2022 WINNER DISTINCTIVE WORK CHASS

Waiting for Daddy

Author
Marg Rogers

Illustrations
Raph Roberts

Additional Illustrations
Trish Donald

Rose's Story

Foreword

When young children experience the challenges of parental deployment, they may display many and varied responses that educators and parents can use as an indicator to understand where support is needed. The book ‘Waiting for Daddy: Rose’s story,’ incorporates both the physical and emotional responses to a parent's deployment, as well as providing resilience-building strategies for children when seeking comfort and understanding.

When a parent in the Australian Defence Force has a deployment that is forthcoming or currently occurring, parents and educators can use this book as a platform to create an open and safe environment to encourage discussion with children. The book encourages children to normalise feelings and emotions that they may experience and helps them to develop a base understanding of what is occurring in age-appropriate language.

'Waiting for Daddy: Rose's Story' is a valued resource supported by in-depth research by Marg Rogers that can be used by parents and educators as a working tool to gain ideas and strategies. These ideas and strategies can assist the development of skills, knowledge and confidence to embed inclusive practices to support military families effectively.

Emily Small
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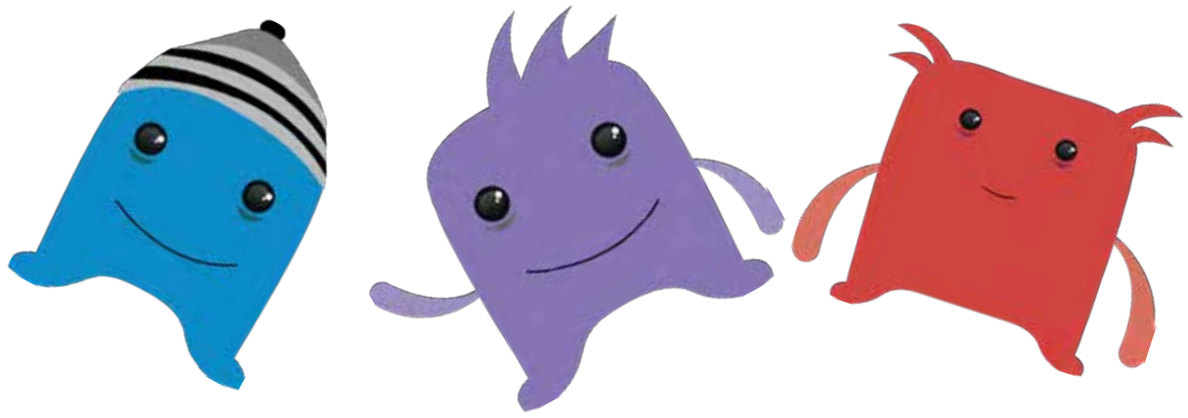
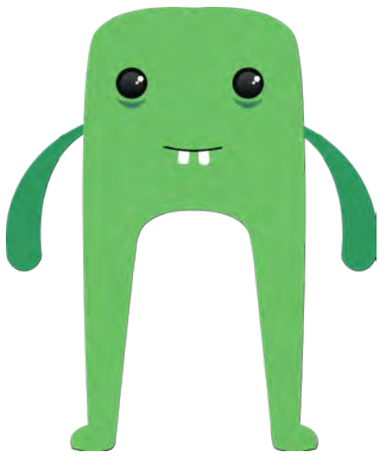
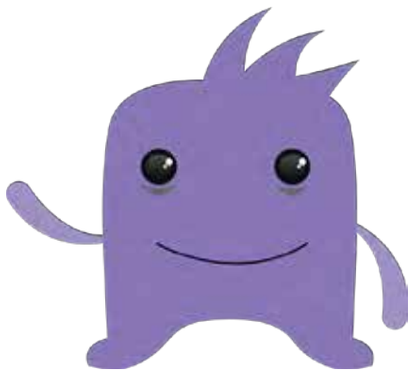


