



Log of Claims Victorian Election 2018

This log of fourteen claims is a benchmark against which Grandparents Victoria/Kinship Carers Victoria (GPV/KCV) will judge the commitment to families of candidates in the 2018 Victorian election.

GPV/KCV calls on all candidates to make clear their commitment to families, particularly kinship care families.

1 GPV/KCV CALLS ON GOVERNMENT TO SUPPORT THE RIGHTS OF FAMILIES.

GPV/KCV believes that:

- Families are an integral part of the social structure and contribute to overall national wellbeing.
- Families are complex with diverse needs.

GPV/KCV also believes there is a need to recognise that every family has its own history and culture, including ethnic culture, and that the cultures of Australia's Indigenous Peoples are especially vulnerable. As the First Australians, their cultures warrant greater protection.

GPV/KCV holds particular concerns for kinship care families. These families are not adequately supported by a 'one-size-fits-all' welfare system, or an inflexible state child protection system.

GPV/KCV believes that the level and type of support families attract should be varied, and according to their needs and their rights to such support.

Therefore, GPV/KCV calls on the Victorian Government to establish a state committee to promote and encourage reference to and the use of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child as a framework for all actions taken on behalf of children.

As a matter of priority, this committee should review the Victorian Government's and the wider community's performance in relation to the protection of the rights of the most vulnerable families in our community.

Further reading:

[GPV submission to the Federal Government on the *Family Law Act*. \(Grandparents Victoria, 2018\).](#)

[United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child.](#)

2 GPV/KCV CALLS FOR CHILD IMPACT STATEMENTS

GPV/KCV calls on the Victorian Government and its agencies to document the impact that any changes to legislation/policy will have on outcomes for children. Every piece of legislation, as well as all changes to regulations and practices, should be accompanied by a 'Child Impact Statement' (CIS) consisting of an analysis predicting the potential outcomes for child wellbeing in the medium, short and long terms.

Each CIS must measure the extent to which policy and practice contributes to improved adherence to the following rights for children and young people:

- to not be raised in poverty
- to know, and spend quality time with, their extended biological family
- to have access to affordable, quality health care, and have access to early intervention in mental health issues
- to be safe from emotional and physical harm
- to have access to a free, comprehensive, quality education
- to participate in leisure activities
- to possess a sense of identity
- to connect with the languages and religious beliefs of their family of origin
- to participate in decisions affecting their own life
- to be paid fairly for fair work, and to have access to safe working environments
- to be treated fairly within the justice system.

Further reading:

GPV/KCV calls for Child Impact Statements and Public Support for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (Grandparents Victoria, 2018).

3 OUT OF HOME CARE – GENERAL ISSUES

GPV/KCV believes that all children deserve to be raised in a loving family. Whilst it is not always possible for children to be raised by their parents, GPV/KCV prefers that children remain within the care of their extended biological family.

GPV/KCV believes that kinship care, which accounts for over 70% of children in out of home care (OOHC) in Victoria, is underfunded, with inadequate support provided to kinship care families.

Therefore, GPV/KCV calls for the following:

1. Immediate implementation of the 40 recommendations contained in the report 'Safe and wanted – An inquiry into the implementation of the *Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Permanent Care and Other Matters) Act 2014* issued by the Commission for Children and Young People. GPV/KCV in particular calls for implementation of the recommendation for the removal of adoption as an option in the hierarchy of permanency objectives for OOHC in the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*. This recommendation reflects community concerns about ill-considered moves to place children for adoption away from their biological family, particularly concerns which have arisen in light of past adoption practices in Australia which led to the Stolen Generations.

According to the report, there has been an 11% decrease in the number of children the DHHS has reunified with their parents since the commencement of the above-mentioned permanency amendments in March 2016.

2. An independent review of all kinship care cases that have been closed by DHHS in the past three years, in order to ensure that no child is left unprotected.

3. Funding for a statewide network of family contact centres to assist kinship carers who are required to facilitate access visits with parents, and to ensure that the visits are safe for all concerned.

