

ANNUAL REPORT

2018- 2019

grandparents
VICTORIA



Kinship
Carers
VICTORIA



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ABOUT GPV/KCV

GRANDPARENTS VICTORIA (GPV)

Grandparents Victoria (GPV) is a state-wide not-for-profit organisation of grandparents who believe that grandparents have a role to play in supporting families, particularly children. GPV believes that:

- grandparents have an important role within their families, across communities and as global citizens
- the needs of families are complex, and collective action by grandparents to support families is required.

KINSHIP CARERS VICTORIA (KCV)

KCV is governed by GPV, with kinship carers well represented on the Board of GPV. KCV strives to:

- develop broad community awareness and understanding of kinship care
- link kinship carers with support services, self-help groups and other relevant networks
- provide resources and information to kinship carers
- develop partnerships with other organisations to best support kinship carers
- represent and advocate for the best interests of kinship carers and the children in their care



KCV is supported by the Victorian government

GRANDPARENTS AUSTRALIA

Grandparents Australia Inc. was formed in 2002 as a non-profit organisation to:

- Promote the role and needs of grandparents and grandchildren
- Undertake public awareness campaigns and research projects relevant to the interests and needs of grandparents and grandchildren
- Liaise with the federal, state and local governments on matters of significance to grandparents and grandchildren

VALUES AND ETHICS

The Association believes that ethical approaches to its work will result in stronger networks of grandparents working together, improved community appreciation of the role of grandparents and proper and legal practices. The Association is committed to an ethical approach to its work. This means that the Association will:

- (a) maintain a commitment to the beliefs and aims of the Association and give priority to addressing the wellbeing of families
- (b) maintain confidentiality at all times protecting the privacy of members and individuals who associate with GPV/KCV
- (c) uphold individual rights while at the same time advocating for the rights of disadvantaged groups
- (d) foster a culture of fairness
- (e) respect a diversity of views
- (f) at all times be honest:

Key words which influence GPV/KCV ethical approaches are:

- | | | | |
|-------------------|-----------------|-------------|--------------|
| • Truthfulness | • Inclusiveness | • Constancy | • Commitment |
| • Confidentiality | • Integrity | • Gratitude | • Compassion |

The work of the Association is based on the beliefs that:

- All children in Australia must be protected and given opportunities and support to fulfil their potential.
- The needs of families are complex and the support grandparents can offer families is significant.
- Grandparents' unique understandings, knowledge and attitudes should influence decisions about child wellbeing.
- Grandparents have a responsibility to engage in public discussions and to act individually and collectively to ensure the wellbeing of all children.
- Grandparents engaged in extraordinary support of families should be supported in their role according to their needs and the needs of the families they support.

THE CHAIRPERSON'S MESSAGE

Following on from the Victorian state election, the Australian federal election in May was a focus of the 2018-19 financial year. I said last year, but it bears repeating, that elections are an important time for the community sector – they present an opportunity to remind politicians that the community sector has priorities, some of which do not match those of politicians.

In February GPV/KCV released its 'Log of claims' for the federal election, and followed this up with two further letters to all federal politicians – one highlighting the need for Child Impact Statements to be attached to all new legislation and asking for an enquiry into families, and another raising concerns about the direction taken by the Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs in their report on local adoption.

The report, *Breaking barriers: a national adoption framework for Australian children*, represents a concerning trend. Legislation in New South Wales and the Australian Capital Territory has recently been changed to make adoption away from the family of origin easier, raising fears of the potential for another stolen generation. The *Breaking Barriers* report holds up the New South Wales legislation as the benchmark to which all states should aspire – a prospect which GPV/KCV views with some suspicion. It would seem, in spite of their denials, that some sections of the community view children in out of home care as a pool of potential adoptees for childless couples.

GPV/KCV believes that the first priority for governments should be keeping children and their families together, and calls for greater emphasis on preventative programs that focus on family preservation rather than spending time and money on policies that in practice may have the effect of tearing families apart.

Carer wellbeing is always a primary focus of GPV/KCV work. However, it was reinforced as an issue in the KCV Longitudinal Study of Kinship Care which found that carers were increasingly rating their overall attitude to their own wellbeing and experiences as a carer as 'mixed' or 'negative', rather than 'positive'.

Further research conducted at the "Kinship Care: Where to From Here?" seminars found that when thinking about carers' wellbeing, participants agreed that they do need to take more responsibility for their own wellbeing and that this should be a feature discussion, perhaps at support group level, in 2019.

GPV/KCV believes that carers cannot be expected to raise happy, healthy children if they are not enabled and empowered to take care for themselves.

