

A letter for Westport



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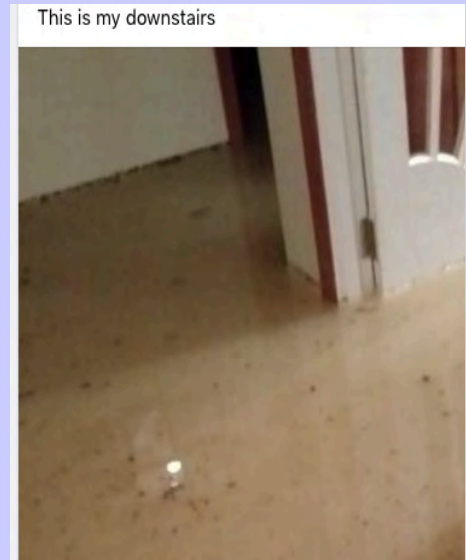
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Hi, my name is Bear. I live in Canterbury with two humans and my best friend Alligator. We share a toybox with an interesting collection of toys and bears left behind when the small humans grew up and moved away.



One day in July 2021, I was checking my Facebook page when my friend posted a picture of her flooded house.





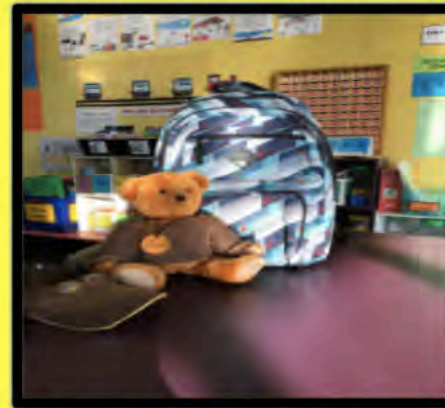
I called the toys together and said, “We need to do something.”

“Yes,” said Alligator. “Do you remember how we helped all the children in Auckland when they had to keep going into Covid-19 lockdowns?”

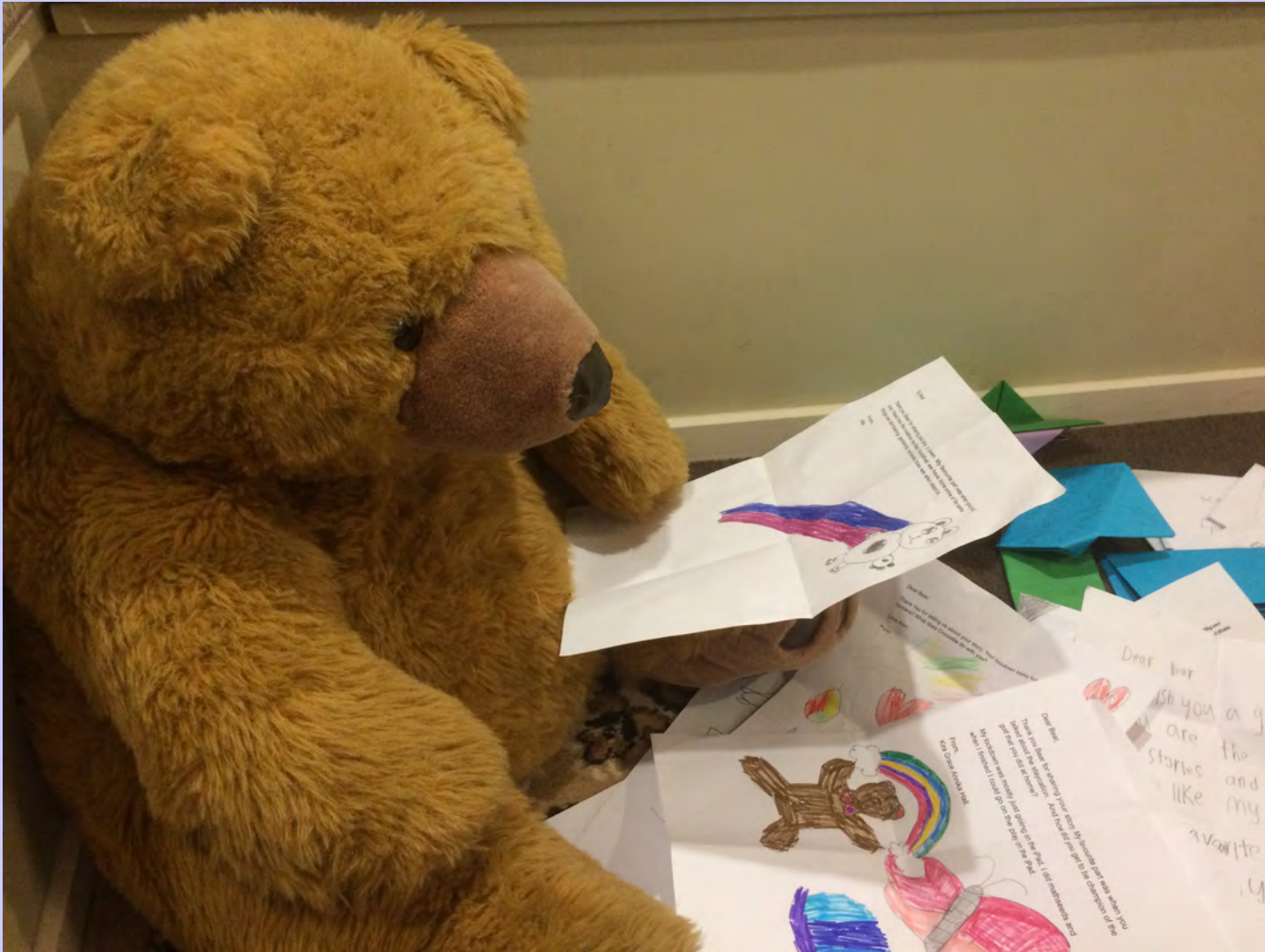


“ When children went back to school, not only did they read our books, they made books of their own. The teachers said our books were really helpful,” Alligator recalled.