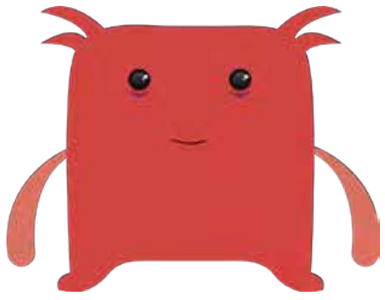


Si
likes gymnastics
and diving

Bean
likes snow boarding
and surfing

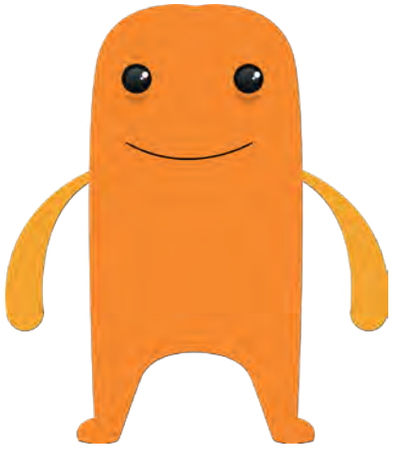


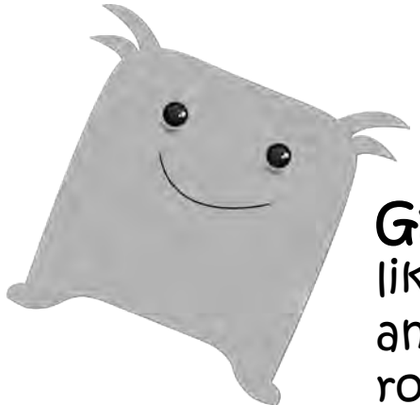
Hu
likes French
cricket and
rounders



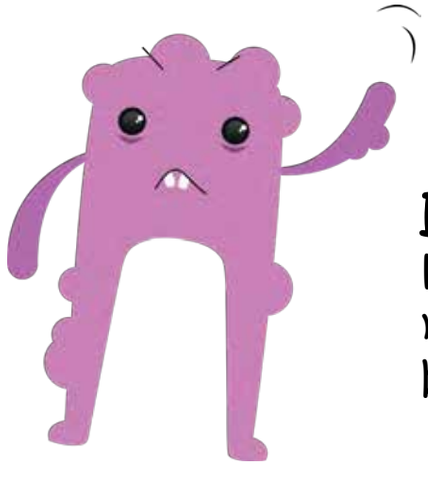
Mor
likes
skateboards
and candle
making

Yopo
likes yoga and
table tennis



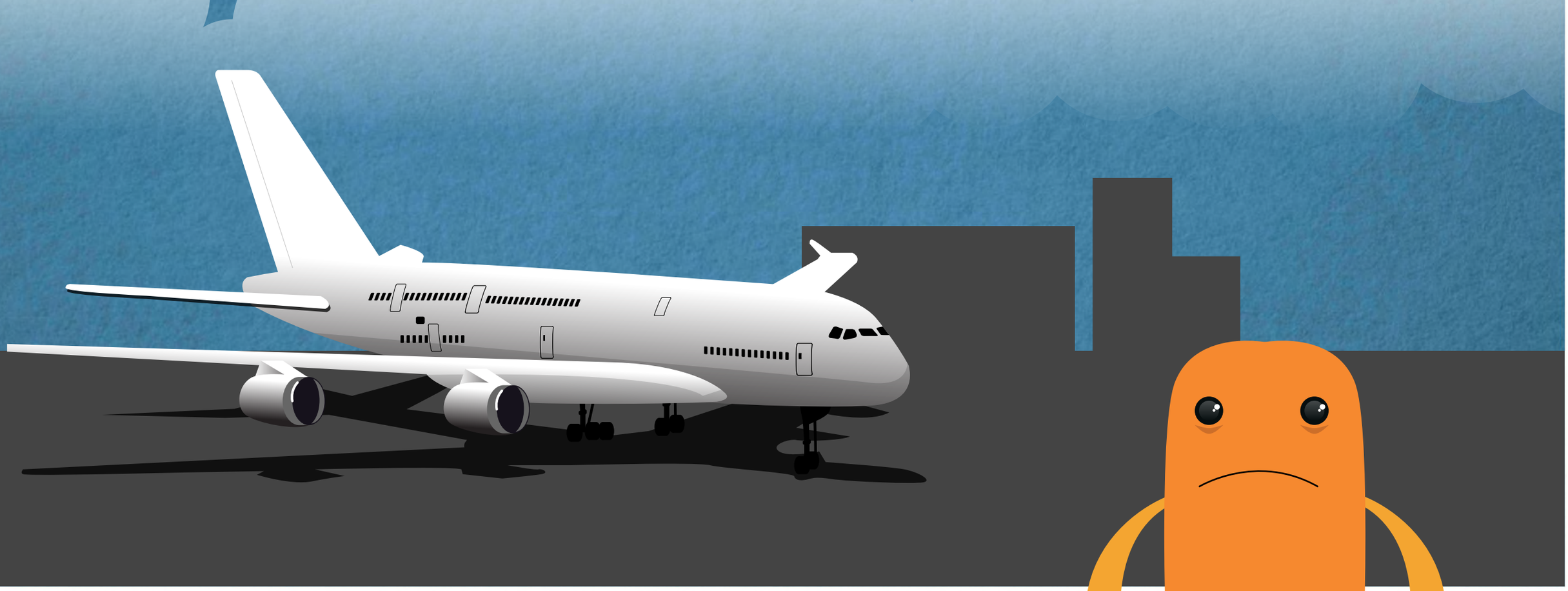


Gre
likes dancing
and
rollerblading



Lurp
likes horse
riding and
ballet

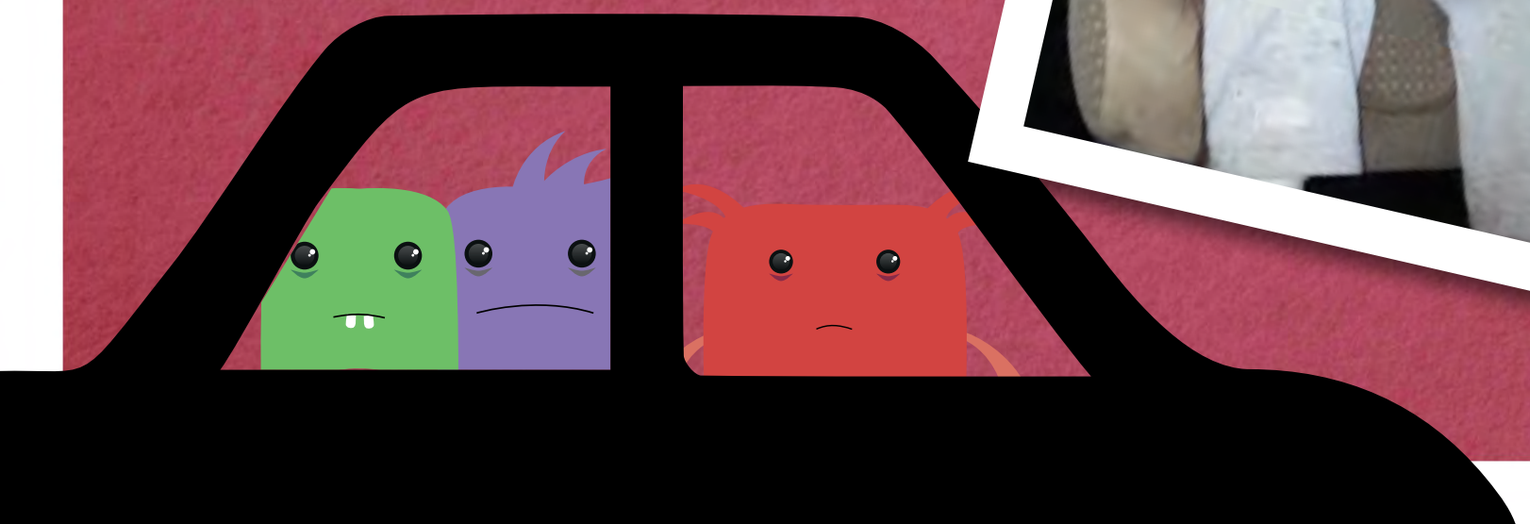
When Daddy goes on deployment,
we take him to the airport to say goodbye.
I don't like the airport!



On the way home it is very quiet in the car.
I think about asking Mum:

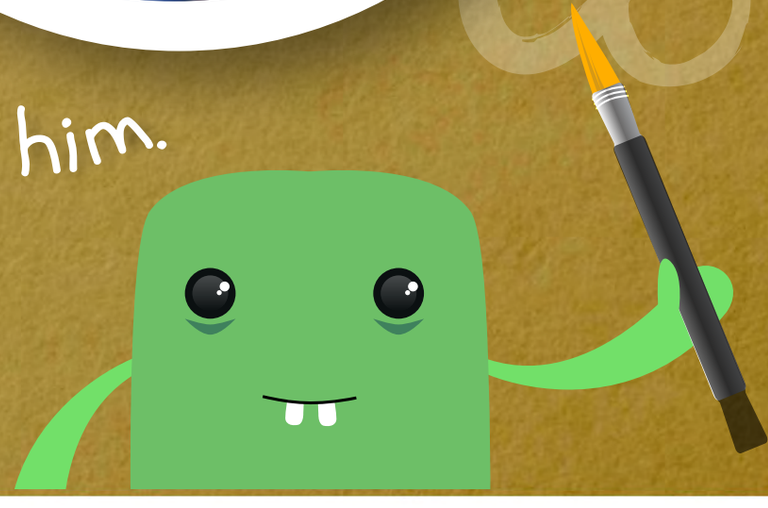
'When is Daddy coming home?'

But she is
looking a bit sad.



