pained, and unable to survive in the harsh conditions that are leading to its early demise. The bird's singing has ceased, the green blades of grass have died, the land, it looks dead. Every last creature is desperate for a droplet, and mouthful of food, something of decent sustenance to its deteriorating body. And yet nothing comes.

She looked to her mum, agonizingly. She wondered who could help. She wanted people to look, to understand, her mother is dying. Her fleece is falling off her body, as if her death has already arrived; she is a walking corpse, decaying in the unforgiving landscape. She is hurting, too.

What's left of her flock is sad and depressing, and little has survived. She was born into this place, not thriving like she had always dreamed of. A presumptuous thought from within was telling her that they won't last much longer.

In the distance walks a man, tall, burly, crying. He is dirty, unshowered, carrying a rifle over his shoulder; he is staring disappointingly into the ground as the dead grass crunches beneath his worn leather boots. He mutters words, but they cannot be heard through his sobs. He kicks a stone and watches it roll, an attempt to distract himself from this brutal reality. Be tough, he wants to tell himself, be brave, and be a man. But he can't. His knees let go and he sits below the dead tree, face in hands, thinking. But nevertheless, a job had to be done.

She trotted around in fear, wondrous as to what the man may do. What was he holding? What would happen? Unknowingly, she wandered to him, curiosity sparking. He stood, tall and menacing, and yet still peacefully; a sense which was haunting in

a way. He seemed sympathetic, and yet, dangerous. She had heard many stories of what the men could do. She was always told to run, run as far as you could, from this man. But no one was running. Did they know what might happen? A feeling of security engulfed her, and the thought of someone that could help her. He kneeled down, reaching out to her, patting her on the head.

A war in his mind fought as he went to grab the rifle, his hand shaky. He sat again, and stayed like this for a while, petting the tiny lamb. He knew she could never survive the coming days, and something had to be done to help her. But nothing could.

She lay beside him, comforted and relaxed, while her stomach remained empty, and her mouth parched, she shut her eyes and trusted him. Whatever he could do, it must be right.

He stood up once again, but she remained lying down. She didn't want this peaceful moment to end. He reached for the rifle, wiping a single tear from his cheek.

"I'm sorry. Sleep well," a soft voice said.

Catriona Vickery, Deniliquin High School

Full Of It

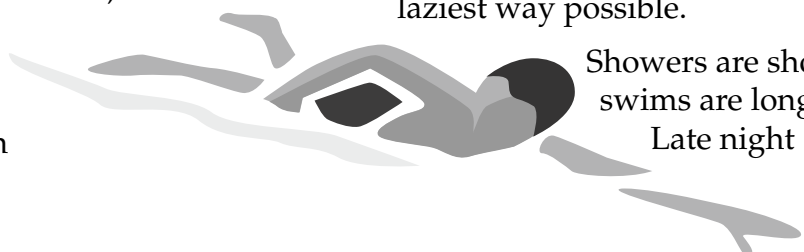
The days before proper summer heat. You can feel it in the air, like how it is before a storm.

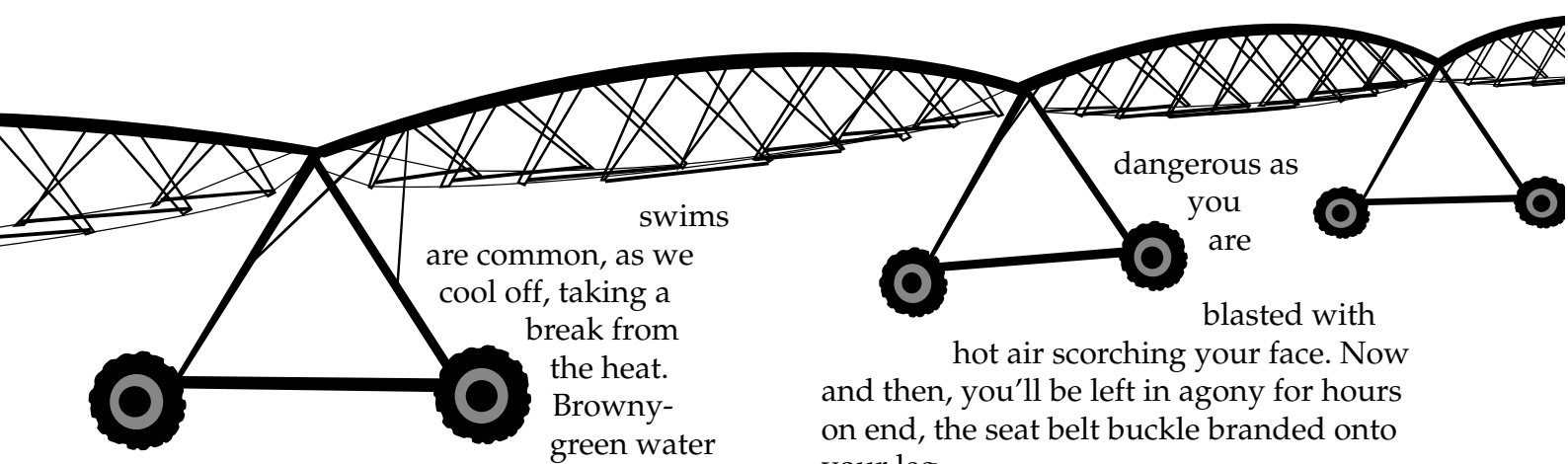
Everything goes quiet. Nature is waiting for it. Then it hits. Hot scorching sun envelopes you.

You know Christmas is coming, but some things are already here. Like dresses, shorts, singlets and thongs, mangoes, icy poles, watermelon and home-made lemonade, filled to the brim with ice.

Carpe Diem they say. So we do, in the laziest way possible.

Showers are short,
swims are long.
Late night





feels like heaven
on earth, as diving down, you get lost in a dark, cold, aqueous world. Hidden away. You struggle to breathe as you laugh, someone grabbing your ankle. Bubbles float to the surface and eventually so do you.

Sleeping is hard. It's so hot the blankets haven't been seen in months. Everyone's exhausted from all the heat, but it's terrible lying there, drenched in sweat. The ceiling fan spins round and round and round and round

Until you wake, the birds and the crickets singing, the sun shimmering in the distant horizon. It stretches its arms, and lets out a yawn, full of early morning sounds, and beautiful pinks and greys, pastel yellows, and tinges of blue. Each is different, and yet they seem to get better every morning.

Christmas goes by, which means an infinite supply of new pool toys, clothes to show off, and the amazing food, all prepared the day before, because mum hates cooking on Christmas Day. Family all crowd into the lounge room, so you can all open presents, the air con blasting, before you all head down the river.

Out of town, on the farms, dust and dirt blanket things, like hot red snow. Drives become a pity party for animals. You just try and ignore the cows and sheep seeking the meagre shade that is left, or the dead kangaroos, roasting to perfection on the bitumen, heat cooking the eagles meals for them.

Going places feels like torture. A single mistake and you are cursing in pain. Opening the door involves extreme precision and skill, and becomes

swims
are common, as we
cool off, taking a
break from
the heat. Brown-
green water
dangerous as
you are
blasted with
hot air scorching your face. Now
and then, you'll be left in agony for hours
on end, the seat belt buckle branded onto
your leg.

But these summers, in our town, feel like the time of our lives. Happiness emanates from each other, and we pass it on like a beautiful virus, with symptoms of uncontrollable laughter, unfading smiles and over the top shows of affection. Dancing to music, like no one's watching. Backing vocals; the sounds of summer.

Food is fabulous. Friends are at plenty. Fresh air comes from the air conditioner. Fun is endless.

During summer, we live in an ideal world. Of happiness and endless enjoyment. In Deniliquin, you feel this everywhere. In the people, in the town. Full of it.

Rosie North, Deniliquin High School

Rice

Rice is cereal grain which is grown all over the world. It is a small starchy grain which comes in many varieties including basmati, jasmine, white and wild rice just to name a few. To be exact there is said to be over 90,000 species of rice in the world.

In Australia the main type of rice grown is medium grain rice this is grown mostly in the Riverina because of the climate and heavy soil. Rice is one of Australia's biggest imports.

Rice can be affected by many things like diseases and drought to animals and insects. Rice is slowly dying in Australia due to the access to water and the way that animals and insects destroy crops. Also the amount of work that has to be put into growing a single crop.

One way to help rice to keep growing in Australia is to invest more money into

developing a new grain which is much tougher and easier to manage. Making it able to grow with less water and make it more durable to animal and diseases. This will make more people to help support the rice industry in Australia.

Duncan Hughes, Deniliquin High School

Constellations

The sky blushed with clouds of pink cotton, painted in seductive reds and vibrant orange. Trees danced to the orchestra of birds and wildlife as they were settling into a slumber. The sun was beginning to fall beneath the horizon, and the distant sounds of machinery were being switched off. Everything was beginning to dream, rejuvenating for the next day. Stars were starting to reveal themselves, as the moon ascended from within the gum trees, taking the sun's place.

She looked up and saw the blanket of glitter that covered the night sky. Brushing her hair from her face she saw the southern cross. Home. The sky was a comfort to her. Millions of flickering lights filled the sky and seemed to go on forever. A gentle breeze rustled the trees and all was still. Silence. Taking a deep breath, she took refuge in the stars. She found herself in the constellations, feeling as if she'd been lost for too long.

Living on the outback farm her whole life, she had been brought up in the vast night sky. The smell of eucalyptus and earth had filled her lungs her whole life. Her environment was the most important thing to her. No one could take this magical feeling away from her. Only when her mother called out to her did she come back from up in the clouds. "Will you

come inside! This is ridiculous; I told you to do the dishes an hour ago. You and your silly daydreams."

Alas, she could not stay in the sky forever. She got up from the hammock and sighed. The veranda squeaked as she dragged her feet back inside the house. Until next time, she thought.

Eliza Baker, Deniliquin High School

The value of water

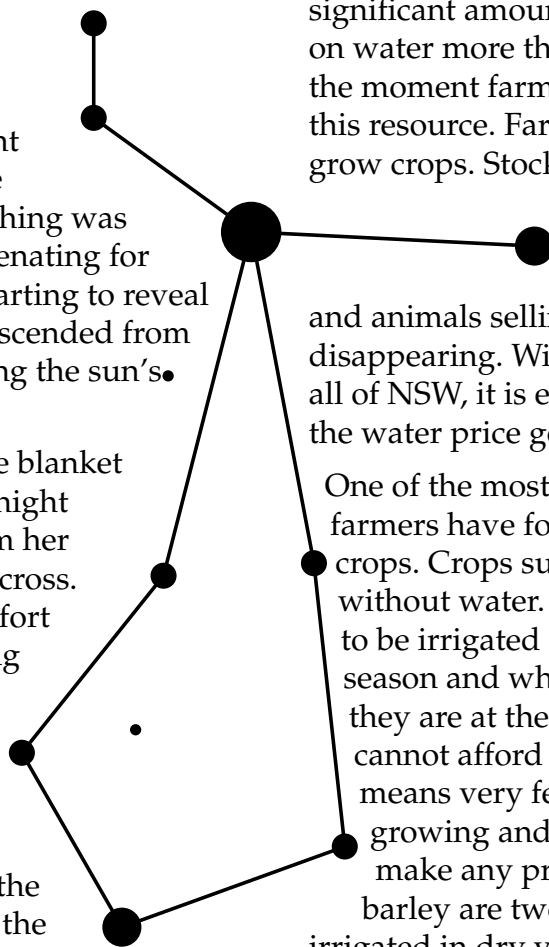
Water prices need to be lowered a significant amount. No industry relies on water more than agriculture and at the moment farmers cannot easily access this resource. Farmers need water to grow crops. Stock farmers also need to

