



# CLIMATE CHANGE ON FOR YOUNG & OLD

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## What Went So Wrong?

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A young girl sits at the window of her room. Inside, the airconditioner is using power, making the room have a comfortable, almost cold, temperature. The hair on the girl's arms stands up in the slight chill. She watches the outside world where the sky expands forever in an immaculate expanse of blue. High up in its midst she sees the sun and wonders if it is burning brighter today. Following its rays, the girl's eyes meet the vast spread of red-orange ground. It is caked and cracking, like tiny islands separated by deep chasms, or perhaps like the pieces of the puzzle that is *what went so wrong*. In the shadows of the house she notices the pitiful shrubbery that has somehow found a way to survive, while past the house the dry white limbs of the odd few trees are almost indistinguishable from the bones of her father's last cow.

How long has it been since it last rained, she wonders. And how much longer have they yet to wait? Her father tells her he doesn't know, but he thinks it will be too long. She asks when her mother is coming back, but he looks away and only says 'I don't know'. The girl looks out the window again and notices the paint is cracked on the sill like the rest of the walls. Her father says they'll paint it someday, but she knows it will just crack again because the sun will have its way. She gently pulls off the pieces that are cracked on the inside of the house and fingers them. Holding the pieces in her hands, she protects them like a hen protects its egg. She knows they won't last though and she lets the pieces fall, watching them slowly float to the ground in a trance. Nothing lasts any more.

The other farmers living nearby have moved away. Her father says some are gone forever, but he meets them at the cemetery. She wonders why he would want to meet them in such a melancholy place, although she sees in him a sadness she dares not to explain.

The airconditioner suddenly turns off. Already the heat begins to crawl through the house. Looking out the window and watching the air grow fuzzy in the warmth; the girl knows what her father won't say.

With the cattle gone the money stops, and with the money gone the temperature of the house soars. The girl tries to hide in the shadows, but the heat reaches everywhere, holding her in a fiery embrace. Her father sees her suffering as her cheeks glow red, but water is so scarce that he can't use it to comfort her.

An economy built on farming and agriculture begins to crumble. Even it cannot resist the flames of the ever-increasing temperature. The dams are as good as empty, but the sea grows higher and the houses on the shore begin to flood.

Fires rage in the bush, well beyond the point of submission. The wildlife is dying as their homes are destroyed. Why did no-one listen and act when they could? The time in the hour glass is running short. Countries fight for water and vainly attempt to begin to put research into stopping emissions. But it seems all too late.

The young girl stares out her window. She no longer looks at the bright blue sky in the happiness and joy of a newborn day, but stares up at in dismay. A tiny smudge of a cloud is her final hope as she wishes it to grow big and cover the sky. Her father watches her with glazed eyes and hopes that someone will come and tell him it is all over. But it seems neverending. The sea of cracked ground, seemingly drenched in the blood of those who suffer, shows no sign of remorse or sympathy. It wishes not to be marred by the green of new life.

The cloud does not listen though, just like the leaders that could have stopped this from happening. It grows smaller and smaller, more and more indistinct, as it fades into blue.

Her eyes turn to blue as she realises she doesn't remember the feel of rain. Oh how she wishes for rain, but all she knows now is heat and sweat. Her body is covered in the latter. Her skin is sticky and her clothes cling to her skin, yet there seems to be no relief in sight. The girl's father wipes at his forehead with a stained rag as he watches his daughter. She is not the same, but neither is he. The land has

changed and it has changed them. He knows he has to leave, but his car won't start. Their small reserves of food and water are running out. There's nothing left now, and there's nothing left to do. They can't leave now as they wonder *what went so wrong?*



**Judy Endrei** wrote this in 2008 when she was in Year 11 at Balwyn High School in Victoria.