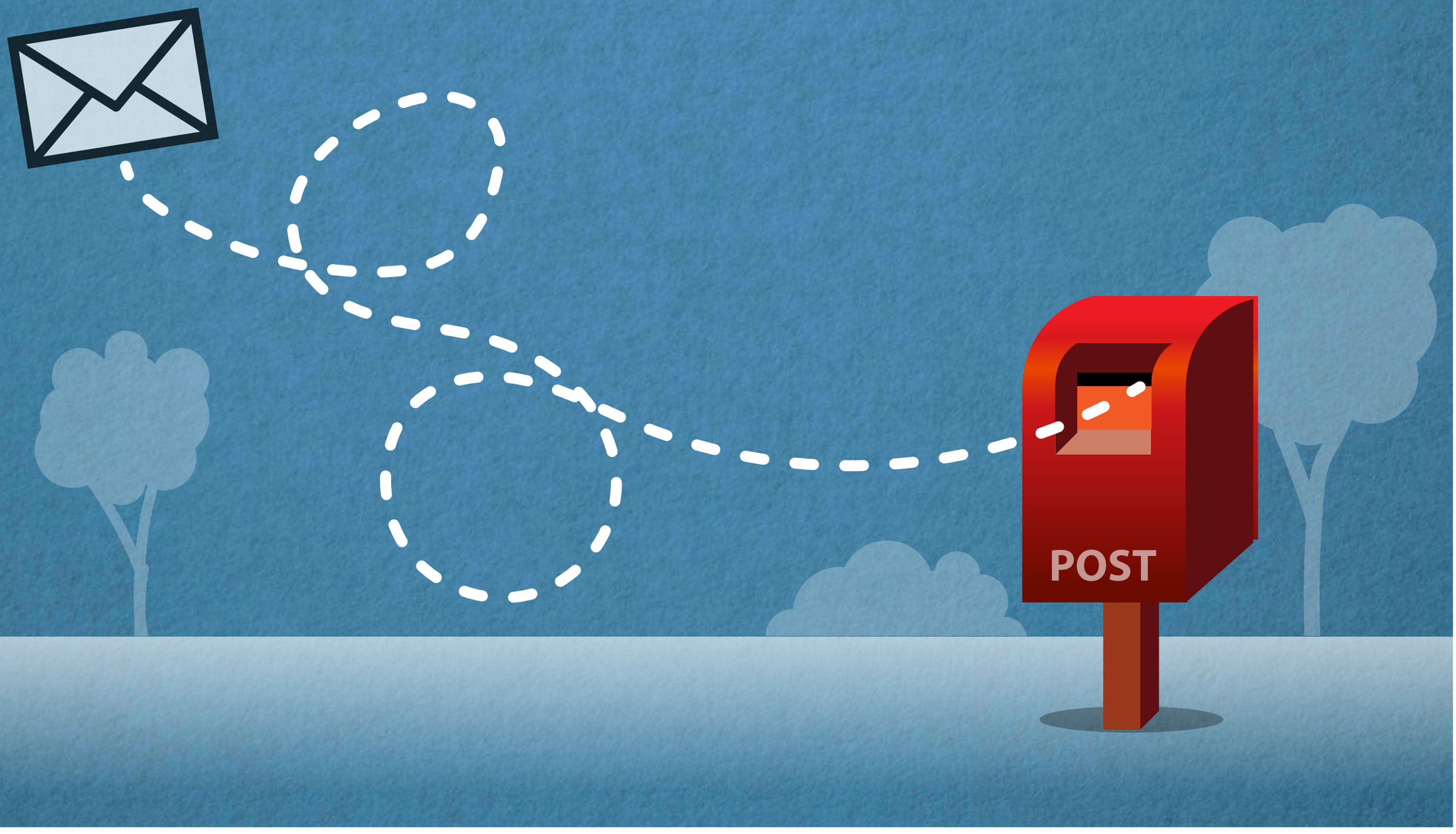
When Daddy goes on deployment,

I draw pictures for him.



We put the pictures in an envelope to post.

On the way to the post box, I whisper to Mum:
'When is Daddy coming home?'



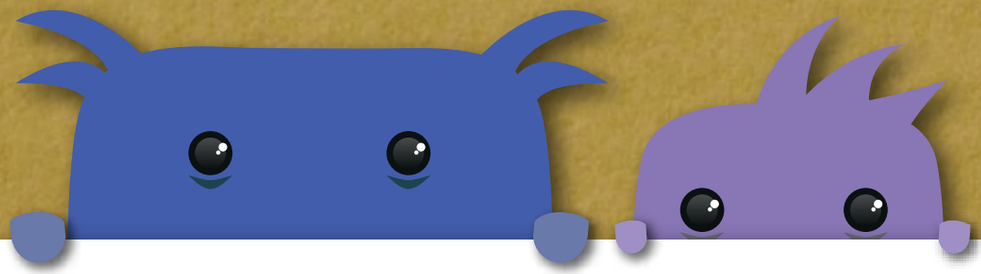
Here is my Daddy on deployment,
wearing his uniform.

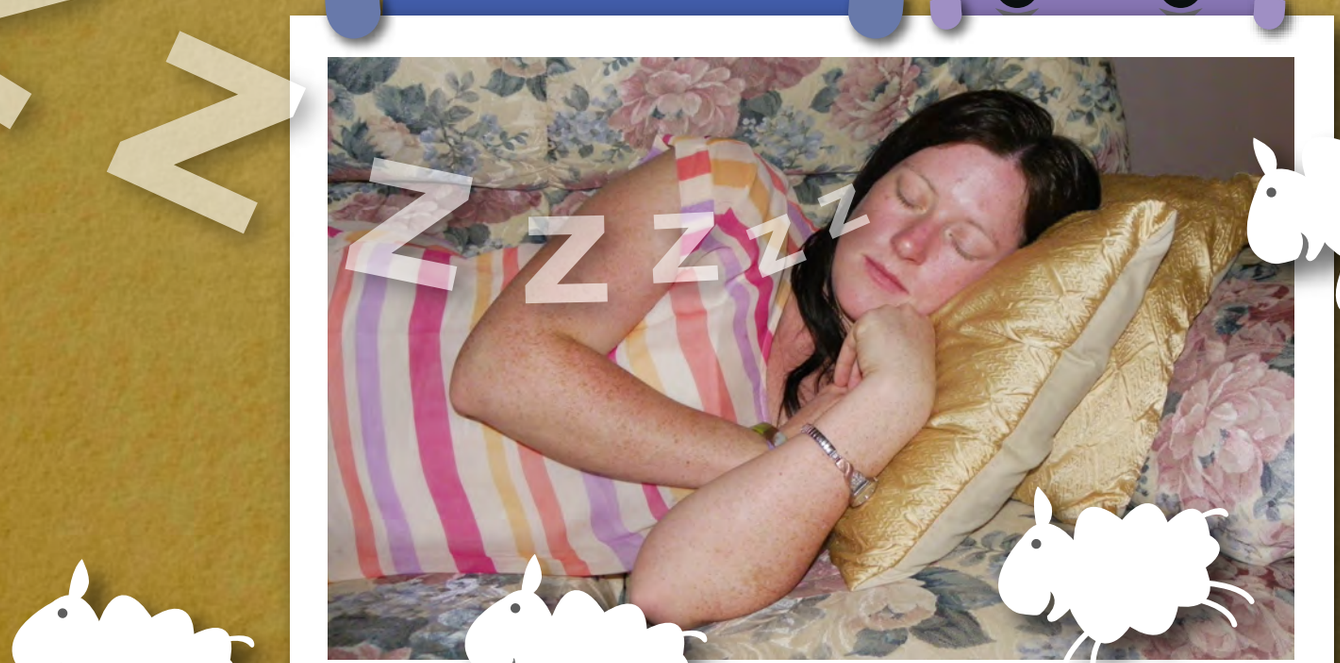
When Daddy goes on deployment,

I help Mum around the house and outside

After our jobs, when Mum is looking tired, I whinge:

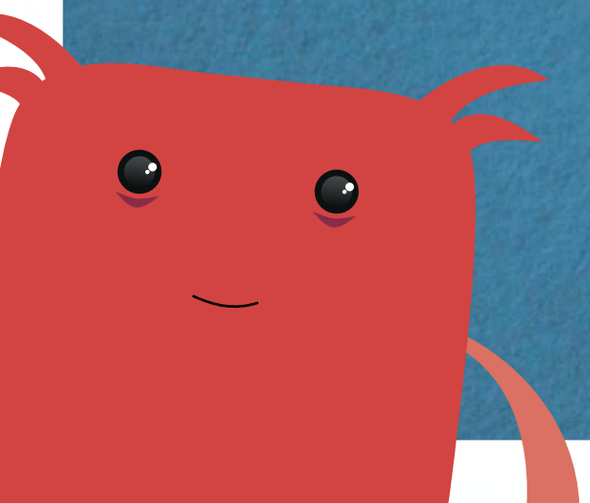
'But when is Daddy coming home?'





