

2017 *What Matters?* Competition

YEAR 5/6 WINNER TASMANIA

Maya Harrington, Princes St Primary School

The Place I Belong

Standing on the deck, I stare out to sea. The sun is setting before my own eyes, filling the sky with natural hues. The sight before me is like a beautiful friendship. I'm seeing it. I'm living it. The wind lashes against my face, sending a deathly shiver down my spine. I haven't been told to put my jacket on – yet. A kookaburra laughs at the smile perched on my face, but knows it's impossible to remove it. I'm back at a place I belong. Our shack... I laugh. A laugh that fills me with happiness, like when we're all laughing together. Happiness is a strange thing. It sometimes picks you up and takes you to a land full of my family, old fashioned music, the bush and seafood. Then it might pick you up and dump you in a garbage bin. That's what life is like. I'm always happy. I don't count the times I'm not.

Then in a blink of an eye, I'm back to the busy shack. It matters to me that I saw that sunset. It matters to me that I saw with my own two eyes, what most kids would have seen on a device. Sometimes I wonder. Why? Why do kids have more interest in a device? Am I different? Is it strange to want to hug my family? I think I'm different to a normal kid, but I'm proud of it. I go and give my Ma and Gok (grandparents) a big cuddle. Why? Because I want to. No device for me. To see their faces light up, thrills me. I think kids take life for granted. I don't. I know how lucky I am. I appreciate it. My aunty works in a school where kids aren't so fortunate. They don't have a great life at home. While we sit around being embarrassed about hugs, they long for just one. Why doesn't anyone understand?

My kookaburra watches me walk down onto the beach. The silky sand slips through my feet, like the bush slipping away from us. The water tingles my feet like an icy pole on a scorching summer's day. They feel numb, and I feel alive and free. I skip. I twirl. I leap in the air and splash in the water. The roaring wind has not just captured me, but the trees as well. They make a slow creaking sound, and just when I think they're going to fall over, they pop back up. I feel like I'm flying. Why am I one of the only kids getting out here? We've reached the end of the beach, and as a family tradition, I fight the pounding wind, and walk out onto the jetty to touch the pole. Again, I stare out to sea. The furious waves smash against the jetty as black as thunder, and I notice the fish farms. I'm thinking about this experience, when it comes to me. I want to shout and cry. But I don't. I keep it inside me. But now I'm going to tell you how I feel. It matters to me... that you know.

I'm 11, and don't think I'm 20. I love being a kid. It means you can see life through different eyes. But most kids don't care. Walking along the beach, seeing the fish farms, makes me realise. The governments are ruining our environment. Kids need to get out there and smell the fresh air. See it. I'm seeing it. I'm living it. Are you? I'm glad I've told you now. Maybe, I'll make a difference.