



WEEKLY PEOPLE

FROM DPB TO DVD!

▲ LIGHTS, KIDS AND... ACTION!

Emma's young son Connor and his kindly friends star in her educational DVD, which takes an A to Z look at New Zealand's environment.

This single mum has worked her way off the benefit and onto Kiwi kids' TV screens

Sitting down to watch a popular kids' DVD with her toddler son Connor, Emma Heke was shocked. "I could make something better than that!" she thought, rolling her eyes at the US-made show.

It's something many parents must have thought and for Emma (42), a single mum on the Domestic Purposes Benefit, creating a homegrown DVD for children seemed like an impossible dream. But she knew it was something parents and kids would love.

"There are some amazing books and toys on offer for children, but I noticed there was little in the way of educational DVDs," the former art and photography teacher says. "I knew I had some of the skills I needed to make my own DVD. I just had to learn how to put it together."

She also had to work out how to pay for it and that meant borrowing money

against her home – a huge risk for anyone to take. If her idea failed, Emma knew she could lose her house.

But she had a feeling she was onto something and, after taking a six-month course in television production and setting up a website to sell her creation, Emma's educational DVD *Ours* was ready.

Ours teaches children about New Zealand's native wildlife and how to care for the environment. It has been an instant hit with parents, caregivers, daycares, kindergartens and public libraries.

Using Connor (5) as the star, along with kids from Nelson South Kindergarten, Emma narrates the DVD herself. Kids who watch it love her Kiwi accent and often say, "She sounds like my mum!"

Ours covers 55 topics and features fascinating facts such as how recycled cans can be used to build cars or bridges,

as well as nature footage like a monarch butterfly emerging from its chrysalis.

Seeing her DVD entertaining and educating kids isn't the only thrill for Emma. Having obtained an enterprise allowance to help her grow the business, she's also rapt not to be on the DPB anymore. Emma is now in discussion with TVNZ about having *Ours* screened on television and with such a good reaction to her work so far, she's confident even better things are ahead.

"I've not had a single negative comment about the DVD," Emma says with a grin. "Lots of people tell me their children are really calm after watching it. There's nothing too hyped-up about it and it doesn't talk down to kids. It's a down-to-earth experience they can relate to."

Vicky Tyler

➤ *Ours* is available online from www.oursdvd.co.nz. It costs \$26 and \$3 from every DVD sold will be donated to Early Childhood Centres

PHOTOS: TIM CUFF • CLOTHES FROM GO CLOTHING