I am sure that helps her sleep.

When Daddy is on deployment,



he is often far, far away in another country.

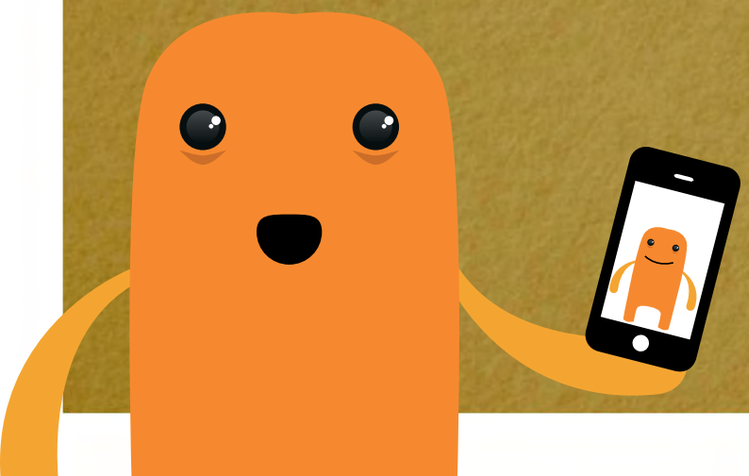
At other times he is a long
way away in Australia.
Sometimes I get scared and
sleep in Mummy's bed.
Just in case she gets
scared too.

When Daddy is on deployment,
I love talking to him on the phone.

When Grandma visits,
she helps me share
the phone with my
brother, Anthony.
She says I am really
good at talking,

and talking

and talking.



When Daddy is on deployment,
we go to the park with Grandma and Mum.

Faster pup!

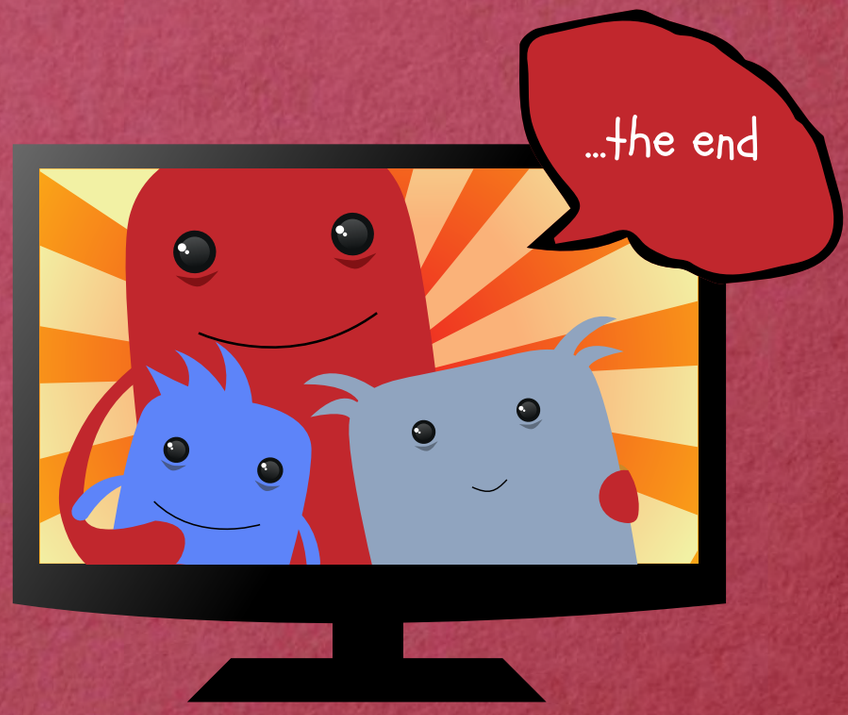
Keep up, Rose!

Come on, Mum!

When Daddy is on deployment he sends me a letter and a present.

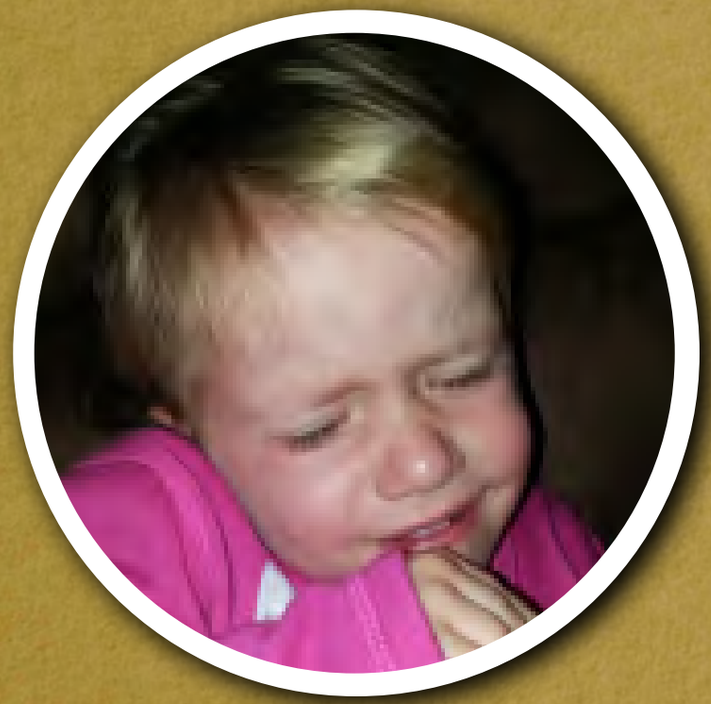
I love getting presents.

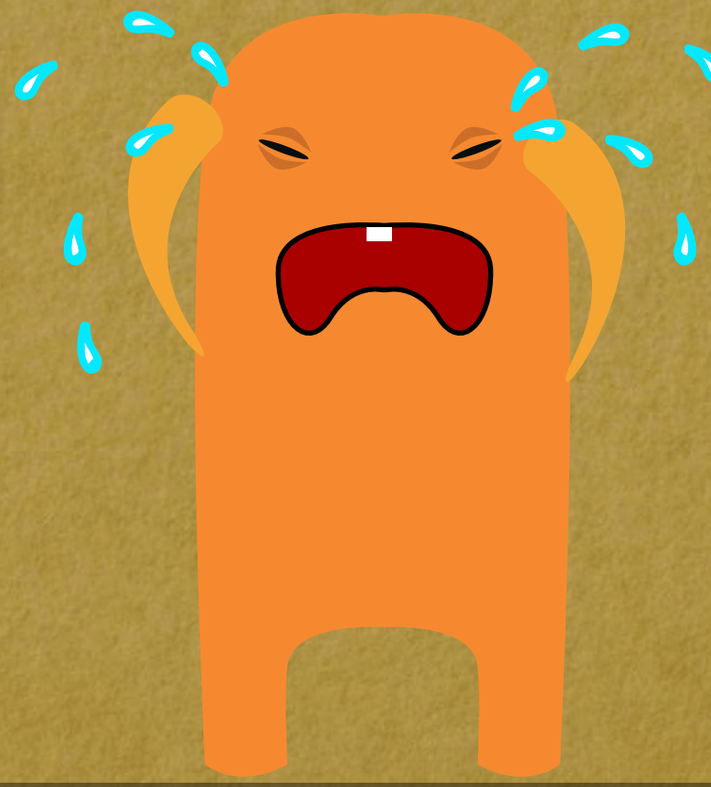
When Daddy is on deployment, Mum lets us watch the DVD where he is reading us a bedtime story. I like hearing his voice and watching Daddy, Anthony and I on TV.



