

## It Takes a Village to Raise a Child

Kids Fund has been assisting Illawarra children with disabilities for over 12 years. It provides equipment such as wheelchairs, orthotics, walkers, communicators, computer programs and hoists. These items can have a life-changing impact on the child and their family.

Alex Dawson, aged 4 from Figtree has received Ankle Foot Orthotics and a special Feeding Chair from Kids Fund. Born at 28 weeks gestation and weighing only 606grams, he has had to overcome many physical issues related to prematurity such as breathing, feeding and weight gain. Numerous surgeries have also been required to repair congenital problems.

Today, Alex is an energetic little boy who loves cars, trains and books. He is often described as a chatterbox. Many of the physical effects of prematurity have been overcome though he is still fed via a gastrostomy - a tube directly into the stomach, but his family are confident he'll be eating orally in the longer term.

His mother Belinda reflects on the idea that it takes a village to raise a child. "Well, in our village we not only have family and friends, but also paediatricians, dieticians, psychologists, ophthalmologists, visual therapists, occupational therapists, physiotherapists, speech therapists, gastroenterologists, neurologists, paediatric surgeons and your standard general practitioner".

Having a local fund like Kids Fund to provide Alex's Orthotics and Feeding Chair certainly reduced the financial pressure on the family and has helped Alex cope in his daily life. His father Matthew reports that the feeding chair is used everyday – it has even been taken to Queensland and Victoria when they visit family.

