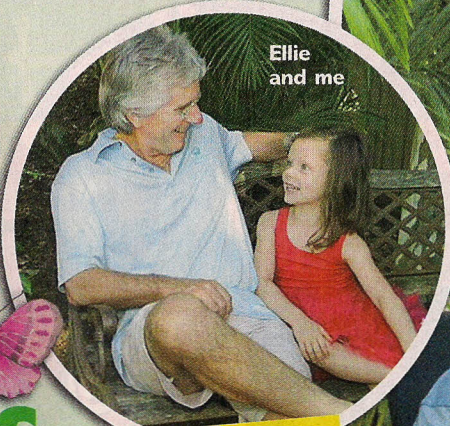


led to me!

hear your true stories



Ellie and me

Garden of dreams

Brian Andrew, 56, Yeronga, Qld

'I love this garden,' said five-year-old Ellie, one of my five grandchildren. 'So do I. Let's go for a walk,' I told her.

We strolled under the bougainvillea and Ellie reached out to touch the flowers.

'They're so soft,' she laughed. 'Let's sit down now, Grandad, and listen to the birds.'

Sure enough, we could hear the chatter of rainbow lorikeets and the laugh of kookaburras.

'This is the Think and Thank seat,' I told Ellie. 'What makes you happy?'

She thought for a moment. 'Swimming in the summer. My brother, Noah, my sister, Sian, Mum and Dad. Oh, and you, Grandad,' she smiled.

My heart melted. 'I like working in the garden,'

I told her, 'and making such a beautiful place. Do you see that log? It took five men to carry it there. I call it the Let Go Log. Your grandma, Moira, sits there sometimes if she's had an unpleasant conversation with someone. She just lets all the hurt go and then she feels good.'

Suddenly we saw a blue-tongue lizard. 'They eat the snails and slugs that eat my plants,' I told Ellie. 'So I like having them in the garden.'

She sat on the swing and I pushed her higher and higher so she could see over the bushes. Afterwards we ran across the little beach I'd made and found Crossover Corner.

'Is there anything that you're scared about?' I asked Ellie.

'Starting school,' she said.

'Yes, that can be frightening,'

Sweet

I agreed. 'I get scared too, at the big waves when I'm surfing. I may not feel strong but I still do it. That's what courage is.'

In the garden we sat at the Dream Table and I asked Ellie what

she wanted to be when she grew up. 'A nurse just like Mummy, and a dancer,' she said.

'Cool,' I said. 'Then you can look after me when I'm old.'

When my friends Kaye and Mike visited, I told them about my talks in the garden with Ellie and my other grandchildren.

'That would be a great children's book,' Kaye said.

'I don't write children's books', I replied.



My book brings families together

But Kaye got me thinking and Moira, my wife, encouraged me.

I needed some courage. I spent almost two years and \$60,000, borrowed against the house, to make my children's book dream a reality. Mike is an artist and was the perfect illustrator for me.

When I showed Ellie my book, *I Grow in Grandad's Garden*, her eyes lit up.

'Wow, thank you!' she cried. I've also had lots of good responses on my website, www.grandadsgarden.com.au.

'The book is bringing families together,' said Moira.

'Terrific,' I said. 'And some teachers have told me they're going to re-create those spots in their classroom.'

Now I need to go and sit on the Think and Thank seat! ■

ing!

stood by the letterbox and peered at the house next door.

Hmm, the wheelie bin isn't out for collection, I thought.

Something's not right here.

It was August 2009 and

My wheelie bin rescue

Jade Crawford, 26, Camp Hill, Qld

Hero