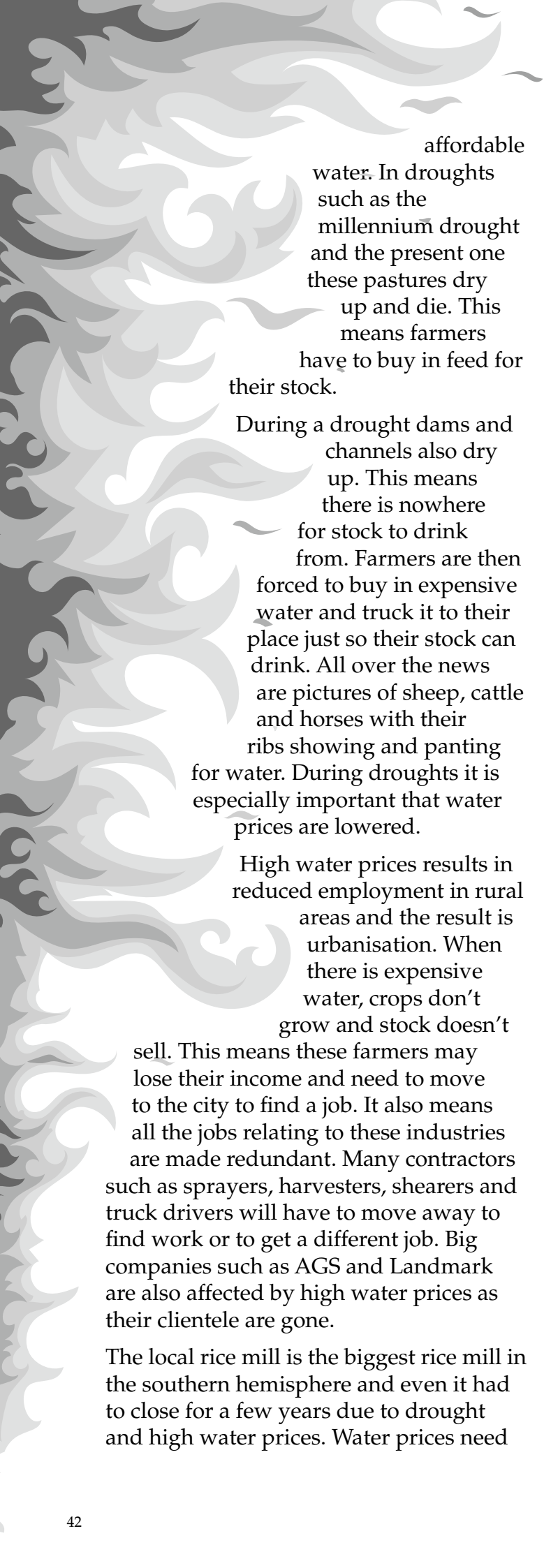
provide their animals with water and feed.

Without crops growing and animals selling, jobs also start disappearing. With the present drought in all of NSW, it is even more important that the water price goes down.

One of the most fundamental needs farmers have for water is to irrigate crops. Crops such as rice cannot grow without water. It is necessary for them to be irrigated for most of their growing season and when prices are as high as they are at the moment many farmers cannot afford to buy the water. This means very few people continue rice growing and those that do hardly make any profit from it. Wheat and barley are two crops that are only irrigated in dry years. This means that farmers rely on consistent rains to water their crops. With the present drought affecting all of NSW, water becomes even more sought after for these crops. Without water farmers cannot feed the growing population.

It is not just crop farmers that need water; stock farmers cannot survive without it. To lower costs many stock farmers grow pasture such as Lucerne on their properties. These crops still need





affordable water. In droughts such as the millennium drought and the present one these pastures dry up and die. This means farmers have to buy in feed for their stock.

During a drought dams and channels also dry up. This means there is nowhere for stock to drink from. Farmers are then forced to buy in expensive water and truck it to their place just so their stock can drink. All over the news are pictures of sheep, cattle and horses with their ribs showing and panting for water. During droughts it is especially important that water prices are lowered.

High water prices results in reduced employment in rural areas and the result is urbanisation. When there is expensive water, crops don't grow and stock doesn't sell. This means these farmers may lose their income and need to move to the city to find a job. It also means all the jobs relating to these industries are made redundant. Many contractors such as sprayers, harvesters, shearers and truck drivers will have to move away to find work or to get a different job. Big companies such as AGS and Landmark are also affected by high water prices as their clientele are gone.

The local rice mill is the biggest rice mill in the southern hemisphere and even it had to close for a few years due to drought and high water prices. Water prices need

to be lowered to stop the financial stress and sudden unemployment that affects many people.

Irrigation water prices need to be lowered. Farmers need water for their crops and stock to survive. Affordable water is also needed to prevent unemployment of agricultural based workers.

Edwina Barclay, Deniliquin High School

Help!

Summer's hot, egg frying hot, winter's cold, like freezing your nads off cold. I hear the beeping of the forklift as I drift off to sleep. Dad is sending hay up north to help people in need. Everyone is running out water, patience and the will to survive.

If this was such a thing as an ideal world I would wish for long hot showers, green grass, to spend time with my family and to actually have a little spare money. Dad has been working his butt off, but when no-one has any money to give, how are we to make it?

When I wake I'm still stressed wondering if I can water my horse today; I have to keep her trough low because my grandfather would kill me if he knew I was taking too much of his precious sheep's water. Like bloody hell, they have a whole paddock that has a channel running through it so they should be right. Right? If there was such thing as a god why isn't he helping us? Have we angered him?

I think all day of what is to come in the future. Will I have to sell all my things and move into town? I surely hope not. I hope for green landscapes, rivers and lakes full of clean water.

The teacher calls my name; I've been so stressed I can't stop drifting off into thought. She asks me to step outside because if I can't listen I might as well not be in here. I honestly don't mean it but what am I supposed to do, ignore it like everyone else?

When she comes out to lecture me I start to cry and I don't know what to do. I get taken to the nurse and sat down. I wanted to go home, so I was taken.

When I arrived home it was really hot, the dogs panting and my bird was going off. Mum said he would die soon because it was so hot. I lay down on the couch at home and instantly stick to it, the sweat binding me to the leather.

Next day is a Saturday and my uncle has asked me to help with harvest and drive the chaser bin as I am his oldest niece and he doesn't have any children. Today it is really hot and it's very windy too. I can't think about the drought today, I have to focus on the task at hand.

It's six in the morning and I wish I could have a coffee but can't because I have to get to work. My uncle, his worker and myself set out for the back paddock of wheat, it was ready earlier than usual this year and my uncle's crop is nearly the only one to survive in the community. We powered along hectare by hectare, I think we filled 2 small bins over an area of 100 hectares which is pretty bad. The crop is dull and lifeless but it is the best we have got.

It comes to lunch time so we rest the machines and have smoko. I only had an apple today because mum hasn't been shopping for the past week and the workers have eaten everything. We all share a bottle of water, it is precious and tastes amazing. It's hard not to drink more than my bit because, well I am so parched and I don't think my body can even produce spit anymore.

After an hour or so of rest and tweaking the machines we get back to it. The wind picks up and the temperature rises by 2

degrees, it is so bloody hot. I think I can see the sun sweating. We fill one more bin over the next 50 hectares and everything was still running smoothly, until I saw smoke coming from the header. I grab the UHF and alert my uncle.

We immediately stop and the smoke gets bigger, then I see the flame strike out of the back, and then came the bang! I didn't see my uncle get out, all that filled my vision was the field in flames of bright neon orange. In a matter of seconds everything was alight; the header, the crops and trees so I turned the tractor around and floored it to bare ground my heart beating at 100km/h.

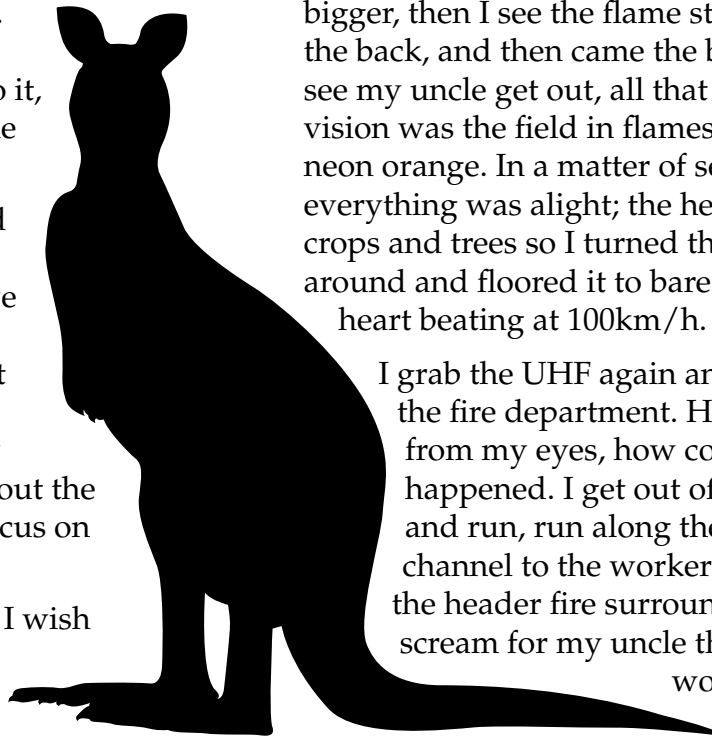
I grab the UHF again and call for the fire department. Hot tears run from my eyes, how could this have happened. I get out of the tractor and run, run along the empty channel to the worker's tractor and the header fire surrounding me. I scream for my uncle then I see the worker pull him to the channel so

I sprint to them.

They are a few kilometres in front of me, I hear the fire siren, lucky the district fire squad was close. Tears still streaming down my face; panic, fear and nausea is all I feel. When I reached them I was breathless, my lungs capsized, my uncle was charred black, coughing up blood. The colour of the blood almost matches the colour of the earth. Despair takes over my body and I black out.

When I wake I am in hospital on a drip and my uncle is next to me in a bed covered in bandages. I never knew that something so extreme could happen to us as it's not that dry here but there has been little rain. We need rain, not 5 mill like 100 so the earth can replenish its supply to Australia.

So I go back to wishing for an ideal world, one with clean water, filled lakes and



rivers with green landscapes. Because I know when the rains do come the favour will be returned to those who helped.

Millie Thomson, Deniliquin High School

Respect

On the 21st of July I went to Melbourne, Victoria with my Mum and my friend and went along the Yarra River loop walk to go to DFO and there were these things that are cleaning the water and taking all the rubbish out of the water, and they were called trash traps.

When the trash traps cleaned up all of the rubbish in the water, the water came back and finished doing its job. The trash traps came back with rubbish and the water was black and brown. I was angry at the who did this because there are living things in that river, and that river is also connected to the ocean, which is even worse.

People throwing their rubbish in the ocean, river, lake, pond it doesn't matter it is killing things that are actually alive in there. It is disrespectful of people that they can just throw their rubbish in the river.

People are not thinking before they do, there are living animals and they are probably eating that rubbish. It is not just the rubbish it is also like chemicals that are being put in the river and it is killing our animals that live and swim in it.

Back in Deniliquin, New South Wales, we have a few rivers like McLean Beach, Edward River. People go there all the time to go for a swim or other fun stuff. The water is just beautiful, the sand is always nice and cool in summer.

But on the other hand, I do see some rubbish floating in the river at times. Deniliquin is a small town so we haven't got popular stores, but we have shops like McDonalds, Target, Coles, and the rice mill.

At some stage I can see like McDonalds drinking cups floating around, also other rubbish stuck in branches and underneath trees.

And it is sad to see that people can seem not to respect their country. Australia is an amazing place. Melbourne is also a really big place like if you see in main streets you will see how much rubbish is around. There are bins around the streets so the rubbish can't be everywhere.

People really need to think before they do it, getting to be a joke, respect our country.

Thank you.

Maddi Lavars, Deniliquin High School

The Cotton is Coming

Have you ever pictured pillows growing on stalks,

Growing in your own backyard?

Or maybe a t-shirt, growing from the ground,

Growing in your own backyard?