When Daddy is on deployment

and my brother and I have a fight, I always cry,





'When is Daaaady coming hoome?'

At other times
Mum says I am
cross and grumpy,
bumpy and lumpy.

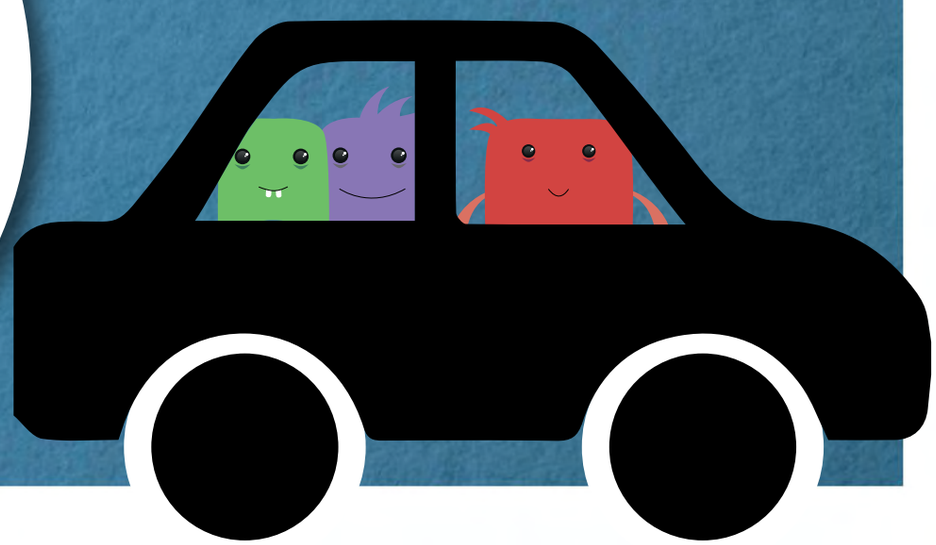
I just want a
cuddle from my Dad.

Finally, the next time I ask...'When is Daddy coming home?', Mummy says 'In two weeks!'. Then it's 10 sleeps.

Then 9, then 8, then 7, 6, 5, 4, 3, 2, 1,

then to the airport!
I love the airport!

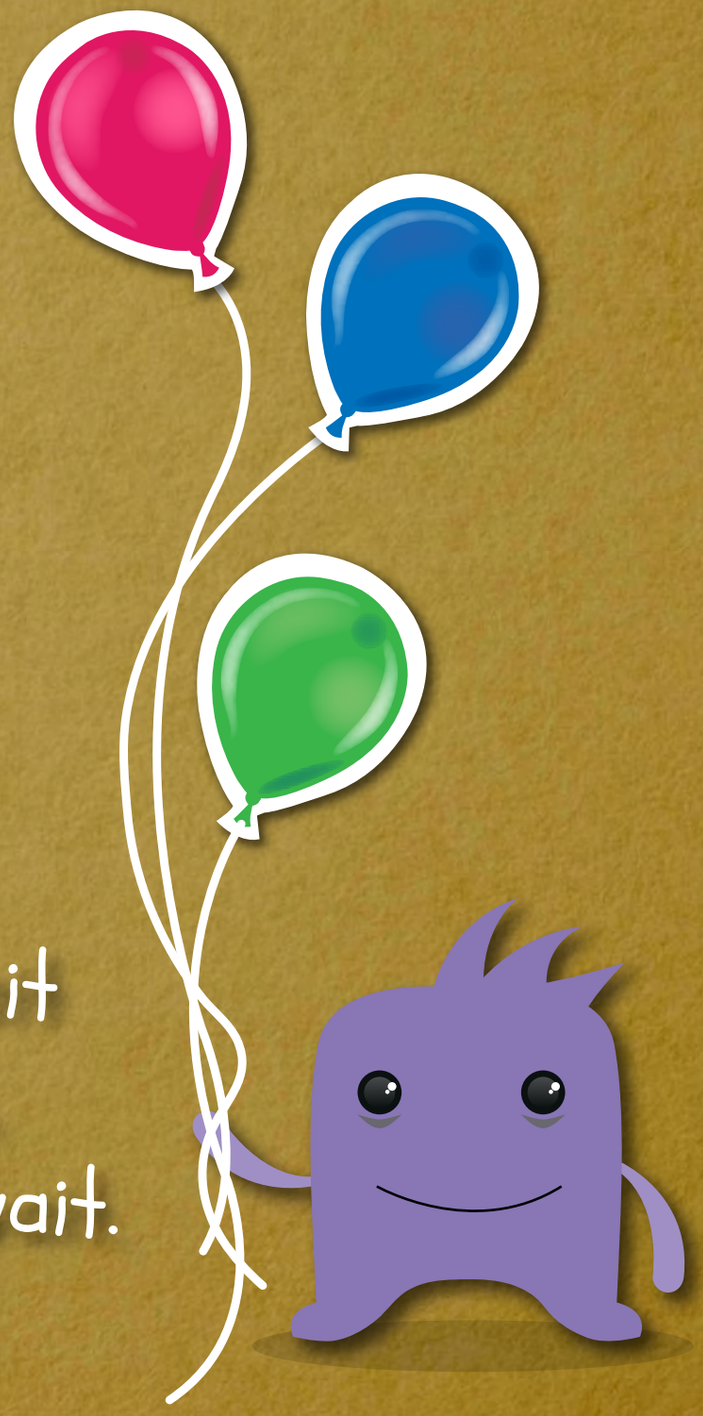
I suggest riding our bikes to the airport, to make it lots of fun. She says the car will be easier. Mum has strange ideas.



Then the big day finally arrives and I can hardly believe it. Mum hasn't stopped smiling all day and Anthony is jumping around everywhere. Mum calls him 'Anthony the 'roo.'

10 9 8 7 6 5 4 3 2 1 YEAH!

When Daddy is on deployment,
we go back to the airport in the
car to pick him up.

