

## The Bravest Word

By Kate Foster

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*Blurb:*

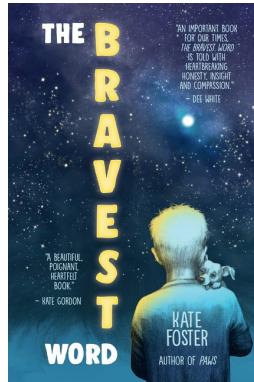
A rescue story of love and trust between a boy and a dog from the talented author of *Paws*.

Do you hear that? You're Cliff now, and your life is going to get better, I promise.

When eleven-year-old Matt finds Cliff, a hurt, neglected dog abandoned in the bush, he knows the brave little pup needs saving. He wants to help. But can he?

Lately, Matt has had way more bad days than good days. The pieces of his life just don't seem to fit together any more and he doesn't understand why. He's finding it impossible to concentrate at school and has lost interest in the activities he used to love. Plus, he's tired all the time.

Matt's too afraid to share what's really going on in his own head with anyone. His friends and family will never understand... maybe it's not only Cliff who needs saving.



*Lamont Review:*

Matt has every reason to be happy. He has a loving family, great friends and is successful at sport, with three soccer premierships, and Best and Fairest player awards.

But now in Year 7, he doesn't feel right. He is finding it hard to concentrate on school work, he doesn't want to be around his friends, and he definitely does not want to play soccer this year. He is having anxiety attacks, and getting angry easily.

Then, during a walk with his Dad, he comes across an abused dog that he names Cliff, after his recently deceased Grandad. After being mistreated his whole life, Cliff doesn't trust people and often shakes with fear.

After his Mum agrees to let Matt keep Cliff, they both begin the healing process.

But it is not until Matt opens up - first to his Dad, and then others, that he discovers a pathway that can help him deal with his problems.

Depression is a big societal issue for those of all ages, and this book gently and effectively shows how to take that first step to ask for help. With themes of family, friends, depression and hope, this is an important and enlightening story that would best suit readers in lower secondary.

*Reviewed by Rob*