Have you ever thought clouds could grow amongst the clover,

Grow in your own backyard?

Or maybe you'd wake to a new pair of warm socks that had grown,

Grown in your own backyard.

But pillows don't grow on stalks, you say,

And t-shirts don't grow from the ground!

Clouds don't grow amongst the green clover, you protest,

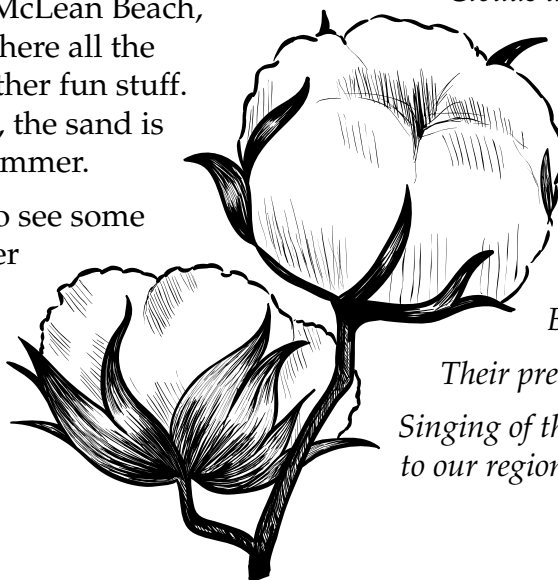
And warm socks don't sprout from the dirt, either!

And my reply to that is:

Not yet, they don't.

But the trucks are coming,

*Their precious cargo singing,
Singing of the freshness they will bring to our region.*



*The farmers are preparing,
Ploughing their fields,
Ready to open our region's eyes to these
exciting new crops.
And the soils, well,
They are just as eager as the farmers,
For they have never seen nor yielded such
fascinating produce.
Our entire region is enthusiastic,
The excitement running through us like
electricity,
Because Deni's never seen anything like this
before.
We're only a small community,
Us Deniliquin-ites.
We're known for our record breaking Ute
Muster,
And our illustrious rice mill,
And now, this new crop is giving us a new
name.
New Deni will also be known for our ability to
grow pillows and clouds, t-shirts and socks,
In amongst the green clover,
In our own backyards.
Liv Cathcart, Deniliquin High School*

Interviews

I interviewed 4 kids aged 15 about where they live. 2 of them lived on farms and the other 2 lived in town.

The 2 that lived on farms had pretty similar answers, they both liked living on a farm and they said it had a lot of advantages to it. The thing they didn't like was being so far out of town and not being able to socialise easily. They both grow barley, wheat and canola. One of them also grew rice. They also both farmed sheep. They both had pretty big farms one of them having 7000 acres and the other having 2000 acres. They both had farming families and farming had been passed

down through generations. They both were also affected by the drought that is occurring at the moment.

The 2 that lived in town both enjoyed living in town but didn't like the noise of cars and the amount of space they had. They both said that if they got the opportunity to live on a farm they would but living really far out would suck a bit. They both also said that they have always lived in town and so have their past generations.

In conclusion, living on a farm seems to be the way to go. The only downside is living so far out, this can decrease the amount of social time they get and can also have disadvantages with the weather conditions (like the drought like at the moment).

Ella Harvey, Deniliquin High School

Thirsty crops

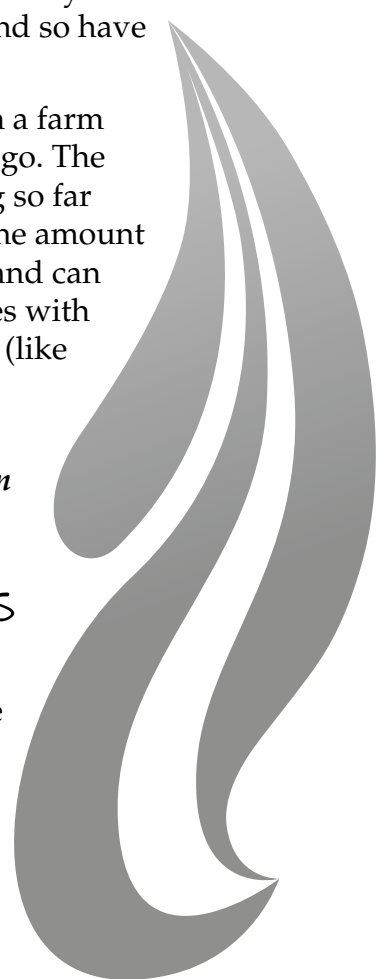
The crops were thirsty, they needed water. The farmer complained about the Channel 6 News saying "It's expected to rain."

The farmer replied laughing dramatically to himself "I doubt it will rain."

He looked out the window and saw the crops dying, most already laying on the ground. He walked out the door and towards the shed. He picked up a watering can and filled it up and walked out to find that only a handful of the crops were still alive.

He ran out holding the water can hoping he can save a few of the crops.

Kayleb Rodwell, Deniliquin High School



Drought

We sold our sheep in March, there was no food. They were shorn about 1 month before we sold them. When you looked out into the paddock there was no grass, only types they didn't eat.

I take the dogs for a run and I go down the drive out the gate and down the lane way where there's a bit of grass but not much. There's been a drover down road with 750 cattle and they were taking some to the sale to be sold. The drovers will be back home in about 3-4 weeks.

There's a mob of kangaroos about 30 that live in the trees in our front paddock and they move around a lot looking for food and water. My dad works up north at Gunnedah driving his tractor and bucket and he moves around a lot to different jobs.

The other day there was a cow sale in the town he was working at and some of the cows went for \$50. He's been up there working for about 12 weeks now, but the work's starting to run out because people are spending money to keep their animals alive and there's been no rain which makes it hard to move the dirt.

People have been hand feeding their animals to keep them because there's not much grass to eat. There have been some sales lately in past few months and some sheep have gone for high prices. Hay is starting to get harder to find because so many people want it.

A lot of people in the Deniliquin region have supplied people having hard times up north with hay but after there's been no rain it starts to put a lot of pressure on them as well. It's getting more expensive to buy water because it's running out.

Grace McCallum, Deniliquin High School

The Fierce Fire

The sun beamed down on the dry rice crop, everyone, everyone but the owners of the farm were panicking for there was a blazing fire starting on their huge property in an isolated rural area.

There was no time. They had to move the cattle promptly, they were in the paddock next door. Great neighbours they were. The dust raised into the air. Vision was poor. They were told not to harvest, but who listens to others? Not them evidently and look where they ended up. They were exactly the same as the stereotypical 'careless old farmer', been around for a hundred years and are exempt from any safety precautions because they have 'too much experience' for things to happen to them.

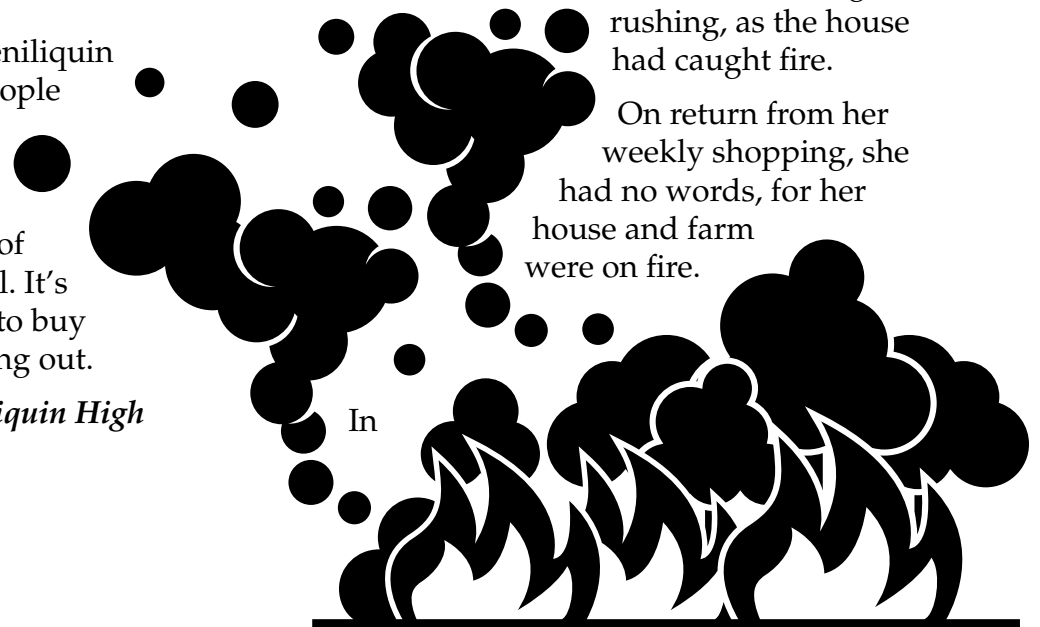
The fire was tearing down the dry, drought affected paddocks. It was moving faster than Usain Bolt. There was no dam water to pump out to attempt to protect the farm. A flaw of the Murray-Darling Basin Plan. Ploughing fence lines, a necessary precaution many take to protect their properties from spreading fires. A precaution they didn't take. They thought that it wouldn't happen to them, but here we are today.

The fierce fire heading towards the large, traditional farmhouse. Wide verandas throughout. The header had moved paddocks, unaware that a fire had

stated. The fire brigade rushing, as the house had caught fire.

On return from her weekly shopping, she had no words, for her house and farm were on fire.

In



shock, she evacuated, assuming that her husband and 2 workers had too. She was right, they had just become aware of the huge fire roaring through the property.

Two days had passed, the fire had been extinguished, but there was black, black everywhere. Thank god that all the farm animals were okay, because of the helpful farmers. It would be good to be able to say the same about the house, the lovely old house in the centre of the property. All that was left of the home was nothing. There was nothing left.

On attempt to rebuild the farm weeks later, it became apparent that they couldn't afford it. The bank was already on their backs for overdraft payments. In the end they had to sell the farm. It is crazy how one choice can affect your whole life.

James Hood, Deniliquin High School

The Local Area

In 1843, Benny Boyd founded me.

He named me after an Indigenous wrestler,

I was once thought to be completely dry.

I am Deniliquin.

I am Jimmy Maiden's burial place.

I was a paddle steamer station.

I am a river town.

I am Moama

I am a discovery of Charlie Sturt.

I am part of the Murrumbidgee.

Captain Moonlite robbed me.

I am Wagga Wagga.

Hume called me "Crossing Point".

I was once proposed as the country capital.

I am named after an English Town.

I am Albury.

I was bought for today's \$60.

I was once used to grow tobacco.

I am a "windy" place.

I am Mathoura.

I am on the Murrumbidgee

Sturt wrote his name on a tree in me.

I was used to hold refugees in World War 2.

I am Hay.

Lachlan Baker, Deniliquin High School

Drought

The fish lay lifelessly on the empty river bed

The cracks run deep into the surface of the earth

Rubbish covers the majority of the dried up floor

The uprooted trees are very apparent now due to the absence of water

The flora on the edges of the banks are shrivelled up

Animals are searching for a new source of water to drink

Children are playing in the mud and the miniscule puddles of water

People with cameras are taking photos of this important moment of history

Felicity Jefferies, Deniliquin High School

Dry as a bone

The year of 2018 came upon us; the farmers just finished putting in their crops. They were hoping for a better season than last year. We got further and further into the year and hadn't had any rain for weeks, even months. The worst drought we have seen in over 120 years. The Australian government thought they could help by donating twelve thousand dollars spread over a couple months, as if



that would help it takes twenty thousand dollars a week just to feed our livestock and they think they are generous by giving 12,000 dollars.

What about the 20 billion that they gave another country? Where was our 20 billion dollars because without farmers there will be no meat, no rice, no cotton, no nothing. In the last drought most farmers that farmed rice switched over to cotton because cotton takes less water and won't cost them as much money.

Coles for example all of their meat prices are going up because farmers can't afford to feed their animals and they get unhealthy and the abattoirs won't even slaughter them and then the farmers will go broke. The drought causes a lot of mental issues for farmers because they can't cope with their livestock dying and not being able to finish off their crops.

