

# The Cook-Off



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## Enviro-Stories

Enviro-Stories is an innovative literacy education program that inspires learning about natural resource and catchment management issues. Developed by Peekdesigns, this program provides students with an opportunity to publish their own stories that have been written for other kids to support learning about their local area.

[www.envirostories.com.au](http://www.envirostories.com.au)

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# The Cook-Off

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I'm Ella. My Mum and Dad own a cattle farm at Eulah Creek where I help out as much as I can. I have a dog called Rusty and a cat called Holly. They don't help much.

It's getting hard to feed the cattle now because there's a bad drought. This is the third year in a row we have had hardly any rain. If it doesn't rain soon my parents are going to have to shut the farm down and find new jobs.





Every morning we have to get up early and feed the cattle before I go to school. I attend Narrabri Public School and I'm in Year 5.

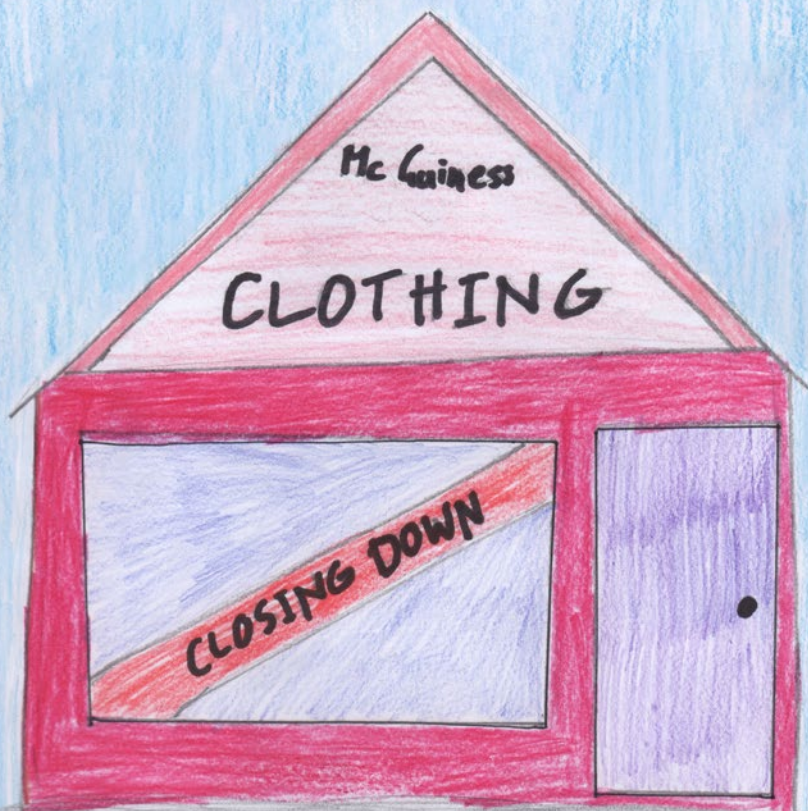
My best friends are Penny, Beth, Bree and Olive. Their families are all affected by the drought as well.

When I get home from school, I unpack my bag, get dressed into my farm clothes, have afternoon tea, then I go and help my parents around the farm.

My parents seem upset. They're always working extremely hard around the farm and not able to make much money.

The drought is taking its toll on the whole community. People are moving and shops are shutting down. I know at least nine people that have moved and seven people that have had to shut their shops.

Narrabri is getting smaller and smaller. I swear my town is going to disappear off the map.







There are only 15 people in our class, there used to be 23. The playground seems empty. The only sound left is the trees whispering and the pitter patter of a few feet.

There are only 160 kids left at school when there used to be 320. This means about 50 percent of my school has had to move because of the drought.

Even my favourite shop, where we used to go every Sunday for \$2 ice-creams, is gone.



We have only 100 cattle left on our farm. We used to have 300. Dad has had to sell a lot of them because we don't have the money to buy feed. We have seen people on the news giving out hay for free, but we don't think we are going to get much... or any at all.

Mum and Dad are very tired and worried. We need rain really soon!!!



"Really, Mum! Really!"  
I yelled excitedly.

"Yes darling, it's on."  
said Mum.

"Yay! I can't wait until  
the Camp Oven Cook-  
Off. Can I enter? Please  
Mum, please?" I asked.

