

How We **CHANGED** *The World*

LORELEI, Age 11



My sister and I have been homeschooling for about 18 months since COVID arrived in Australia. I really enjoy the flexibility we have to do different things in our day.

In April 2021, we were walking our dog in the park near our home in Rivervale (a suburb of Perth) when we saw an owl on the ground. My younger sister, who was the first one to notice the owl, thought this was very odd because she knows that owls are nocturnal. We went back home and got a large bucket and some old towels to try to safely catch the owl. It was quite tricky to catch the owl because it had sharp claws and we didn't want to hurt it, or for it to hurt us.

Once we caught the owl we carefully drove it to the native animal rescue centre. As we were driving it was flapping its wings inside the bucket even though we had it covered with a towel. When we got to the rescue centre, we were not able to go in because of covid but they took the owl and told us that it was a boobook owl and it had probably eaten some poison rats.

Our Dad talked to Dr Mike Lore, who is an expert from Edith Cowan University, and he said that there are two different types of rat poison - first-generation poison, which stays in the food chain for about seven days and second-generation rat poison, which stays in the food chain for about two years. Many species of native animals are becoming poisoned by eating the rats that have been killed with the second-generation poisons. This worried us because this is bad for the ecosystem and is disrupting the food chain for native animals.

We went to Bunnings and saw that they had a huge wall of rat poisons with the first and second generation boxes mixed in together - it is very hard to tell them apart because the boxes look almost identical. I wrote a letter to Bunnings to explain what the problem was and to ask them if they would do something. We also spoke to a journalist from the local paper, started a petition to our local council asking them to bring in regulations for the use of rat poisons in our local area and asked questions at the Council meeting about the use of rat poison and other ways the Council was working to provide protection for native animals and birds.



We were so excited when Bunnings wrote back and said that they would be re-designing the shelves in their stores to separate the first and second-generation rat poisons, they would provide information for customers and they were going to give their staff across all stores in Australia and New Zealand extra training to inform them on which ones are safe to use in different circumstances. They were also going to go back to the regulators and ask for changes to be made to the requirements for packaging of the poisons to make it more clear which is first and which is the second generation.

I'm excited that we have been able to make a positive change for owls and other native animals and we hope that this will help others who are also fighting to protect our unique biodiversity.