



# Years 7-8 Category Winner & Overall Tasmanian Winner

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## Fishing in the Clouds

If you had asked 11-year-old me what matters in the world, I wouldn't have had an answer. I was too focused on playing video games, eating chocolate, and feasting on candy. Jump forward three years, I now realize spending time with the people I love and being grateful for this time is important to me. Now I'm not one to write a sad, upsetting, depressing story but I believe I need to get this off my chest. Without further ado, here is my story.

As a young boy, I was more attached to my mother as she was less strict and would let me get away with things. Although my dad loved me, he was heavier on discipline and wanted to teach me to be independent. Without him I don't think I would be the same person as I am today. I still remember catching my first fish and seeing the joy in his face. Memories like these will stick with me forever.

Fast forward to 2020, I was lying in my room, playing my PlayStation when I heard someone walk up the hallway. It was Mum, she sat me down on my bed, her eyes were red, I knew something was wrong. She wrapped her arms around me, pulled me close, sitting there for what felt like eternity, until she could finally talk. I was hit with the most dreadful news, my dad was diagnosed with stage 4 lung cancer, it was terminal. I sat there dazed, my eyes blurred, and tears started rolling down my cheeks. My dad was going to die.

A year later, my dad could only whisper, I couldn't remember what his voice sounded like. He was given drugs so he could stay with us for longer, it was now about how much time we would have together. He couldn't do much physical activity, although he still did what he loved, fishing. My Dad was transferred to hospital in March 2022. He was so sick, having coughing fits every few hours. While my dad was in hospital, I didn't visit, I felt sick to the stomach whenever I watched him in bed, struggling. I stayed at home, feeling guilty.

My Dad was a fighter, he fought stage four cancer for two years. He continued fishing, it was what he loved. We got the chance to go to Eaglehawk Neck where there was a fishing tournament. He won, and we got to see it happen. That was the last 'fun' thing we did as a family. The next month, my dad was bedridden, he wanted to spend his last months with us. He didn't go to the hospital. We cared for him. I am happy he got to stay with us, in our home, rather than in a hospital hooked up to machines, he wouldn't have liked that.

The eleventh of July 2022; I was at my nan's house. I heard my nan's phone; I didn't think much of it until I heard my Mum's voice. I just knew what she was going to say. When Nan started crying my heart dropped. I just lay there feeling like someone was squeezing my heart. I cried and cried. I felt lost and afraid. I panted to the beat of my heart, trying to get a breath through my tears. My dad was gone, forever.

I now realize spending time and being grateful for the people I love is what truly matters. I also hope cancer research will lead to a cure, preventing unnecessary deaths in the future so people like my dad, receive life-saving treatment.