My grandparents own a farm, my aunty and uncle own a farm and my other aunty and uncle own a farm so as a farming family we have to look out for each other and make sure everyone is okay. Because the government isn't giving us enough help, because all they do is think about themselves and as a farming community we need to look out for each other.

The channels are low, dams are low and with all the water levels low how are we meant to feed our livestock and water our crops? Is the government even helping?

12000 dollars isn't going to go a long way is it? And if the rivers, dams, channels are all dry where are all the fish going to go? All of our native fish will suffer and probably end up dead but on the

other hand carp will thrive through these conditions. The worst is yet to come and if we keep going the way we go with the drought, we don't know how long it will go for.

Thankfully we got 5ml of rain yesterday and most farmers were happy from what we got but it's not enough, if we want to break the drought it will have to rain for about three days straight. Because at the moment 100% of NS W is dry as a bone.

The drought will affect all of Australia's native animals because there will be no fresh green grass for them to eat and the leaves will most likely be dead on the trees so the koalas and wombats won't be able to eat on their usual diet and everyone will be in a massive struggle to get water and feed for their animals to eat. Dry as a bone.

Kai Hillier, Deniliquin High School

Another victim

I awake to the sound of silence. I lay in bed with my head spinning, I crawl out of bed and put my singlet and shorts on. I check my phone where the date reads July 10th, which is my birthday.

I think a reminder pops up saying 'jack's bday'. I walk out my door and into my kitchen where mum's sitting at the table with a pile of paperwork. She looks up at me with red eyes, she's obviously been crying. Dad's at the sink with a cup of tea just staring at the wall. I walk up to him and touch his shoulder, he turns to me and says in a creaky voice "happy birthday mate".

He keeps talking but I stop listening. I just can't stop looking at the bags under his eyes. He probably hasn't been sleeping.

"Thanks," I say as I walk to the fridge where there's a jam sandwich so I pull that out and start eating.

"I'm going for a ride," I say. "Ok mate," I hear my dad say. I walk out the door putting my thongs on as I go and pick up my helmet. The rusty ag bike sits there covered in red dust. I walk over and climb on.

I start the bike and as it rumbles to life I lift the gear and hold down the accelerator. Off

I go. I change gears again and again until I'm in fourth and I hold the accelerator down tight as I fly up the road; the wind is hot as it blows on my face.

My eyes start to water but I'm not worried, I slow down and turn left through the old gates that hang there. Everything is dead.

The trees, the grasses even the animals are struggling. I slow down and stop the bike and I kick the stand down. I'm looking directly at a weird looking bush then the bush moves. I take off my helmet and walk over and I see a pair of reddish grey ears. As I get closer I can tell it's a kangaroo.

Its fur is red from the dust but it's in a bad way. I can see its ribs and its eyes have

flies in them. I know
what I have to do,
so I walk over to a
nearby tree and pick
up a large log that's
lying on the
ground. I
walk back

over to the roo which is lying on some grass; it's trying to stand but can't.

I raise the log above my head and bring it down hard onto the 'roo's head; it drops and its legs start to kick. A slow trickle of blood dribbles out its ears and mouth.

The drought has claimed another victim; nothing can survive without water.

I look up in the air as I see a pair of eagles circling; they can sense death, they must be the only thing profiting from the drought.

I put my helmet back on and climb back onto the bike. I start it up again and take off, my head hurts I need water but there's not a lot of that.

All of a sudden a mob of roos come bounding out, I'm going too quick and I can't slow down. I hold the handle bars tight. I smack a roo from the side and feel free as I fly through the air. I hear the growl of the kangaroo as it hits the ground. My eyes close.

I wake to the burning sun with my head spinning. I feel my head and when I look at my hand there's red. I feel sick, close my eyes and think, "the drought has claimed another victim".

Jack Michael, Deniliquin High School

Water needs to flow

Every day I wake up to the sound of the birds chirping and the ducks quacking, but today it was silent. I thought to myself, something must be wrong, so I went outside and I looked across to the dam and it looked pretty dry. I rubbed my eyes and I had a better look, yeah I was right. I got in my car and drove to the dam and there was nothing there so I got back in the car and quickly drove home to tell mum and dad that there is barely any water in the dam.

When I got home I told mum and dad the bad news. They couldn't believe it. I said to dad "what are we going to do?" He had



no idea but he did say we have to think of something quickly before the animals die of thirst.

Dad rang up the people to ask if we could buy any water and they said we won't get any water until next week; dad swore and hung up the phone. I said to myself, we are pretty much stuffed.

Dad said "let's go" so we hopped in the car to go for a drive next door to see if they had any water. On the way I was looking at the cattle on the side of the road; they looked pretty healthy which was good. I was just hoping that they would stay that way.

We got to our next door neighbours. Dad asked them if they had any water. Bob who owns the farm we were at said yes. Dad looked confused and said to Bob, "well for some reason our dam doesn't have any water in it". Bob said he would come and have a look so we drove back to our farm. Bob couldn't find anything, sadly.

Two days had past we still had no water and the animals were getting thirsty. The baby calves were starting to die. We really had to do something; we went back down to the dam to have a look. Dad was walking around for about 10 minutes, he was making me dizzy then all the sudden he stopped. I ran over to him and I fell over in the process but that was okay. I looked at him he said to me, "someone shut the pipe off; that's why the water stopped". We opened it back up and the water rushed through; we were so happy

we had water again and in about 3 hours the dam was full again. But we still never know why the pipe was shut?

Hayley Denny, Deniliquin High School

Our Gold

*We dream of the flood you see,
A water teeming crop.
Had enough of the cracked ground below,
a parched earth that's seeking more.
Pure blue water,
The kind that flows from above,
"she must have got lost in the bluff",
something my father has always lamented
about.
The timing has to be perfect,
for a flood could wipe out more.
Washing away our precious crop,
fatality of what some call their gold.
For some it may be the end,
Others may be their beginning,
as for there is nothing we can do,
we take part of nature's course.*

Gracie Willis, Deniliquin High School

Stand united

A lone tree. A silhouette standing in the open field. Bark that had seen ages, roots that reached further than any other. But all of that, the hundred years of just existing,



all brought to its knees by one small thing, something overlooked by far too many. A drought. Such a thing that should never happen, never mar the plains, never bring suffering to any.

Not to the sheep that dragged themselves in search of a blade of grass, anything to keep them full. Even the yellow grass that was a husk of what could be, even that was enough.

They huddled in the minute shade that the tree's dead trunk offered. Resting in the crooks of its gnarled roots. Heads poking up from their limp bodies. Frail from what should be time, but rather was starvation. They did not stand with hope, but desperation. Desperate for a change, for the drought to cease to an end. For rain to drench the hills, for rivers to rise of natural causes, for their bellies to be full, not hollow.

The hope had been stripped; the hope had been taken by force. Leaving what remained to suffer. To live a life without hope is not to live. It is to crawl through life, looking behind every step of their way, for fear to taint what few moments should be pure and innocent. They did not deserve this, they did not deserve the suffering, but all were powerless in that moment. None had the strength to rise if for anything but food.

The tree, something that once stood with such power seemed weak and frail, like an old man just trying to get by. Its withered branches stretched out as though trying to catch any drop of rain, anything. But even that small attempt seemed futile, for there was no rain to catch. And there possibly never would be again. You cannot catch that which does not wish to be come.

Dreams and hopes, possibly they could remain; perhaps they were just dormant, lying in wait like a python. But what if they weren't, if all else seemed to fail what chance was there for life to return to normal? What chance was there if there was nothing to chance on? They all

dreamed for a better life, they dreamed for something more than this pitiful existence, but those who dreamed did not survive.

Food filled your belly, dreams filled your mind, but your mind did not keep you alive. Nothing kept you alive, nothing but the will to not give up. The will to survive was all that remained, the instincts that did not want to idly sit by while the world turned to dust. So perhaps the hope was not that things would get better if you sat there, the hope was that maybe others out there, others who were thriving, would look down with enough pity, enough pity to not give up. But to stand united, to stand until the end.

Holly Mullins, Deniliquin High School

The Silent Killer

As dark clouds build above,

Rain swirls...

The consistent droplets quenched the ground.

The drought had come like never before,

The animals, the people...

Starving.

The anger that was raging through the sky it had to escape,

They fell...

the bright bolts of light,

they struck the trees, tearing them down,

But it never stopped.

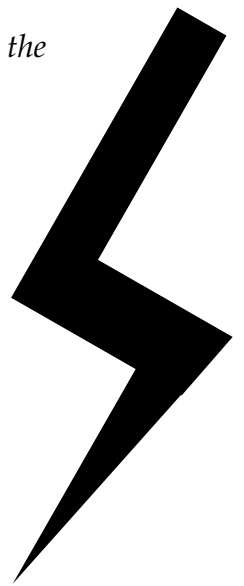
These days it is desolate,

The ground cracked,

I guess the crop dies this year.

Today the sky is blue...

Jack Richards, Deniliquin High School



Year 10

Fate

*Bent over, his ancient bones splintering,
His frail frame contorted and warped,
His backbone crumbling from the
harrowing weight he carries,
The predicament of the constant
demons he bears.
Skin cracked and arid, baked by
the ever present sun,
His pockets, once brimming with
coins,
Was the only thing that weighed
him down,
And his priceless importance kept
him secure.
Like the sole of his shoes, his fight for
survival wears thin,
His mind, deprived of the one
necessity required to grow his
precious thoughts,
Possessing 200 years of experience, he grasps
his significance.
His vision rapidly deteriorating much like the
future,
The fate of the agricultural industry affects
more than just the individual!
(in this poem, the individual represents the
entire industry)*

**Bella White, Emma McCallum, Sophie
Stringer, Deniliquin High School**



Spare A Thought

The sun awakens, rising onto the Southern Riverina landscape, where honey-strips ricochet against the dust paddocks of each other and the sky stays still, every day without a movement of clouds. Before the town, Deniliquin, is riveting with laughter and morning shoppers for the day, the farmers' day has already begun.

The farmer is up before anyone else, milking the cows and feeding the cattle. He starts herding the cows into the shed, one by one coming in and out. The cows are lean and helpless as all of their nutrition has gone to their offspring. The dust rises from the ground as they walk out from being milked, heading to the paddocks with the trough of food barely containing anything. It will be at least two more weeks until the farmer will have to sell up his cattle and turn away from the milk production.

Another farmer nearby is in his tractor, harvesting the cotton in the fields, and one is draining the paddocks after irrigating the rice fields... or was that last year?

Now these farmers are suffering because of the drought; our community and town are suffering too with the farming production damaged and not being able to make the markets and local groceries.

Furthermore, the farmers are losing profit and are becoming mentally ill due to their suffering. Spare them a thought.

Carly Fisher, Deniliquin High School

Boots

The red dirt lay still, only to be moved by breaths of hot wind that swept through the dry land. A pair of leather brown boots, ragged with wear and tear from years of harsh labour stirred the dust as they treaded against the dry wind pushing them backwards. These same dirty pieces of material had walked directly this path for many long months.

In the beginning, they would wander past the hundreds of hooves, over luscious green grass. Then slowly, as time began to fly by, the creatures in which these boots once strolled upon grew less and less, the green padding beneath their feet becoming darker and sparer. And now, there was nothing... nothing except red.

Where there was once a spur of plentiful colours flourishing from the ground, there was red. The sky that once shone blue had mixed with the dust pushed upwards by the forceful winds, leaving it red.

And the clean, fresh air that the pair of boots could once exist in was just a heavy, dark red. We were in drought.

