



## Background to the Wrap Around Kids™ program

Wrap Around Kids™ is a program developed by Fostering Partnerships Pty Ltd, borne from the struggle of a parent to advocate effectively for her son.

Jude Foster a parent of a son with ADHD and a language disorder received information from another parent that changed her son's long term outcome by advancing referral, diagnosis and appropriate intervention. Despite involvement with health and education professionals in her son's management, no-one had suggested an assessment by a speech pathologist.

**Teachers and GPs are ideally placed to identify developmental difference in children and refer early.**

When the opportunity arose to coordinate a research project for the Mid North Coast Division of General Practice to support children with ADHD and learning difficulties in schools, she jumped at it! Whilst this project was acclaimed by key researchers, it was not able to be replicated because of the high cost of implementation. The project highlighted the important role of teachers and GPs in identifying children out of step with their peers and that early referral improved their outcomes.

Jude was also concerned that whilst funding was available the expectations of families were raised but inevitably their hopes were dashed when the funding ran out.

As a health professional she could also see the potential benefits for young people with a range of other medical conditions such as diabetes, epilepsy, asthma, cerebral palsy, mental health conditions and more.

### Development of the Wrap Around Kids™ program

In 2000 Jude established Fostering Partnerships and set about developing a sustainable, collaborative framework to support young people with medical conditions that impact at school... Wrap Around Kids™ was born.

Wrap Around Kids™ (WAK) is a multidisciplinary management program that supports students and

their families via regular Wrap Around Meetings at school. Integrating information about an individual student with a special focus on their areas of strength means the key people in the student's life better understand their needs in context. The communication framework in WAK improves the continuity of care which has resulted in global improvements socially, educationally, psychologically and in health for the child.

Until now, systematic sharing of information and expertise between families, and managing professionals has not been routine. Responsibility for transfer of information has often relied on family members as the messengers between professionals. Sometimes they don't have the confidence, resources, or energy to communicate information from one professional to another over the life of their child.

We found that assembling a team of health professionals to meet with the parent(s) and the class teacher(s) improved communication between home and school and increased understanding of the individual needs of the child.



Some members of a collaborative team consisting of Principal, Wrap Around Co-ordinator, GP and Psychologist (Speech Pathologist absent)

**Each member of the team brings specific expertise to discussions, facilitating a coordinated management plan.**

**The name Wrap Around Kids™ symbolises the scaffolding and Wrap Around support provided to the student and their family by the team.**

Wrap Around Kids™ has been trialled in 12 schools in NSW for 4 years.

Health professionals on the Wrap Around Team usually consists of a GP, psychologist, speech pathologist. Participants bring their expertise to discussions which facilitate development of a coordinated management plan.

The role of the WAC includes liaising with health professionals, parents and other educators and providing 'in-house' expertise at school.

Links between developmental delays, learning difficulties and language disorders are well documented and highlight the need to include a speech therapist within a multidisciplinary team.

The psychologist provides information on the academic and psychological needs of the child and behavioural management strategies for schools and parents.

The operational framework of Wrap Around Kids™ enables schools to address the educational, behavioural and emotional needs of their students with complex conditions that impact at school.

Wrap Around meetings are held regularly in each school. Parents are invited to explain what led to their child's diagnosis and give a detailed history of the child at home. Teachers then contribute their assessment of the child with particular regard to academic and social performance at school. An

audit of previous education and health assessments occurs to increase understanding of the student's need as well as to help identify those needing further investigations.

A fundamental principle that WAK uses in working with individual students is to identify and build on their identifiable strengths.

A structured group discussion results in recommended assessments and/or strategies aimed to support identified areas of difficulty for the student. Follow-up meetings continue to monitor assessment outcomes, progress and compliance.

Fostering Partnerships Pty Ltd has not received any government funding or grants for development of Wrap Around Kids™. Research, development and reality testing of WAK has been funded through a range of activities including conference coordination, workshops/presentations and consultation. The support of private companies committed to social/ethical investment has also provided sponsorship to make access to the program more affordable.

Fostering Partnerships has received ongoing support from Apple Computer Australia. Such support was clearly not about sales, Apple recognised very early that WAK deserved support because of the outcomes it delivers for families.

### **Wrap Around Kids™ OnLine**

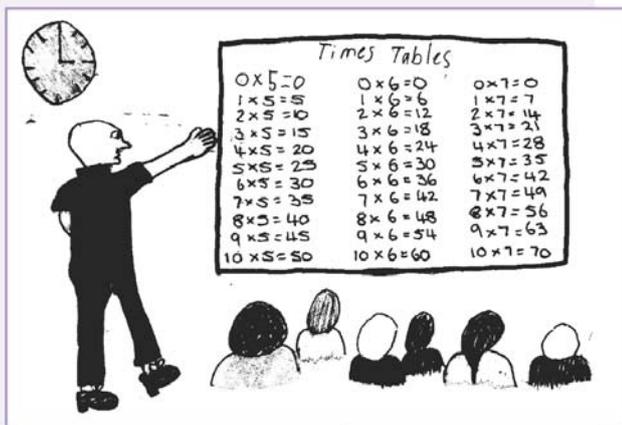
Wrap Around Kids Online (WAKOL) is the piece of the puzzle which enables WAK to be made widely available. Families authorise access to the secure website for managing professionals to share information, thereby increasing active management of individuals with chronic illness.

WAKOL provides information and fact sheets, centralises data collection and stores assessment information.

It also provides de-identified and aggregated statistical analyses of the data to advance best practice management of young people.

WAKOL has been developed by Kangasoft Pty Ltd to specifications by Fostering Partnerships. Part of the design and development process includes rigorous and ongoing legal and ethical scrutiny.

Many additional functions and enhancements are planned for the future development of WAKOL.



Artwork Daniel Lowe