4. An ongoing commitment of government funding that supports children in kinship care, including adequate payments to respond to the changing needs of the children and a peer-support program that assists both statutory carers and carers whose cases have been closed by the DHHS.

Further reading:

‘Safe and wanted – An inquiry into the implementation of the *Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Permanent Care and Other Matters) Act 2014*’ (Melbourne: Commission for Children and Young People, 2017).

United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC). Articles 9 – Separation from Parents, 10 – Family Reunification, 18 – Child-rearing Responsibilities, 20 – Protection by the State, 21 – Adoption.

4 OUT OF HOME CARE – EDUCATION

GPV/KCV believes that education is a key element in ensuring positive outcomes for children as they mature into adult life.

GPV/KCV believes all children have the right to a high quality education that ensures that all students experience success at school.

Therefore, GPV/KCV calls for the following:

5. Brokerage funding to enable Lookout Centres to source education services for children in OOHC whose educational needs they have assessed; for example, where a child might require specialised assistance such as speech therapy.

6. Establishment of a kinship care education allowance paid directly to all carers to assist in defraying the costs of education.

7. Funding for development of an information package/professional development module about the special needs of children in OOHC for use in schools and teacher-training institutions.

Further reading:

UNCRC. Article 28 – A Child’s Right to Education.

5 FAMILY WELFARE

GPV/KCV believes it is the responsibility of a civilised society to have an equitable welfare system that operates as a safety net to ensure children and families have access to the basic necessities of life.

GPV/KCV believes that welfare measures should support families without stigmatising them, and enable those families to better their circumstances, rather than be decimated by the welfare system.

Therefore GPV/KCV calls for the following:

8. The Victorian Government to block all use of the Cashless Welfare Card within Victoria’s boundaries, until such time as research can prove that the card benefits families, and until extensive community consultation about the card’s use has been undertaken.

9. The establishment of a state committee to encourage reference to and the use of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC) as a framework for all actions taken on behalf of children.

10. The Victorian Government to reinstate the right of children under 10 years of age to independent representation in court proceedings affecting them.

11. The Victorian Government to implement a scheme of residential support for young mothers wishing to undertake intensive parenting programs designed to keep them caring for their children.

Further reading:

UNCRC. Articles 26 – A Child’s Right to Social Security, 27 – Standard of Living.

6 HEALTH

GPV/KCV believes in a child’s right to enjoy good health and high-quality health care, and that a key part of ensuring children’s wellbeing is encouraging a healthy lifestyle.

Therefore GPV/KCV calls for the following:

12. A state government-led and funded campaign promoting healthy food choices for children based on scientific research and which includes information on the connection between consumption of Omega-3 fatty acids and the reduction of trauma-related behaviours in children and young people.

13. The Victorian Government to conduct a research trial into the effects of diets high in Omega-3 fatty acids on trauma behaviours of children and young people, particularly young people in residential care or custody.

14. The Victorian Government to establish a state committee on children’s play in support of Article 31 of the UNCRC to:

- Implement a program to award funds to local agencies wishing to establish therapeutic play groups and other activities for children with special needs, particularly those children exhibiting trauma-related behaviours
- Stimulate discussion and encourage development of policy and practice in the area of children’s play, including in schools.
- Encourage development of venues for adventure play for children
- Implement a system of small grants to be awarded to local groups wanting to establish small, locally managed play activities; e.g. annual closure of neighbourhood streets for children’s play.

About GPV/KCV

Founded in 2001, Grandparents Victoria (GPV) is a state-wide non-profit community organisation of grandparents working together to shape a positive future for all children. GPV addresses a wide range of issues and often campaigns around current programs affecting children and young people.

Kinship Carers Victoria (KCV) is a government-funded state-wide network of kinship carers which was established in 2011 to promote kinship care, to ensure that it is well supported and that it leads to positive outcomes for the children and young people raised in kinship care placements.

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