Christine Conn, Deniliquin High School

Waiting for rain

I begin my day by checking on the cattle. Every day I have to rise early to see if any of the cattle have died. I walk down the long driveway looking around the land. Dust is rising as I walk on the dirt driveway. I can hear an odd sound, so I

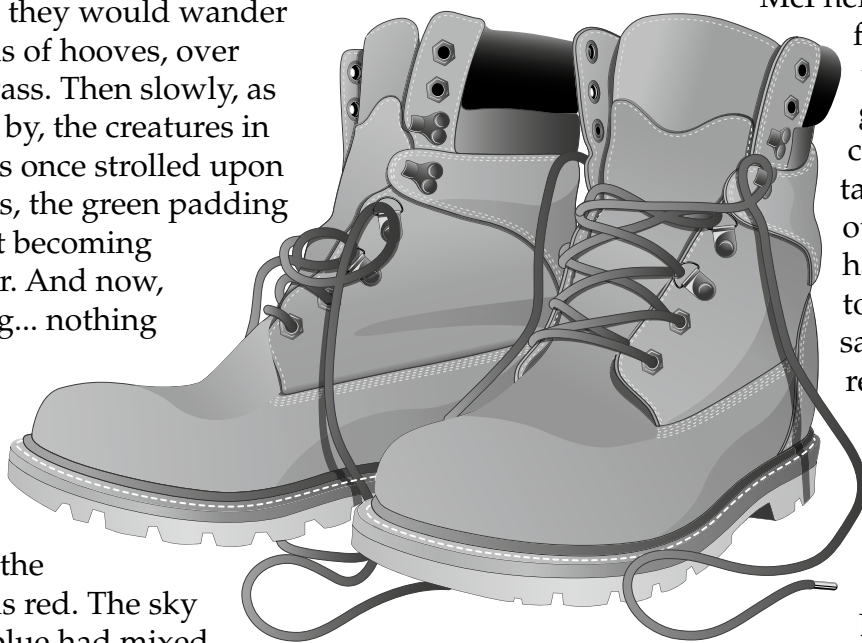
run to the cattle. I see a cow on the ground in agony. I feel powerless as there is nothing we can do. We can't afford to buy feed and there is no water to use. I pat the cow. Its weak body tries to stand up, but its legs can't hold its weight.

I leave the cattle yard to head for the house. I have to wake my younger siblings, so I can feed them. My parents have already been up for hours and are out on the farm working. I wake my siblings and give them food. My brother, Buddy, asks me, "will our farm be taken from us if the water doesn't get better?" I wait a moment and think. I have never thought that our farm, that has been in the

McPherson family for more than five generations, could be taken right out of our hands. I reply to Buddy saying, "I really do not know. We will just have to wait and see."

Later on that day we have to attend a meeting with all the local farming families. The families are all sitting in a circle. I look around and see a family who was known to be wealthy farmers in town. They look miserable. They begin to talk about how much their lives have changed since the last time we had a good amount of rain. They have lost a great amount of money trying to get water and feed for their animals.

Many families continue to talk about how the drought has affected them. I blank out of the conversation, thinking about why people are just talking about the drought rather than doing something to



overcome it. Then I remember that there is nothing we can do. Our lives are basically deteriorating around us. We wait for the rain.

Montana Muldoon-Leetham, Deniliquin High School

Fauna of the Drought

The Butterfly's wings tumbled with the wind

The Kangaroo travelled with his weary kin

The Saltbush's roots buried further down

The Cat called a truce with the hound

The Crow's eyes glanced over the parched plain

The Mouse was lucky to find a grain

The Lizard took shelter inside a skull

The Cow's eyes glazed until there was null.

The Cod dove deeper in a shallow river

The Farmer waited for the rain to come hither

The Eagle spent less time in the sun

The Emu spent less time on the run.

The Koala feasted on colourless leaves

The Magpie sung its sorrowful grieves

The Lorikeet toyed with crunchy petals

The Fox could travel over fallen nettles.

The Horse rubbed the halter on a lifeless trunk

The Kookaburra had lost his spunk

The Spider grew closer to the townsfolk

The Frog would barely sing a croak.

Stephanie Vickery, Deniliquin High School

Farming

I live on a small hobby farm, with two hundred sheep, three pigs, six horses, twelve chooks, six dogs and a cat. I love where I live. I wake up in the morning and I'm surrounded by Old Man saltbush and bright blue skies with no clouds in sight.

But that's the problem... no clouds. And no clouds means no rain.

And no rain... that's bad news.

Because without rain, it's a drought.

And I don't want a drought.

There's hay on trucks being sent up north every day. I thought that was good, we were doing our part, helping out other farmers. But then at school we had the conversation.

What happens when there's no more hay?

When it's too expensive?

I went home, and for the first time I noticed.

Dad was talking to mum. About greedy farmers selling hay that wouldn't have been worth half as much as they were pricing it.

It wasn't too bad. But that was just us, on our little hobby farm.

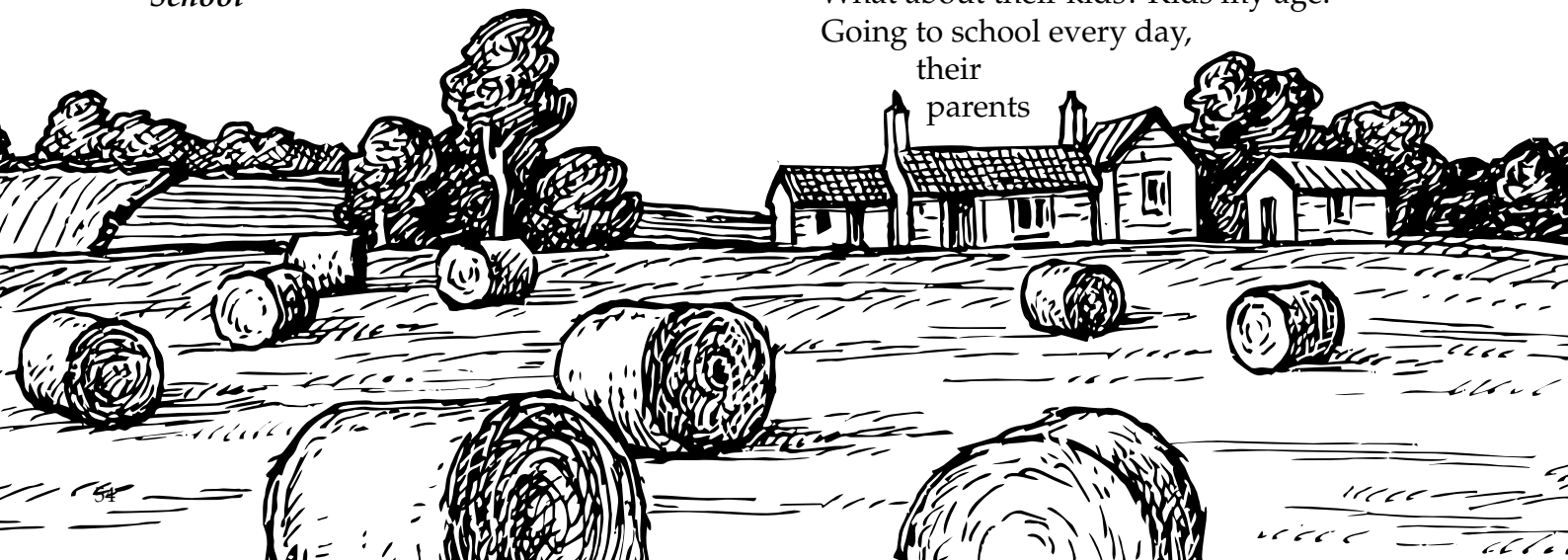
What about the farmers with a thousand acres of land, whose crops had just needed a couple of ml of water but they hadn't gotten that, and everything was dead?

That was their income. And it was gone.

What about their kids? Kids my age.

Going to school every day,

their
parents



fighting over money, how did they feel.
Were they okay?

I can't imagine how those farmers must
feel. To look at their livestock and wonder
when the rain will come so that they can
feed them.

When they'll have to sell their animals.
Or worse, their farm.

In our local IGA the tabloids depict the
country's growing concern for the lack of
rainfall.

Ella Mullins, Deniliquin High School

The Faith within our father

Dear God,

You were to bring rain on a
land without people.

On a desert without a man
in it.

To satisfy the waste and
desolate land and to
make the seeds
sprout.

Instead
we sit here
underneath the
sun,

The sweat like rivers that used to stream from
our skin.

Surrounded by the outback oceans, red dust
and the cracks like canons,

Pasture starved of water.

And we sit here between it all,

Hoping our saviour will make rain.

We kneel underneath the blazing sun,

Praying you'll hear our hopes.

Slowly being defeated by faith in ourselves,
our minds and in you.

You change our rivers into a wilderness,
Springs of water into a thirsty ground.

A fruitful land into a salt waste that we stand
before today,

Because of the wickedness of those who resided
in it.

*Lillie Harford & Thomas Duffey,
Deniliquin High School*

Disappeared

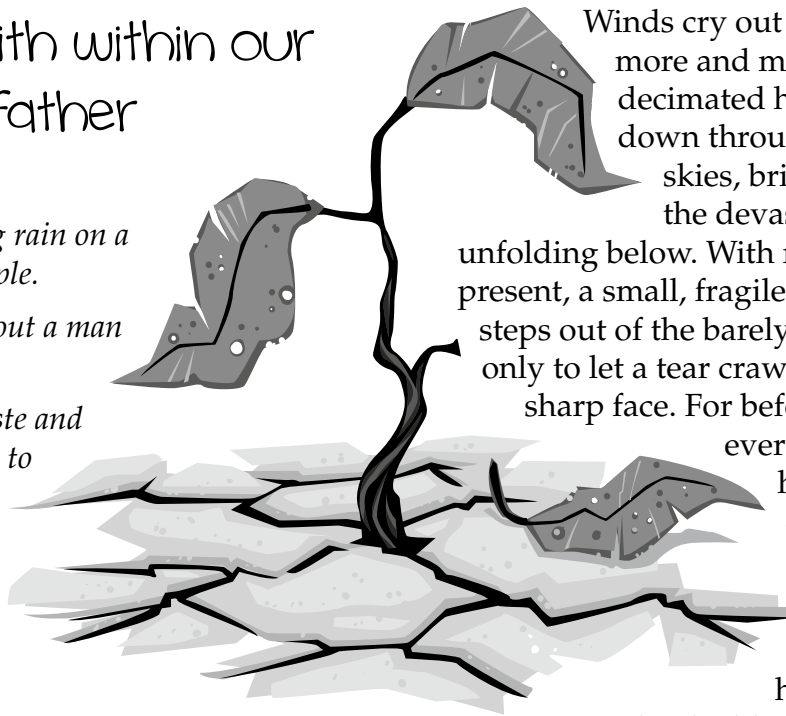
Dark, storming clouds flood through
the valley, causing destruction and
havoc as they pass. In the dust and mud
lies a dormant, wooden home, slowly
degrading in the storm's endless shower.

Winds cry out as they rip out
more and more of the now
decimated hut. Sun breaks
down through the clouded
skies, bringing an end to
the devastation that was
unfolding below. With morning now
present, a small, fragile looking boy
steps out of the barely standing rubble,
only to let a tear crawl down his pale,
sharp face. For before his eyes lies
everything he knows,
his lifeline.

This young boy
with pale, white
face goes by
Cliff. That is not
his real name but
it is what he likes to be called. Cliff
bravely ventures out, out of his crumbling
home and forward into the fields before
his house. Where once laid prosperous,
green fields filled with luscious plants
and animals, all colours once described by
the sun, have vanished, covered in thick
layers of dull mud.

Every animal big or small wandered
these fields outside Cliff's small house; he
would play and explore daily with these
young creatures. Now all his little friends
have gone, disappeared in the night, with
the raging storm enforcing terror into
their tiny souls.

In morning's break, this young boy



wanders, searches and smiles. He sees hope.

Lachlan Saville, Deniliquin High School

It's serious

In Australia at the moment there is a big outbreak of one of the worst droughts in Australia's history. It has affected all the states and territories, which has really been hard on Australian farmers, and has caused farmers to call for help and reach out to the community, government, and even everyday Australians.