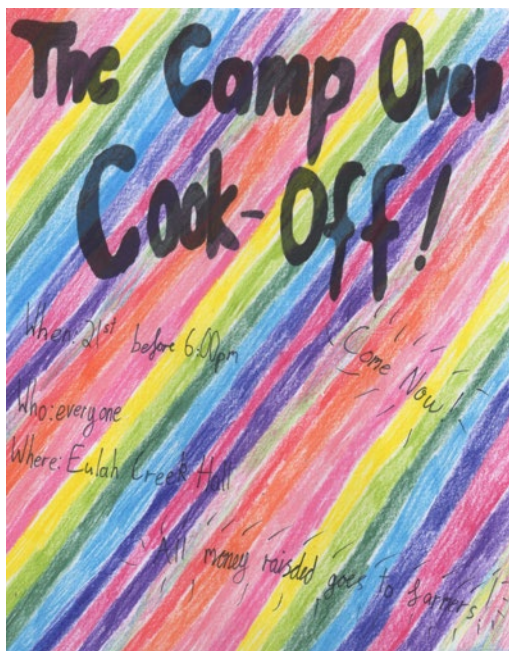
"Yes dear," Mum  
replied, "I'll go put it  
on my calendar now."



I was really excited that there was a fun fundraiser  
called the *Camp Oven Cook-Off* on the 21st and  
today is the 18th. It will make some money for the  
people in our community.

I wondered if I could bring some friends home on the  
bus and then their parents could pick them up after  
the cook-off. YAY!

My Mum and I have just come back from the Eulah Creek hall. We were helping plan the cook off.



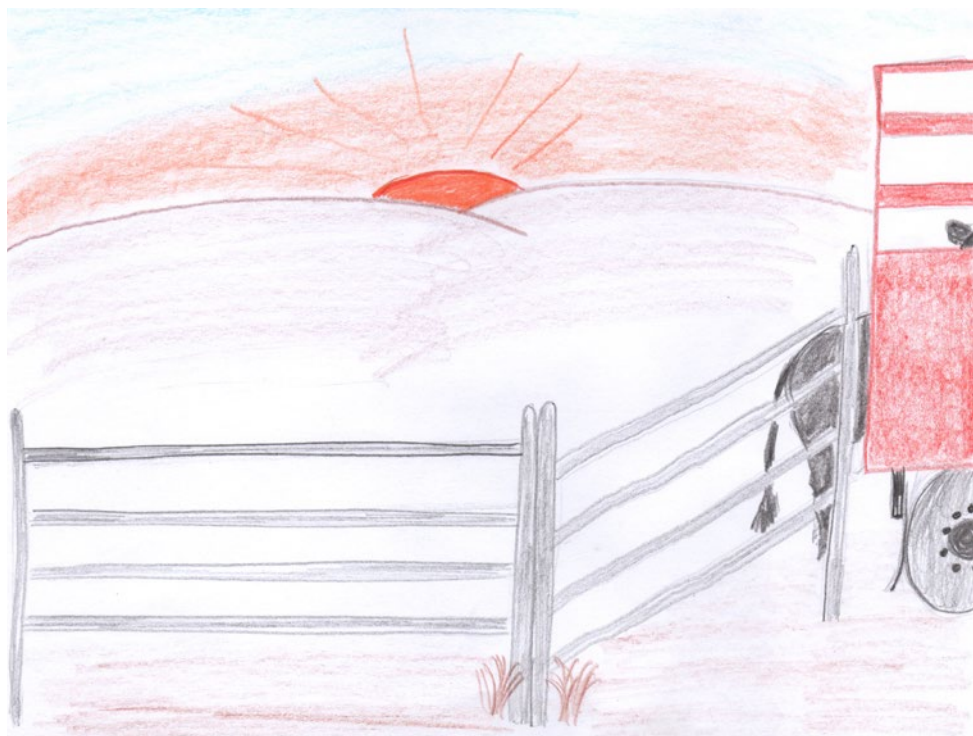
The plan was:

- People attending can donate money to the cause if they attend.
- Farmers should get in for free, so don't have to pay unless they want to.
- You also have to pay to enter the cook off.
- There are games for kids too (nobody pays).
- At six o'clock everybody has to bring their camp oven over to the tables and then they serve their food to the people.
- There is going to be secret judges and they will pick who wins.
- There will also be a billy boiling competition.
- There will be a bonfire after judging with some more games, raffles and fundraising events.

Over the next couple of days, I heard Mum and Dad talking about shutting down the farm. I don't want them to because I love this farm and this town. I want to grow up here. But if we leave, what about my friends? I'll have to make new friends. I'm so scared! I wish this fundraiser would hurry up and get here.







My dad managed to sell some more cattle. Now we only have 50 left. My parents are still sad and worried but this will keep the farm open a little longer.

They seem to be a bit happier and I know they are looking forward to the community coming together for the cook-off.

