



The mother of inventions

When seven-year-old Mia Hawes was asked to use the word 'run' in a sentence at school, she chose a slightly different approach to her other classmates.

While they wrote sentences like; 'I like to run around at the playground' or 'When my dad calls I run to him', Mia wrote, 'When I grow up I want to run my own business'.

Like mother, like daughter. Mia's mother Diane Hurford has her own business selling **Brolly Sheets**, waterproof mattress protectors designed to make life easier for both parents and children when little accidents happen in the middle of the night.

Mia was the initial inspiration for the business. She slept in a bottom bunk while going through the process of night-time toilet training and Diane lost count of the number of times she bumped her head while changing the sheets after a middle of the night bed-wetting episode.

"I thought, 'There's got to be an easier way'," remembers Diane. "I couldn't find anything on the market that made it easier for me to get the household back to bed as soon as possible (with minimal bruising). The few options available were either too expensive, too complicated for a 2am bed change, or looked too sterile."

Diane says she comes from a long line of practical women, so when she couldn't find what she wanted – she made it. She made up her own waterproof design in bright and cheerful fabrics and made sure it could be



Diane's tips

- **Start small:** We began with black and white photocopied flyers and my Mum at work on the sewing machine.
- **Find your niche:** It began as a way of making my life easier, but night wetting is very common and there was a lack of products available on the market. I wanted something practical and attractive that would take away any stigma for kids.

easily replaced in the middle of the night, meaning the whole bed didn't need to be made again.

It was such a success that friends and family started to request their own model. Then, when the family relocated to Sydney, friends suggested Diane set up in business while she was over there.

"I'd always wanted to start my own business and this seemed to be one I could combine with motherhood," says Diane. Before having children Diane worked in the retail travel industry. Although she considered going back to work, it wasn't the kind of industry that was conducive to part-time work, and she liked the idea of doing something that would help other mothers.

Brolly Sheets developed a sound following in Australia, and when the family moved back to Auckland, Diane was ready to launch the business via a website here, www.brollysheets.com. With Mia and Lewis, 5, both at school, she tries to do the bulk of her business during school hours. The remainder is done after they have gone to bed. But it's still very much a family business. Diane's proud that Mia knows how to answer the phone professionally if need be, and her husband will spend his evenings packing orders if a rush is on.

"We started very small, and although it's great to be expanding, I like the way the business can work around our family life." ■

Bedwetting is common...

At the age of **five** there will be five or more children in the class of 30 who are still wetting the bed at least twice a week

At the age of **seven**, there will be about two in the class who are still wetting the bed at least twice a week

At the age of **10** there will be one or two

In the **first year of secondary school** there will be one

In **Year 10** (15 years olds) there will be one in every two classes

Source: www.brollysheets.com