Australian farmers have been given opportunities and assistance from the government, and really generous donations. The early morning broadcast networks have also given more supplies to the unbearably suffering parts of Australia, to give the farmers aide for products for their livestock, crops, and family farms.

The farmers need help to produce better supplies for Australia's growing need and for others around the world. Some farmers have had really hard times with this drought. The lack of rainfall has left them with dry plains and no feed for their livestock or crops. A few farmers have been struggling with this so much that they have even contemplated, attempted or committed suicide. This is serious.

Harry Hillier, Deniliquin High School

Dry Land

Throughout the country countless farmers suffer from the inevitable drought, affecting the majority of New South Wales and Queensland. One farmer, eighty kilometres north of Bourke in New South Wales, is riddled with the drought. With minimal money and not enough work, Grant Beget is a hard worker and a very stubborn man.

He relies on his cattle and sheep to make a profit to comfort and care for his family.

The drought has reduced the amount of water Grant can provide for his stock, forcing him to sell and cull most of his big sellers. Grant believes the government is making it a harder job to pay for water, and to make an easy living.

The government plans to increase the cost of water, to capitalise on urban areas but this fills Grant with rage. With the charity funds being minimal and not enough for the affected areas, Grant cannot afford to take any risks that will send him broke.

Countless weeks later, Grant is approached about the last of his stock when the temperature drops dramatically. The smell of moisture clutters the air and the claps of the thunder is music to Grant's ears.

Grant and his family gather buckets and tubs to fill with water, as it pours from the faithful clouds which Grant hasn't seen in a while. From the dehydrated soil to lush grass, Grant runs inside and checks the weather report. He sees that it is a solid five days of non-stop rain, which sends him into an outrageous amount of joy.

With the growing amount of work for Grant, he can't even count the amount of money he has waited for. Green paddocks, healthy crops, cattle and sheep... he is able to run his farm again. He is able to create a healthy living for his family and prepare for another drought.

Hayden Kelvy, Deniliquin High School



Adult

A Dry Year

"Hey Darl, I'm going to town if you need anything," I put the UHF away and wave in the general direction of the dust. Jacko is getting lambs in and I am nearly on time for daycare drop off.

"Yeah yeah pull up pull up," he answers, I can't wait to get a coffee this morning. Why is he carrying a sheep dog? Before I can ask he opens the door to the 'back back' and Ginger the sheep mustering Ninja is loaded into the car with a deep cut in her leg. Coffee can wait until after daycare and vet drop off. Turns out we're out of drench too so if I could grab that and be back before lunch that would be great.

Coffee is getting pushed to the bottom of the list but I'm distracted by the fact as he gives me a quick kiss through the wound down window. The smell of dust and sheep shit wafts in. His teeth are white and his stubble is hosting a coating of dirt. I smile at him as the baby squawks.

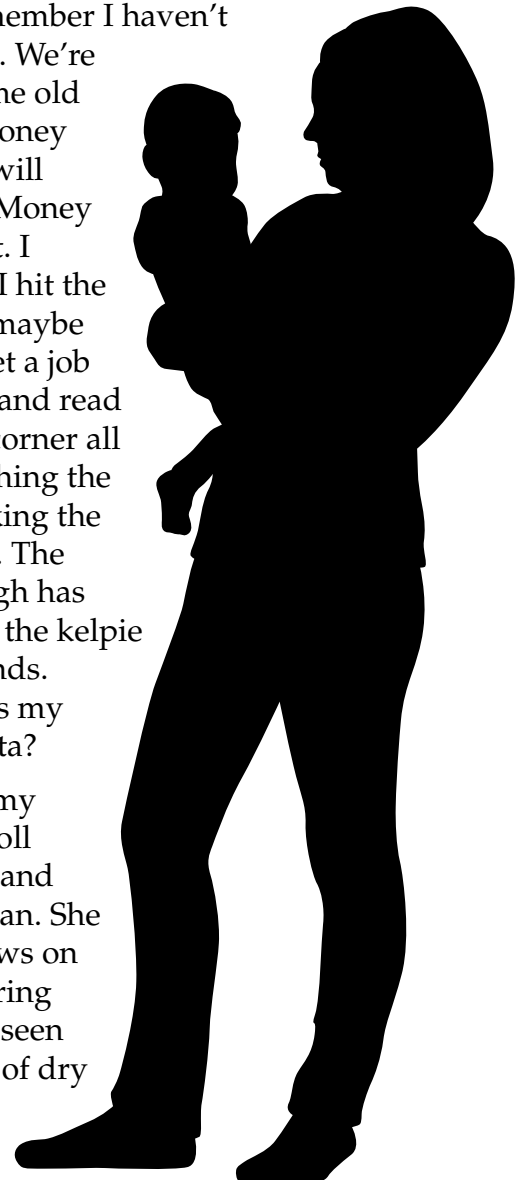
It's a dry year. Morale is low, stress is high, drought conditions inside and out. The season plan has changed too many times to count, only yesterday we discovered that most of the wheat we had been watering is now frosted and will be baled for hay instead of harvested for grain. Shouldn't complain, there's others worse off than us.

I'm meeting with the bank manager this arvo to 'touch base' (his words), which

I suspect means he'd like to know on a scale of 1 to 10 how full of shit the cash flow budget is. We get along well with him, he's a reasonable bloke, but I think we're about one more overdraft extension away from "how do you have your tea" to "step into my office."

I pass the sheep truck on my way into town and remember I haven't paid their bill. We're expecting some old season hay money this week so will pass that on. Money in, money out. I daydream as I hit the school zone, maybe I could just get a job at the library and read books in the corner all day, not watching the sky, not checking the bank account. The toddlers' cough has subsided and the kelpie is in good hands. Now, where is my beloved barista?

With bub on my shoulder I stroll into the shop and spot Aunty Jean. She runs dairy cows on the neighbouring farm and has seen her fair share of dry years. "Job's



buggered," she declares as she takes the baby and immediately starts rocking her. "Yeah we might have some hay for you," I answer as I go to order.

The local girl behind the counter who has always been beautiful overhears us and asks, "What does 'doing hay' mean?" We're trying to organize the netball trip and half the team says they can't go if they're 'doing hay!' I laugh and wish I were going on a boozy weekend with a pack of girls. I missed netball this year, on-court and off-court fun. Her hair is long and luscious and she's as gorgeous as she was when we used to hit up the Blue Light Discos. I subconsciously run my hand through my semi-greasy, kinda regrowth affected ponytail. I give her a brief summary of what it means to 'do hay' and explain that it's an all night job that doesn't lend itself to looking after kids or being very social. She huffs and goes to put in my order.

I reach for the local paper because I have two free hands and the baby is being well looked after. My phone beeps and the parts for the hay rake have come in. Shit, nearly forgot the drench. The door swings open and a girlfriend pushes a double pram in the door. The pram has so many attachments she's managed to fit four kids into it. "Happy days" she laughs; she has to laugh otherwise she'll cry. Her husband is a header and windrowing contractor and left a week ago to go and find work. There is no work. The whole state is drought declared. Every year she manages without him for months at a time while he brings back a year's worth of income. But not this year, his regular clients have sheep eating out crops or

they are watching tumbleweeds skim the landscape.

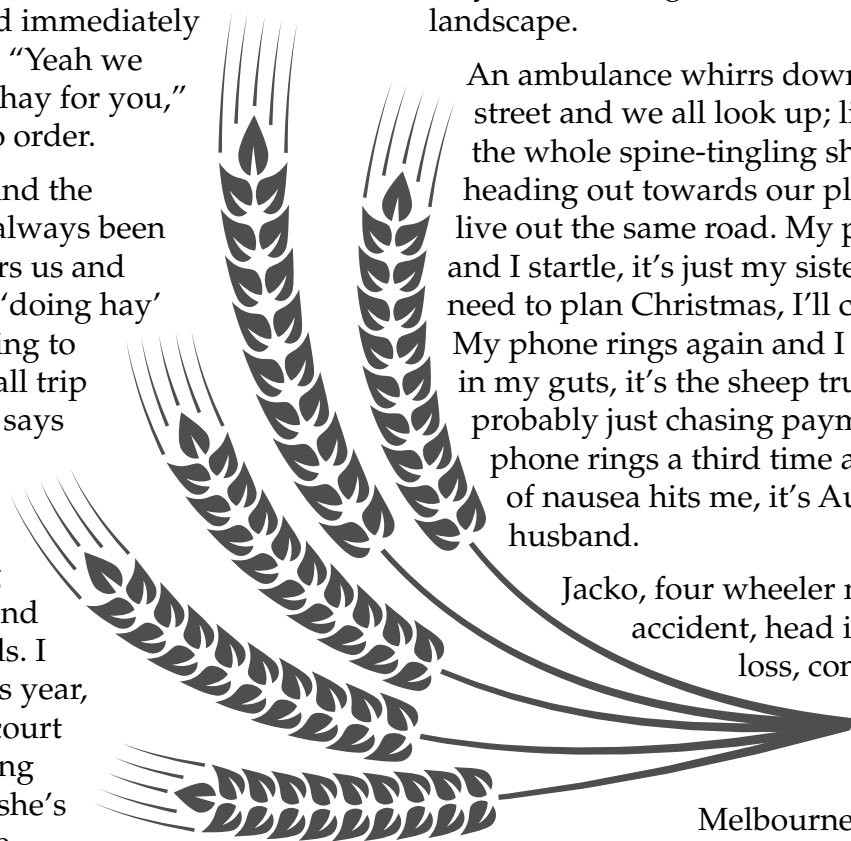
An ambulance whirrs down the main street and we all look up; lights, sirens, the whole spine-tingling shebang. It's heading out towards our place. We all live out the same road. My phone rings and I startle, it's just my sister in law, we need to plan Christmas, I'll call her back. My phone rings again and I feel a knot in my guts, it's the sheep truck driver, probably just chasing payment. My phone rings a third time and a wave of nausea hits me, it's Auntie Jean's husband.

Jacko, four wheeler motorbike accident, head injury, blood loss, conscious, ok, going to airlift him, maybe

Melbourne, suspected spinal damage, face but not his eyes. In an instant the shock has consumed me and the shop is a haze of worry. There's no air. The baby is delegated, the responsibility of the toddler taken over, I'm bundled into a car and driven south. There's still no air.

My hands shake as they prattle away on the phone trying to tell his mum, struggling to get onto his brother, attempting to call his sisters. An eternity stretches out as my mind plays "what if" and my heart lodges in my throat. He is safe, he is in hospital and he is alive. Hours turn into days and days blend into weeks. He will make a full recovery. There is air and I can breathe.

My uncle finished our hay and the bank manager sent flowers. The vet temporarily adopted Ginger and my girlfriend stocked our freezer with meals. The girl at the café sends a heartfelt message, I'm invited on the netball trip. It's a day session at the local pub so that all the farm wives can make it. We head home through the dust and dying crops and I look sideways at my husband. He smiles through the



bandages and drugs, “geez those lambs are looking good.”

Carly Marriott

All in a day's work

Penny let out a satisfied sigh as she surveyed the work her and her family had put in to achieve their vision. She looked across the reeds which had now established themselves, along with the other water plants that were hand planted by the family.

It was peaceful here, knowing this manmade wetland which had taken so long to come to fruition, was able to provide a winter refuge to so many native species, including frogs, insects, microorganisms and many birds.

Penny's eyes fluttered, and she tried to screw them shut, but she could not return to her dream. She peered at the alarm clock; it was 3am, still time to get more sleep before getting the kids ready for school. But try as she might sleep would not come - she loved that dream where her vision for her farm and the prosperity of her community felt so real.