We have decided to volunteer to help at the cook-off and I can't wait. We are also going to be entering a camp oven ourselves.

This can't come any sooner as there are only about 12 people in my class now.

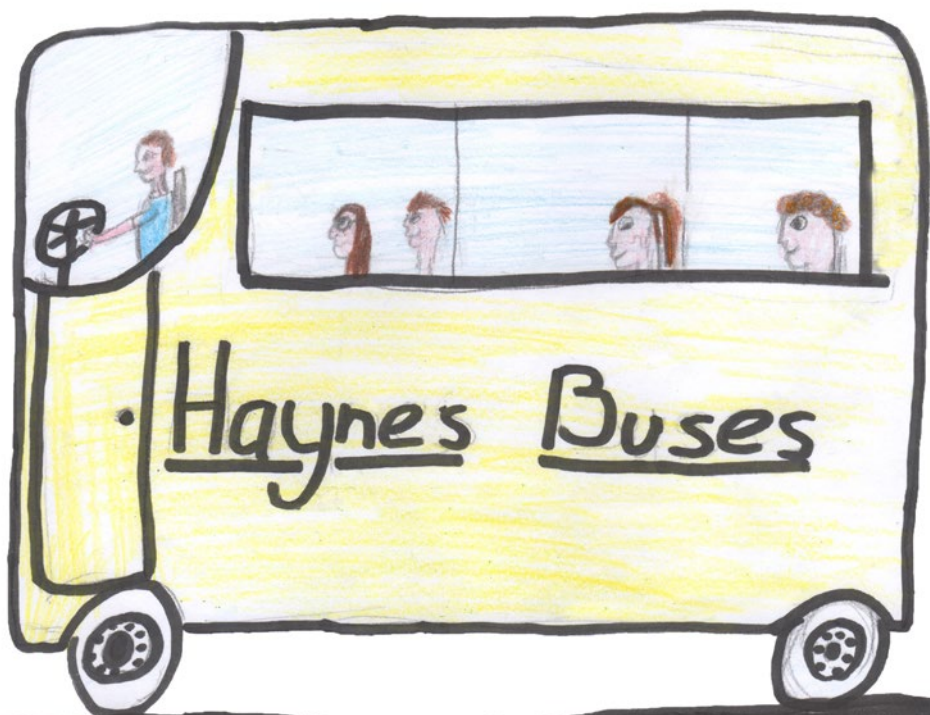


My friends and I decided to help with the cook-off by setting up the decorations and the clean-up. I've cracked open my piggy bank and found just enough money for my friends to go. They will come with me on the school bus and then all we have to do is literally, 'walk over the road'.

We live right across from the hall where the cook-off is being held.

It's finally here, Yay! I'm on the bus with my friends going to my house right this instant. Then all we have to do is get changed out of our school clothes and walk across the road. Ten minutes later...

"Here we are! First things first. Let's get the place cleaned up. Then we can put up the decorations." I said excitedly to my friends. "Let's go, go, go!"







"Alright guys, we are all done cleaning up and decorating. Now all we have to do is wait for the people to come. In fact here they come now," I said. "Beth and Olive, you guys stay here to greet everyone. Bree and Penny go start a camp oven. I'll go and be a firebug and get some hot coals going."

"Roll up! Roll up! Come-on everybody. Bring your camp ovens over and get your plates. Let's get into the food," said Dave the organiser over the loudspeaker.

I asked my Dad to carry the camp oven over to the table where we were serving the food. After we had finished serving everybody, we sat down to eat! I was excited to see what everyone else had made.

After dinner we waited for the winners to be announced.

"The winners of the junior camp oven cook-off are Penny, Bree, Olive and Ella. Please come out to get your prize."

The night continued and we raised some money to help our farmers. Most importantly, everybody had a great time and we all came together to support one another.





Later that night, around 1:00am in the morning, there was a noise that sounded very strange to us. Plop, Plop, Plop. Followed by a constant pitter patter.

"What's that? What is that... it's raining, it's raining." I thought. "Hey Mum, Dad, it's raining, it's raining" I screamed as I ran into their room, but they were already up and staring out the window with relief.

I climbed into their bed and gave them a big hug. We drifted off to sleep and when I woke up in the morning it was still raining. I played outside in the rain the whole day.





The bell rings and we're back in the real world. In other words, the drought has broken and we are back in business. This is what farming is all about.

The paddocks are green again and the cows are eating happily.

I like to think the *Camp Oven Cook-Off* was the thing that broke the drought! If not, at least it made lots of people in our community really happy and brought us all together.





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