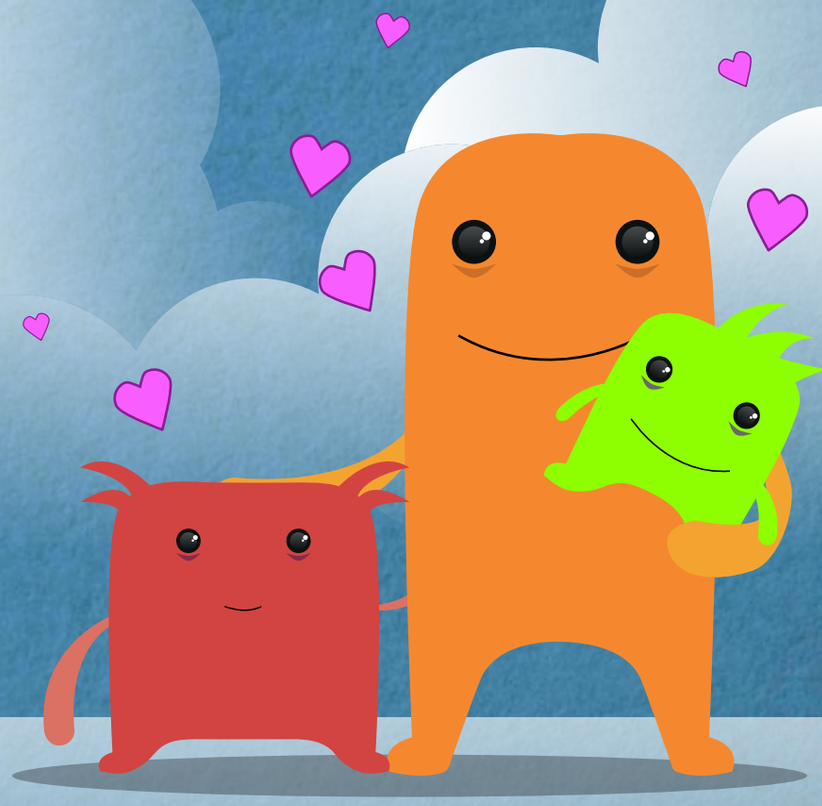


At the airport we wait
with other families.
We wait and wait and wait.

The plane lands and we wait again.
I close my eyes and wait and wait.

All of a sudden, someone calls out.
I open my eyes and I can see other
Dads, Mums and adults arrive.

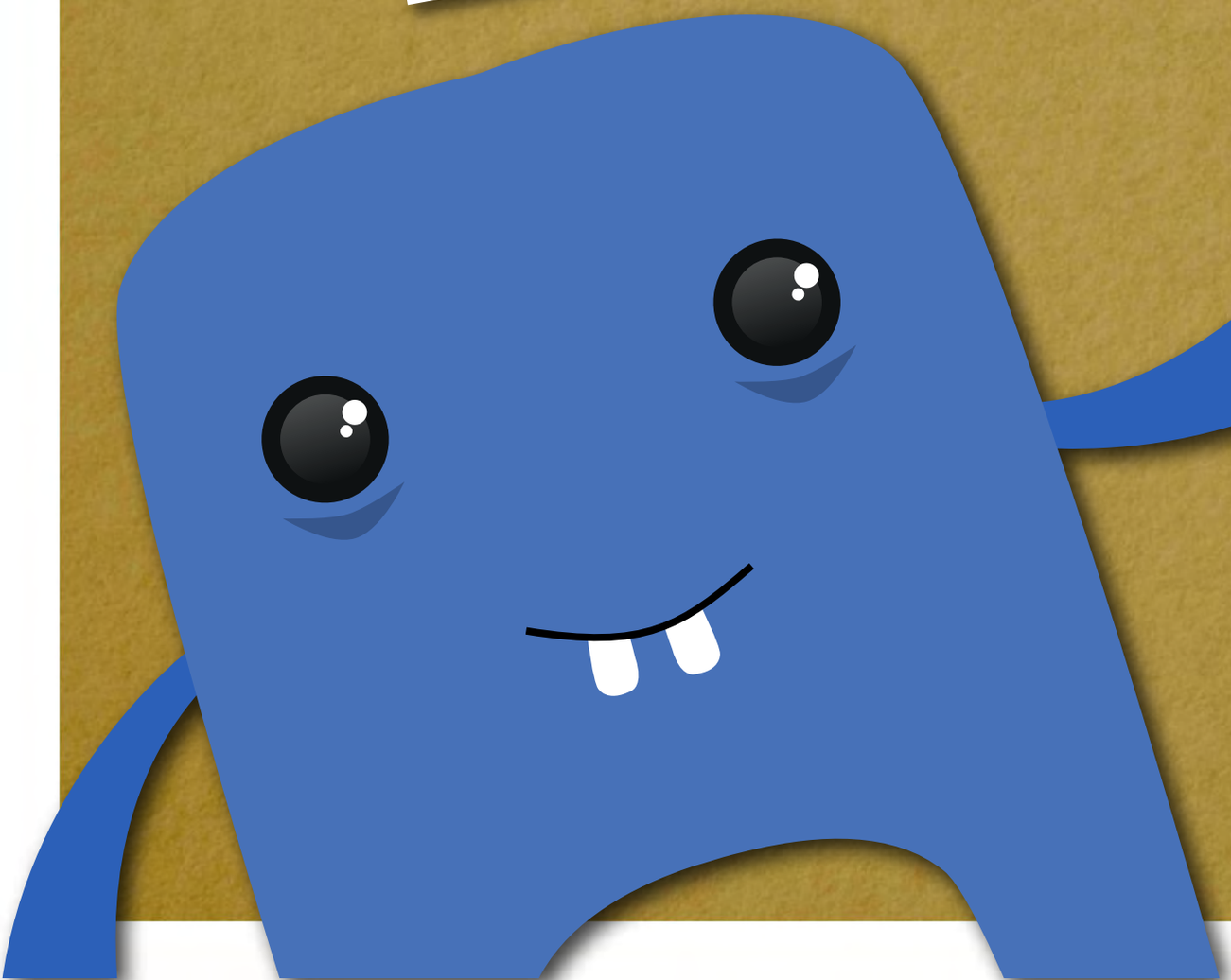
Finally, after many months, there he is.



He has lots of cuddles for Anthony and me.

We even let him
cuddle Mummy,

although they
take forever.



I tell him how old I am,
just in case he forgot.

I love my Dad and he loves me.

Now that you have finished the story,
can you find the following things?

Aeroplane

Wheelbarrow

Telephone

Car

Which pages are they on?

Here are some harder things for you to do.

Find the word **Mum** 5 times.

Find the word **"airport"**. Which pages are they on?

How many times can you find the word **"home"**?

How was this research-based eBook written?

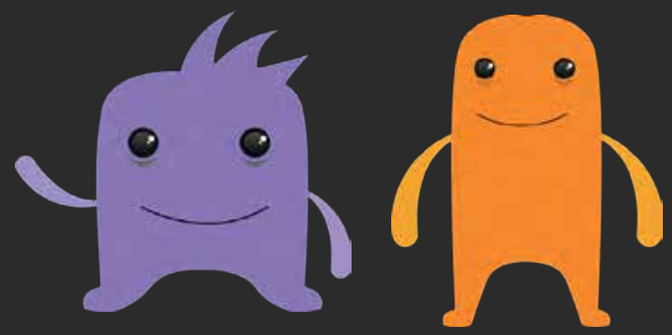
The static eBook was written using research data collected with defence families. The overall research project was titled 'Young children's understandings and experiences of parental deployment within an Australian Defence Force (ADF) family' (Rogers, 2017). The information below and in the next few pages explores research from the eBook, the interactive version of the eBook and the original research project.

eBook research question

How can the use of a storybook assist young children from defence families to build their knowledge and understanding of their physical and emotional responses to family transitions they experience, as well as ways to build resilience?

eBook research statement

This digitised eBook was designed to build on children's knowledge and understanding of:



- emotional and physical responses to parental deployment
- difficult cognitive concepts related to deployment
- sources of support for comfort and ways to build resilience
- family communication when a parent works away

This eBook provides a starting point for parents, early childhood educators and family workers to talk to children about some of the common experiences of children within Australian Defence Force (ADF) families. Seeing other children experience similar situations, such as sending a parcel to a parent who is deployed, helps normalise their situation and gives them a sense of belonging and agency as they see their own lives reflected in children's literature.