One of the kids stirred in their sleep so Penny got out of bed in the cool night air and checked on each of them. In the soft light Penny felt that mother guilt pin at her, she knew that she didn't give the kids as much attention as she should. Not that the kids were neglected, where Penny slipped grandparents were there to pick up the slack on the home front. Once everyone was settled Penny padded back down the hallway, slipped back under the covers and curled up next to her husband who was soundly

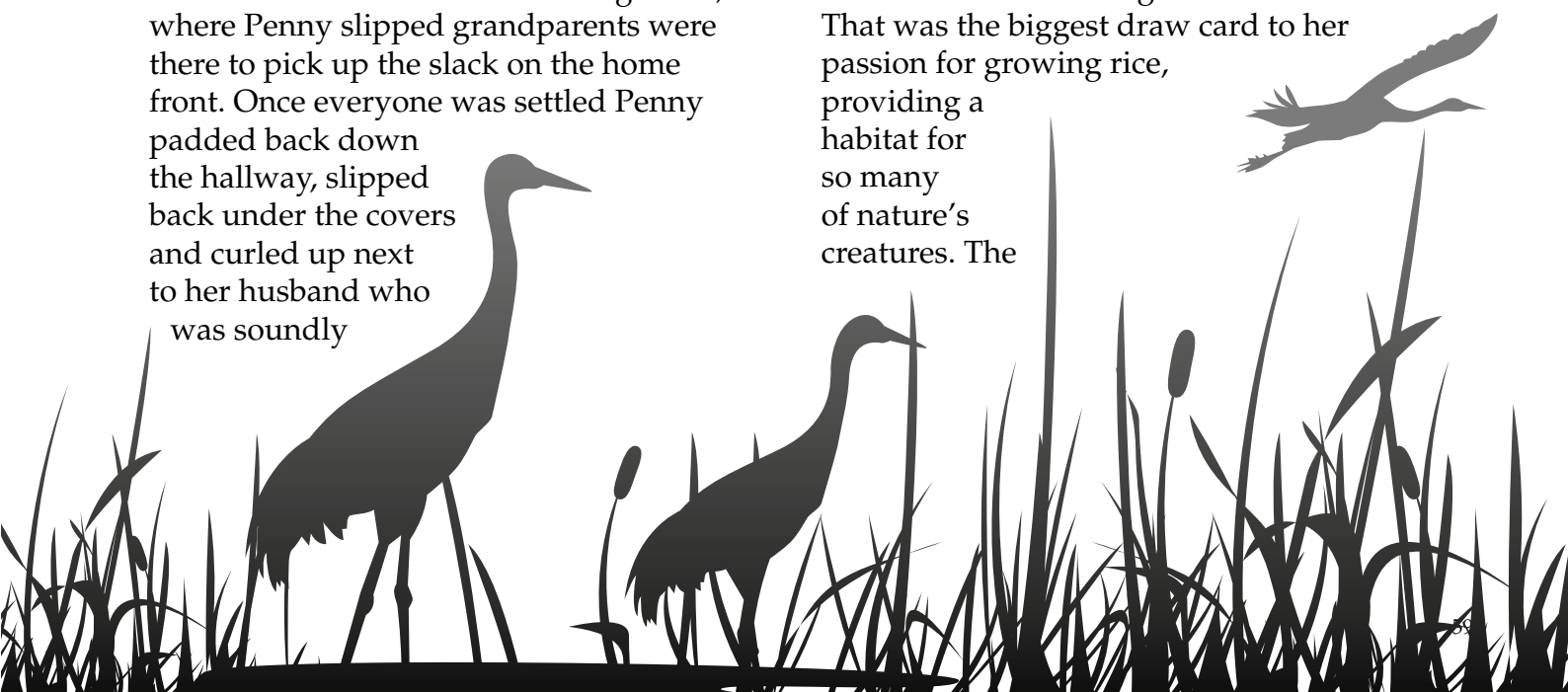
sleeping and oblivious to the fact she had been out of bed.

Trent was her biggest supporter and without his off-farm income there is no way that Penny could volunteer all the time she did to fighting for her community and trying to educate others that farmers are not the bad guys. Penny knew that Trent's options to develop his career were limited in their rural community, but they both really wanted to bring their children up here and make this community their home, it was worth fighting for.

Penny was the most surprised when she discovered that farming was so imbedded in her blood. Growing up she had always loved being with her father and helping out. After finishing school she was happy to venture off into the big smoke to get some life experience before returning to the land.

It was after the drought broke and Penny grew her own rice crop when the farming gene really kicked in. It was then that she truly fell in love with farming, combining food production and providing a habitat for native species. This was why she was fighting so hard, she didn't want to do anything else and her community was dependent on the water that had been taken away from food production.

It broke Penny's heart that people in the city thought you can't produce food and fibre without sacrificing the environment. That was the biggest draw card to her passion for growing rice, providing a habitat for so many of nature's creatures. The



brilliant blue dragonflies which infiltrated the rice crop, and the deafening frogs that sprang to life as soon as the water hit the paddock in preparation for sowing rice. Penny loved the seasons that rice was grown out the front of the house and falling to sleep with the crescendo of frogs lulling her to sleep.

Penny had their whole future mapped out. Along with developing tree corridors they would establish a wetland on their farm to support the wildlife during the winter after the rice crop had been drained and harvested. All that was possible before so much water was removed from production in her community. Now there is so much insecurity with the reduced amount of water available to farmers, the competition for water had increased and growing staples like rice and milk was becoming more challenging.

If only Penny could find that missing link, the switch that would make the bureaucrats and green zealots truly appreciate that you don't have to choose between one or the other, you can have

both. The environment and farming systems can coexist and they have to if we want to continue to produce enough food to feed ourselves and to export, which contributes to the local, regional and national economy. The Murray Darling Basin Plan, which came about from the 2007 Water Act had transformed her community and not for the better.

Sure, the Millennium drought had a significant impact on the decrease in employment, reduced numbers at schools and empty shop fronts, but growing up it wasn't like that. If only Penny could find a way to ensure that young farmers knew they had a secure future. She could envisage the oval full again of soccer kids, the netball courts were running on Saturday from 9 to 5, the footy clubs being able to field full teams and the shops all occupied.

Penny wasn't the only one from her community who had sacrificed so much to try and bring some common sense to a political decision that had brought so much insecurity and lack of confidence to her region. She had so much respect for those who had worked so hard to bring the community together and had provided many solutions to the perceived problems that filtered down from the city. If only the message that local solutions are the best approach to real outcomes, using local knowledge and experience was the best way forward. But water reform around the Basin Plan had split the community and plenty stood to make huge financial gains from the increase in their water asset.

Sleep finally came for Penny and this time she dreamt of starving sheep and cattle, yet the rivers were running a banker and all her region could do was watch as water flowed by. Farms which had been established to drought proof the country, that grew pasture and fodder for stock, fruit, cereals and produced vast quantities of milk lay idle. This isn't the way it was meant to be.

Shelley Scoullar



Farming

Food for thought

Have kids really been taught

*We are from the region of
Murray and Murrumbidgee*

*And our food we can
guarantee*

*Where does our food come
from now*

*Does our milk come from a
cow?*

*Or from a bottle on a supermarket
shelf*

I'd say the dairy farmer milks the cow themself

How do some kids think bread appears?

*Not at the bakers but from wheat grown for
years*

Grown along with many another crop

*Hoping like mad no disasters happen, like
locusts to hop*

Much of our fruit is grown on a tree

*Not in the fruit and veg aisle, sold for a higher
fee*

We grow, squeeze and pack our own juice

Please kids think about your produce

Bacon doesn't come in a packet

As sad as it may be, let's not cause a racket

But bacon comes from a pig

*Meat from animals, cows, pigs and lamb have
a market that is big*

*So children most of our food comes from a
farm*

*Not all squeaky clean from the shops where it's
full of charm*

So when you're eating your dinner tonight

*Give your food some thought before you take a
bite*

*And think of our hard working farm women
and men*

And the work they do to put food on your table



So please eat all

your Australian grown veg and fruit

As well as meat and dairy in hot pursuit

So have a healthy diet

*Food for thought please think of this, often in
the quiet*

Jennifer Bradshaw

Dirt Pour

A boy, not much older than five, stood alone in a dustbowl that was once an overfull channel. His cries could be heard across the vast wasteland. He was lost. Lost without a place. Lost without a home.

His tears had dried into dirty streaks, paved from eyelid to cheekbone. His brown eyes were dull. He had clashed with his twin sister. He had fled. The escape seemed so much better than the reality of her disapproving glare cast upon him. He was young. He didn't know any better. Or at least, he thought he didn't.

A fierce gale whipped about him, bringing the dust into a towering column of air. He shaded his eyes, trying desperately to keep the particles from invading his gaze. A scream was ripped from him, torn unwillingly from a carnal part of his being.

The heat seared his unbroken skin, his lips becoming chapped. Bleeding, he fell. He could hear a roar, like that of a beast about

to devour its prey. He turned, the tornado wreaking havoc on the landscape behind him. A sheen of sweat appeared on his face...

**

It has not rained in months. Barely a drop. A whisper. The land is suffocating, unable to breathe freely. It's gasping. No reprieve from the last drought that had the land entrapped in its vice-like claw.

The heavy heat has evaporated the moisture from the ground. Now? Well, now, it is a myriad of crevices that split the broken ground into a network of dusty spider webs.

The channels are bordering on empty, even though plans exist to forestall these tributaries running out. Every step he takes is slow. Languid. There is no purpose in his walk. There hasn't been for months.

He tries valiantly, but it is never enough. The unrelenting stench of death fills his nostrils. The vultures are the only things that survive here, like a virus consuming its host. He pulls the brim of his worn down Akubra over his weather-beaten face. He moves past the carcasses. Some still bear the mark of life; whereas others have had their bones bleached a stark white from the burning orb above.

He looks to the distance, seeing a mirage that waves alluringly. There he sees a concept that is far more foreign to him than the hope of ever seeing the rains again. Paddock upon paddock filled with...

**

The sun dried all that he could see. His breathing became shorter. His heart pounded, locked in its eternal prison cell, bound by its earthly confines. His hand stretched out before him in a last attempt to wrench his way out of his dire situation.

He lifted his palm, letting the flecks of dust filter through fingers that looked more like bones than they did flesh. It fell slowly, as if moving through an hourglass.

He coughed, the dirt began to clog and fill his lungs. He tried to cry out for someone to help him. It was in vain.

His head fell into the crook of his elbow, protecting the mind that mattered most. The heat lifted in its intensity. The blue expanse above him had the colour melt from the atmosphere, a blank grey returning in its place.

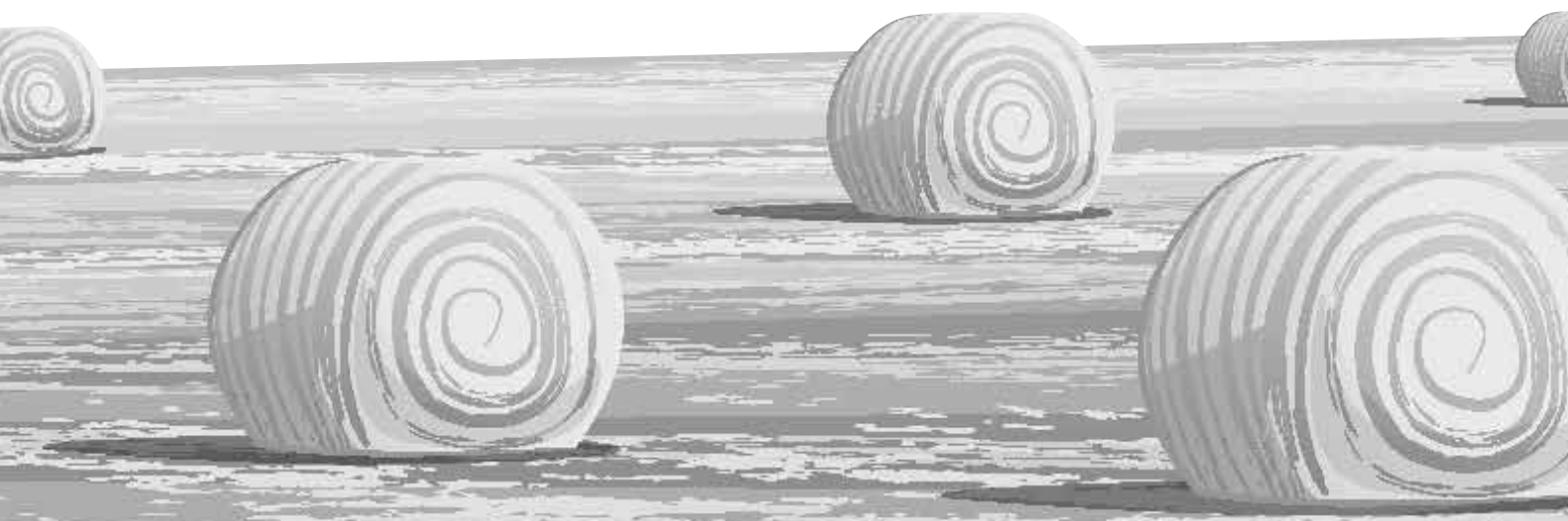
He could smell the beginnings of smoke. An ominous cloud was approaching. He moved as if to get up, but stumbled, falling heavily to the ground. He cried out in agony. His right arm lay in an awkward position, his elbow dislocated from its usual location.