Bear Comes Back to School



Room 1 & 2 Adventures



I nodded, "They were so grateful and sent us lovely letters and drawings."

I continued, “And we know how the children in Westport feel because we had floods in Canterbury in May.”

“We ended up being trapped and not able to go anywhere and the little bears were very frightened.”





“We could write another book for Westport,” suggested Alligator.

And with that all the bears started suggesting ideas and talking over each other until I said, "Slow down and think. What did the Auckland children like best in my lockdown stories?"



“When you got stuck inside the letterbox,” laughed Jingle Bear.



“And when you played hide and seek, but you thought no-one could see you!”

“When you watered the weeds and dug up the roses!”

“And fell off the trampoline!”



“What about when you tried to teach Alligator about farming!” laughed Farmer Bear.



And with that, the bears fell about laughing.

“Be serious,” I said.

“What are some of the messages we can put in the book to help children in Westport cope when they feel sad about what has happened in the floods?”



Nanny Bear spoke up: “Everyone has difficult times and we all respond to problems in different ways. What really matters is how you find ways to help yourself and others.”



“ Find someone you trust to talk to about your feelings. Someone who is a good listener and might have some wise advice for you,” said Alligator.



"Be kind to others and comfort them when they feel sad," said Nicholas Bear.



“Check on your neighbours to see if they need any help,” said Koala.



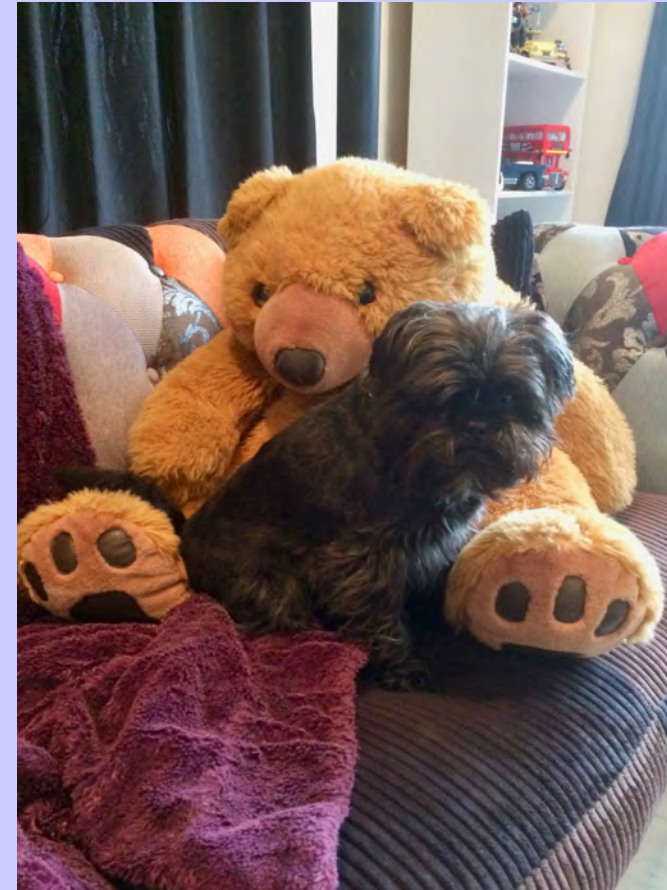
“Share what you have with others in need,” suggested Pooh.



“Helping others makes you feel better, too,” added Poppa Bear.

“And what are some ways you can make yourself feel calm when you get sad or worried or stressed?” I asked.

“You can listen to music,” answered Panda. “Or play with your pets,” said Baby Bear.





“Or spend time with your family and friends,” added Sailor Bear.





“Or go outside into nature and appreciate what is around you,” suggested Berry.

“I also like to get some exercise when I start to think worrying thoughts again,” she added.



“Those are really good ideas,” I said.

“I also want to say to the children that when you feel that you have lost everything or that things couldn't get worse, try to think of some positives.”

“And make plans for a time when things will start to get better. What would you like the future to be like? What can help you get there?”

“The strongest people are not those who have never had difficulties but those who learn to pick themselves up after each setback.”





The toys all nodded thoughtfully.

“And you’ll always feel better when you have a bear to hug,” added Mama Bear with a big smile.





Kia ora Westport

We know this is a difficult time for the people of Buller. Floods are wet and messy and smelly. It takes a long time to clean up and you will be sad for all the things you have lost. Try to be brave and strong. There are lots of people caring about you all around the country.

Kia kaha, kia maia, kia manawanui

Love, Bear ... And Alligator ...

And all the bears ... And all the toys in the toybox.