The book builds resilience by showing children how to find other sources of comfort when their parent is away, and various ways to connect with the deployed parent using different communication methods.

The book uses graphically designed characters to build emotional intelligence as they react emotionally (empathising) with the children (photos of the characters from a defence family) in the book. This includes graphically designed characters that show joy and excitement leading up to a reunion with the parent at the airport.

The graphically designed characters also show love, joy and warmth when they are finally reunited, demonstrating and normalising emotional responses to children. The story also shows children's physical responses to a parent working away, including having trouble going to sleep by themselves at night.

What the literature and research says

This eBook explores themes identified in the author's PhD thesis entitled 'Young children's understandings and experiences of deployment within an Australian Defence Force (ADF) family' undertaken at the University of New England.

Physical reactions to deployment (e.g. sleep issues)

Hollingsworth (2011) describes responses to parental deployment as common which can include externalising behaviour, including sleep issues and toileting regressions. Lester and Flake (2013) believe sleep issues have a major impact on family life and marriages in military families experiencing deployment because they are often signs of emotional stress (Friedberg and Brelsford, 2011). Parental sleep deprivation can also be exacerbated as they suddenly have to parent alone with children whose sleep is also disturbed (Rogers, 2017). Babies and toddlers often miss the absent parent most at bedtime when they are overtired. It may take them longer to settle because they do not have the words to express their feelings of grief and loss due to the absence of someone so important to them (Linke, 2007).

Emotional reactions to deployment (e.g. whining, teariness, clinginess)

Mogil et al. (2010) describe the difficulty of losing a parent as a provider of emotional support during military deployment. Rogers-Baber (2017) discusses the way relationships within the family are vital to support one other and assist the child emotionally through the ups and downs of the deployment cycle. Connell (2013) underlines the importance of this support by stating, 'Relationships within families are generally the most important element of children's emotional worlds' (p.25). Effective support may be more difficult to provide due to increased stress levels of at-home partners and spouses during deployment (Hollingsworth, 2011), so parents might need to get additional support.

Barriers to understanding the concepts of deployment (e.g. concepts of time)

Paris, DeVoe, Ross, and Acker (2010) outline the challenges facing young children because their understanding of many concepts is still developing, affecting their ability to comprehend the arrivals and departures of the deployed parent. Concepts of time are difficult for young children and waiting can seem like an eternity when you do not have a real sense of time (Linke, 2007). This may be eased by the use of family narratives (Baber, 2016) and by improving children's vocabulary by scaffolding language learning through reading stories and having conversations (Fellowes & Oakley, 2014).

Support for the family (e.g. Grandparents)

Wellard (2012) believes grandparents can help create well-being and as a preventative to loneliness for children. Additionally, the relationship can strengthen families in times of stress, and assist in building resilience in children (Henderson, Hayslip, Sanders, & Louden, 2009). Building networks of support around families is important in helping all family members cope with stress. Where biological family members are not available, friends and neighbours can become effective kin and provide protective factors (Rogers-Baber, 2017).

The need for apps that encourage creativity (interactive version)

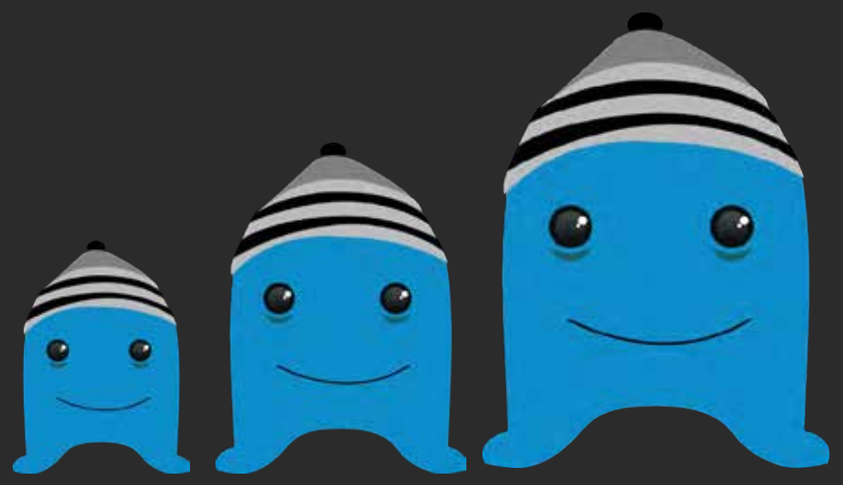
In early childhood, play is valued as the way children learn (Wood, 2013). With the increase of iPads and tablets, apps are appearing in the educational section of the App Store that does not allow for children's creativity and imaginative play. Selecting apps that allow children to be creative and engage in imaginative play allows children to mix their interest in technology with activities that encourage learning (Bird, 2018). Digital apps or interactive web-based solutions, such as this one, follow early childhood philosophies that promote children's creativity, through open-ended drawing and painting activities. This creates opportunities to develop children's imagination, such as when they are asked to draw a picture of what they would like to do with their parent when they return from deployment. This type of activity gives children a sense of agency, despite the many aspects of parental deployment they cannot control (Rogers & Bird, 2020).

Interactive eBook research question

How do you build very young children's knowledge and understanding of ways to communicate with deployed parents and practical ways to assist the parent who is at home within defence families through a web-based digital app that contains educational games, interactive activities and arts-based activities that reflect early childhood philosophies?

This interactive version of an eBook was designed to build on children's knowledge and understanding of:

- physical and emotional responses to parental deployment
- emotions
- ways to communicate with the parent who works away
- ways to assist the at-home parent
- distance and time concerning parental deployment
- numeracy and music
- their Australian environment
- ways to prepare for reunions
- what they would like to do with their parent when they return



Interactive eBook research statement

To do this we have designed activities from the static version of the eBook to build these skills and create a starting point for conversations between the child and the parent, family worker or educator. For example, emotional intelligence is fostered through the children's exploration of feelings of excitement and anticipation when a parent is coming home. Care for family members is encouraged by asking the children to explore ways of helping the at-home parent. Numeracy skills are developed through counting down the number of nights of sleep until the parent returns. Family communication skills with deployed parents are encouraged through preparing drawings and a parcel to post. Positive ways to prepare for a reunion are explored as children design a welcome home banner with musical notes on it so they can explore pitch. Children's understanding of Australia's native and non-native fauna is improved through a drag and drop activity.