The wind dragged the embers ahead of the fire; his skin became blotted with dark singes.

Too soon, he managed to think belatedly...

**

He has seen this before. Too often does this happen. Soon the fires will come,



ready to engulf its next victim. It will roar ferociously, claiming those too foolish to escape. It happens. It is a part of this landscape.

It has been for several millennia. But each generation has done nothing to reverse the

**Jacqui Johnson,
Deniliquin High School**



The folks were waiting at the church, "By Jove" they said "He's late".

They found him with his 'banjo', digging dirt and heard him cry

"Must finish off me waterin', the Hume is running' dry".

Our Junior's having lots of fun - he's got a novel craze,

He says he's

saving water - hasn't washed himself for days

The Irrigators' Lament

Where's me pen, it's on again, this time we've got a drought

"Be careful with the water men, the Hume is running out!"

There's hail at Wangaratta and rain at Bungaree,

And plenty of wind in Canberra (I think you'll all agree)

But in the Murray catchment they're suffering from drought

The "Berriquin" is rationed - the Hume is running out.

Had a meeting out at Blighty, with shout and aberration,

"We've gotta have more water" was moved with approbation

"Will someone here please make it clear just what it's all about?"

"We'll all be ruined" yelled Hanrahan, "THE HUME IS RUNNING OUT."

Young Joe was getting married, they'd fixed the day and date,

He leaves his knees and elbows, and round his neck and ears

"The season's jolly good," he says, "the best we've had for years."

But we really shouldn't worry and carry on a treat,

They'll fix the water problem just like they fixed the wheat

Don't agitate, sit down and wait, and soon you'll have your fill

They'll import water from Mackay and charge it on your bill.

Last year we had a bushfire, a flood in 'fifty-six'

But now that water's rationed we're really in a fix

But we'll carry on, regardless of fire, flood and drought

And now, I fear, the end is near, my humour's running out

A 'Banjo' Wielder

Written in 1958



WHY DO WE NEED WATER?

There's a simple fact of life that we cannot ignore – we all have to eat.

And we are not talking only about people living in our region, or our country. People all around the world have to eat.

In Australia, the lucky country, most of us have a staple meal on the table two or three times a day. That is not the case in other countries, where famine and starvation are serious issues.

It is important for Australian farmers to be given the opportunity to grow food that feeds our domestic market, as well as feeding millions of starving people throughout the world. Few, if any, would disagree with this.

What many Australians do not fully understand is the importance of water in the food and fibre growing process.

To explain it in the most basic terms, water is the essential resource if we want to maximise the potential of our agricultural production and, at the same time, feed the human race.

Over the past 20 years huge quantities of water have been switched from food growing to what is termed environmental flows. Unfortunately, as a nation, we have not yet fully recognised the unintended consequences that have eventuated. Nor have we sufficiently studied the amount of water needed for: (a) the environment; (b) food and fibre production.

As a result, we haven't yet got the balance right.

It is important that our politicians increase their understanding of the need to work towards achieving a balance that is in the best interests of both our nation and the world.

It is essential that we care for our environment so it can be enjoyed today and by future generations. That is why we need the right level of environmental flows – not huge volumes that cause floods and other damage.

It is also essential that we provide as much water as possible for our food and fibre producers, allowing them to play a role in feeding the world and also making a significant contribution to the Australian economy.

They're also the backbone that keeps hundreds of rural communities ticking. Without rural prosperity our country towns decline, some even die, forcing more people into already crowded cities.

So as a nation with a rich history of people who care for each other, it is surely time to work harder on ensuring we look after our country communities and the environment in which they live.

As we said, it's all about getting the balance right. This is achievable, provided we have the desire and determination to implement effective, common-sense water policy.

THE SPEAK UP CAMPAIGN



The Speak Up campaign was born out of a meeting of West Berriquin Irrigators Inc. in mid 2015 after the impact of reductions in productive water in our community started to hit home.

We realised the community had to fight back against the impacts of this plan, not only on food and fibre producers but also on the people and jobs they support.

The aim of the Speak Up campaign is to educate as many people as possible about the true effects of productive water lost from irrigated agriculture.

When our water delivery company Murray Irrigation Ltd told us the company needed to make drastic changes to be viable, as it is now operating with 27 per cent less water, we decided we needed to change how we deliver our message.

The politicians and certainly the Murray Darling Basin Authority were not listening to our concerns that if more productive water is removed from irrigated agriculture then the ramifications for our clean green agricultural products will be dire.

Here in the Southern Riverina we produce high quality food efficiently and it has an international reputation for being "clean and green". If we lose the current system we will be importing more food and who knows what has happened to it before it gets here. Australian agriculture has very strict guidelines on how we produce food to ensure we are among the highest quality producers in the world.

We started a social media campaign to educate the general public about what irrigation farmers are producing here in their back yard and the flow-on effect of not having enough water available for productive use.

We started a Facebook page and on it we have had some really great stories about local farmers and how

they can give back to the community when they are allowed to be productive, as well as investing in their local environment and importantly paying more taxes.

The social media campaign has tried to explain the complicated issues around water and the Murray Darling Basin Plan at a basic level. Our goal is to help as many people as possible gain a better understanding of the importance of irrigated agriculture.

We also have instigated a media campaign which has generated huge publicity in metropolitan, regional and local media, explaining the plight of our food producers. We have been constantly on radio, occasionally on television and in the pages of newspapers including the Melbourne Herald-Sun, Sydney Morning Herald and The Australian, plus a plethora of country papers. We are confident the message about the damage being caused by the Murray-Darling Basin Plan is being delivered.

As farmers we are an optimistic lot and we have people here with the skills, innovation and passion to produce food. We can do it clean and green; we have the potential to help feed the world.

But we need to find a balance between environmental and productive water, and when we do there is a win:win solution out there.

People can follow the Speak Up stories on Facebook at Speak Up 4 Water, you can also follow us on twitter @Speakup4water or check out our website www.speakup4water.com

All our work costs money and we would welcome any assistance you can provide. If you would like to help fund the Speak Up Campaign donate through our website or email speakup4water@gmail.com for direct deposit details. Thank you for your assistance.

'Food For Thought' is an initiative of the Speak Up Campaign

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www.speakup4water.com

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Murray River at Barham - 1915

Murray River during millenium drought

BASIN PLAN BASICS

The Murray Darling Basin Plan was drafted after the Howard Government passed the Water Act 2007. Malcolm Turnbull was Water Minister at the time and therefore responsible for drafting the Water Act.

The Water Act 2007 was legislated during the Millennium drought, which was the worst drought in recorded history.

Despite the worst drought in history the Murray River did not run dry, in contrast to previous bad droughts. There is evidence of people enjoying a picnic on the bed of the river at Koondrook during the 1914-15 drought, and also a photograph of a bullock dray crossing the hard, dry river bed during that same period.

The Murray River did not run dry during the Millennium drought thanks to the foresight of our forefathers, who built infrastructure to improve our water use and efficiency. Another major contributing factor that kept the river running was our water allocation system. Throughout that

2001-2009 the average allocation to food producers was 36.8%, which included two years when there was a zero water allocation for food and fibre production, and one year there was an 11% allocation. The lowest temporary water price in that period was \$75 per ML and the highest was \$1100.

Even though we were experiencing the worst drought on record some environmentalists claimed this weather pattern was permanent and convinced the Government the Murray River was dying. It was from these exaggerated claims that the Murray-Darling Basin Plan was born.

Prior to the Basin Plan, within the footprint of Murray Irrigation Ltd which delivers water to the Southern Riverina's food and fibre producers, a number of reforms had already taken place to ensure that environmental needs were met alongside social and economic needs. Unfortunately the Basin Plan was established before the impacts of these measures could be properly evaluated. The measures included:

1995 - 30GL Murray Irrigation conveyance water transferred to NSW

Government for Adaptive Environmental Water.

1995-2010 - Land and Water Management Plans investing \$105m Government funds with \$544m community contribution to improve on-farm efficiencies.

The Living Murray program (NSW and Commonwealth) delivering 45GL for the environment.

Water for Rivers – a further 11GL for the environment.

As of May 2017 NSW Murray has returned 348GL back to the Commonwealth for environmental flows, despite the target being 262GL. Thus, we have already exceeded the original target by 30%.

The draft Basin Plan resulted in the MDBA deciding that 2750GL of water needed to be returned to the environment. Of this 650GL could be met through the Sustainable Diversion Limit Adjustment Mechanism. This means there can be changes to water sharing rules and projects to deliver environmental water more efficiently to the value of 650GL, which can offset the water to be recovered from productive use.

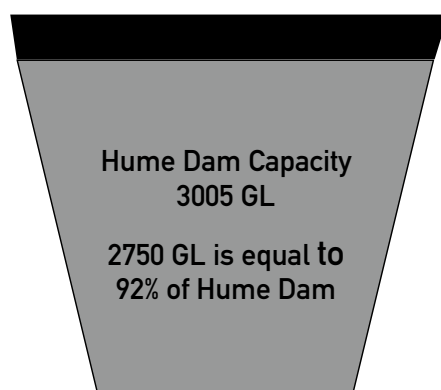
During the Gillard Government, Labor committed another 450GL of water to the Basin Plan, and this is called the 450GL of up-water.

Governments went about recovering water through buybacks and efficiency programs.

In 2016 an amendment to the Water Act resulted in a cap for buybacks of 1500GL.



tough
time
from



PRODUCTION FACTS

Measuring water

- 1,000,000 litres = 1 megalitre (ML)
- 1,000 megalitres = 1 gigalitre (GL)

An Olympic swimming pool holds 2.5ML



2,750GL is equal to 5.5 Sydney Harbours

2118GL is being recovered from productive use through the MDBP.

This could produce roughly:

3.1 billion litres of milk or
12.5 billion lattes
(\$1.55 billion farm gate value).

If 3.1 billion lattes were lined up next to each other, they would make a continuous line that could wrap around the world 21.9 times



The power of water

1GL of water has the power to produce:

960 tons of rice OR 6.2 million serves



1,500 tons of wheat OR 2.5 million loaves of bread



1745GL (or 82%) of the water recovered under the Basin Plan has come from the Southern Basin, this water has the power to produce.:

Rice:

which is 1.7 million tons of rice OR 11,342 million servings OR \$698 million (\$400 per ton) farm gate value

Wheat:

which is 2,617,500 tons of wheat OR 4,423 million loaves of bread OR \$1 billion (\$400 per ton) farm gate value

Production facts:

- In Northern Victoria and Southern NSW, tomatoes use 6ML/Ha which produce 100t. At \$100 per ton - this is world's best practice.
- Australian rice growers use 50 percent less water than the world average to grow 1kg of rice.

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