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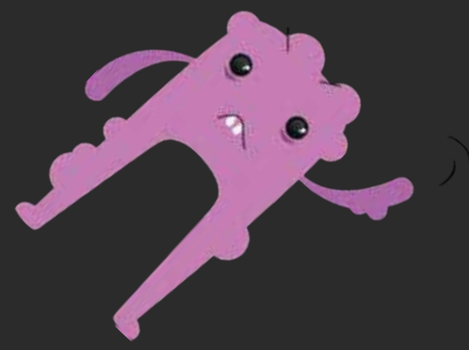
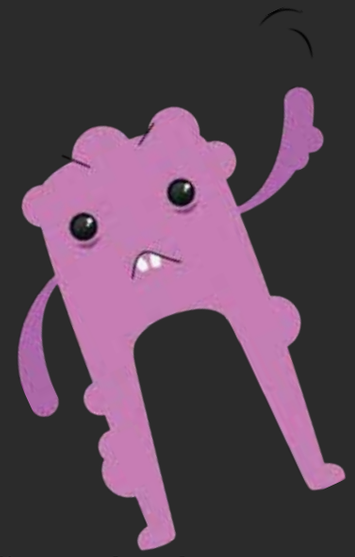
Image Reference List





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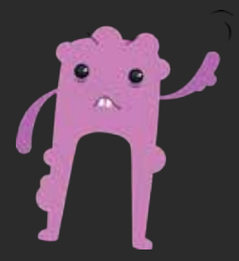

Plane in flight photo by Kovah on Unsplash accessed 2.8.20

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About the author, project manager and digital activity designers

Dr Marg Rogers is a lecturer and researcher in early childhood education at the University of New England. Her PhD researched 'Young children's understanding and experiences within an Australian Defence Force (ADF) family'. Marg witnessed the impact of war on her uncle's family when he served in Vietnam on multiple deployments and the effects on is health and mental health.

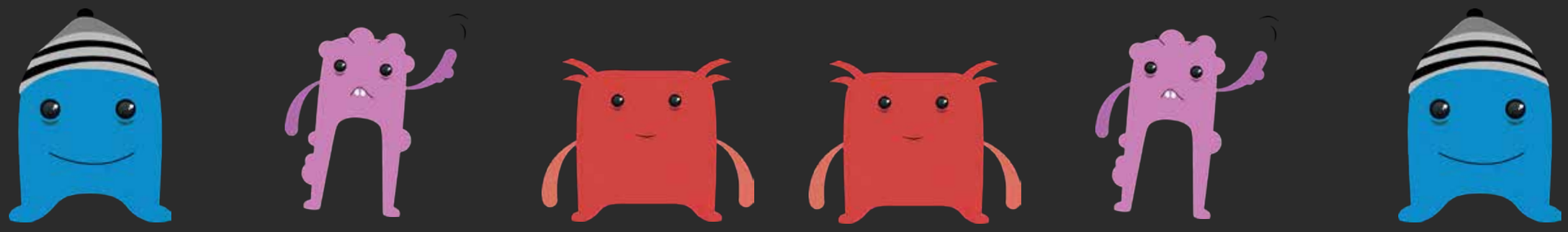
She also experienced the intergenerational effects of her grandfather's WWII service that resulted in injuries. Marg has qualifications and professional experience in early childhood, creative arts education and language education (ESL). In both her current and previous work role her passion for education has always been in supporting families to do the best job they can through authentic community and education partnerships. As a part of this project, Marg has had the privilege to meet with defence families and discuss many of the issues they face. She hopes her eBooks will provide children, parents and educators with a starting point to discuss these issues further.

Madeline
Fussell was the initial point of contact between a few defence families and Marg which resulted in Marg's PhD research. As a primary trained educator, Madeline has over 30 years teaching experience. Although retired now, her most recent position was as a lecturer in social sciences at UNE**, teaching pre-service primary teachers in Australia and Nauru. Madeline's childhood experiences with her father's service-related health issues and her own sons' military careers have been a driving force to improve community understanding of the needs of defence personnel, veterans and their families.**

Both Marg Rogers and Jo Bird designed the activities for the interactive version of the eBooks using early childhood philosophies. They worked with Trish Donald, Raph Roberts and Michael Partridge to make those designs a reality.

Dr Jo Bird is a senior lecturer in early childhood education, with research interests in children's technology-supported learning, especially supporting educators to include digital technology in their play programming, children's play and early childhood leadership. Jo's PhD thesis was titled "'This is pretend. We are just playing": Exploring young children's imaginative play with working and non-working technologies and educators' provision of these devices in **early childhood settings'.**

Other resources by Marg Rogers can be found at www.ecdefenceprograms.com, or on Orcid https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8407-7256 Other resources by Marg and Jo can be found at www.ecdefenceprograms.com



Copyright, ethics and citation

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For further information or requests for permission, contact Dr Marg Rogers https://orcid.org/0000-0001-8407-7256

Pseudonyms have been used in this book. Ethics approval was gained from The University of New England (UNE).

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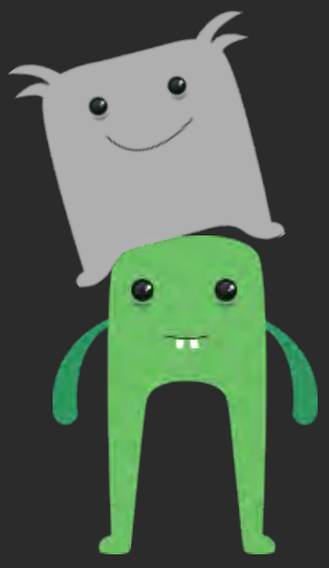

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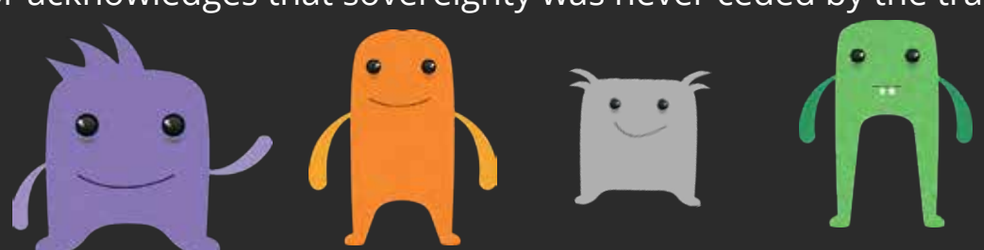
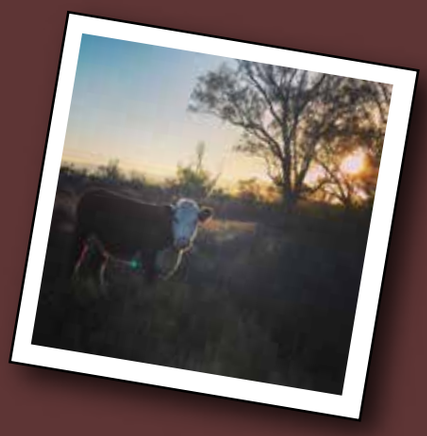
UNE acknowledges the Anawain people, the traditional custodians of Armidale on which it is situated, and shows respect to their elders past, present and emerging. The author acknowledges that sovereignty was never ceded by the traditional owners of the lands on which UNE stands.



From the author:

For my sister, who taught me so many important things, including how to milk goats and read.

For my next sister, for her joyful, loving heart, generous nature and love of bushwalking.

For my other sister, for her friendship, wisdom, her open listening heart and wit. Your passion to travel the world is infectious.