I would like to acknowledge the GPV/KCV staff for their efforts in what has been a challenging year, and my fellow Board members for their contributions to the governance and management of the organisation. Also, the many other people who make up the GPV/KCV network for enriching the work of GPV/KCV by participating in its surveys, forums, and other consultations.

We look forward to the 2019-20 financial year, acknowledging the hard work ahead, but optimistic about the rewards.



Helen Brown

THE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

This financial year marks a turning point for kinship care in Victoria, after over ten years of urging and waiting the Victorian budget acknowledged kinship care with a substantial financial investment in the future.

The support provided in the budget is nothing less than what is required to keep kinship care vibrant, marching to the tune of the advances being made in the care of children with special needs. These funds will also assist in keeping kinship placements stable by acknowledging the expertise and strength of kinship carers and fostering those strengths across the whole cohort of kinship carers - the largest and most productive form of care for children in out-of-home-care.

It is to be hoped that a proportion of the funds being made available to support kinship care will be devoted to ongoing evaluation of the support offered to kinship carers and that such evaluations will take into account the experiences of kinship carers as much as statistical evidence. The carer voice is now being recognised as being key to charting the way forward, and we expect that this recognition will continue and become more intrinsic in deliberations.

GPV/KCV values the Commissioner for Children and Young People and was pleased to see an ongoing investment in this position in the budget. In the past few years kinship carers and grandparents have found the role played by this statutory authority to be crucial in raising debates about children and young people from the perspective of their rights. To have a well-supported government funded agency with a capacity for independent critique of community action in relation to children and young people is applauded, especially in a time when there is an inclination by governments to "bunker down" and stifle public discourse, particularly if that discourse in any way questions government approaches. Support for advocacy such as that the Commissioner provides is a cornerstone of democracy and reminds grandparents of the traditions of Labor governments of the past, committed to open discussion. Well done Victorian government!

Amongst this good news there was a note in the budget that causes disharmony. It was the massive cuts to the public service. It is popular to criticise the public service, assuming that there are too many public servants and that they are all overpaid. GPV/KCV does not subscribe to this view and would be distressed if the area of health and human services suffers cuts that will affect emerging work to support families to engage in prevention of problems. GPV/KCV argues that early intervention and prevention approaches are a crucial role the public service could play: every bit as crucial as child protection services.

Prevention and then protection! is what we want. We call on the whole of government, from the Premier across all portfolios to think in these terms. Perhaps we could start by implementing a system of Child Impact Statements that measure the effects of any government policy on families and children before they are implemented.



Anne L. McLeish OAM

Director

1... DECISIONS ARE MADE AND VIEWS GATHERED

GPV/KCV relies on the support and advice of an extensive network of contributors. Founding members and newly joined members all have opportunities to inform the work of GPV/KCV.

1.1... THE BOARD DECIDES

The GPV/KCV Board members have ultimate responsibility for decision-making and compliance with laws and regulations. Of 40 decisions made by the Board over the course of the 2018-19 FY, 65% of them were substantial decisions that are able to be arranged around three broad themes:

Governance

- Discussions of potential legal action over misstatements made on one particular Facebook page
- Review of the whole of the standing orders and the outcomes of the GPV/KCV ethics review
- Proposal to seek a patron for GPV
- Major financial planning for the next few financial year

Family wellbeing

- Support for a kinship care superannuation scheme
- Increase in the number of surveys undertaken annually to determine the pressure points bearing on families
- Continued monitoring of proposed changes to adoption legislation
- Support for Aboriginal self-determination
- Proposals for increased kinship carer training

Outreach

- Support for campaigns run by other organisations
- Promotion of GPV/KCV

The ethics review

As part of a commitment to focus on the ethical conduct of GPV/KCV members and staff an external evaluator was employed to undertake a review. This review involved surveying board members and staff about their attitudes to ethics, as well as examining recent publications to determine whether they demonstrated the organisations' ethical standards.

Travel

This year the staff/board travelled to 2 interstate locations, 4 inner metropolitan locations, 8 outer metropolitan locations and 11 regional rural locations.

Board members

- Helen Brown – Chairperson
- Gedda Burke – Deputy Chair
- June Smith – Treasurer
- Kerry Doquile – Member
- Helen Corcoran – Member
- Beverly Gardiner – Member
- Angela Hogan – Member
- Miralde Crankshaw – Member
- Anke Kenter – Member
- Jenny Sullivan – Member
- Jenny Cheshire – Member
- Adine Neill – Member
- Marylyn Broomhall – Member
(resigned Nov. 2018)

Life members

- Helen and Mal Brown
- Anne McLeish
- Jack Lloyd

Staff Members

- Anne McLeish – Director
- Naomi Whyley – Admin. Officer
- Megan Crowle – Publications Officer
- Beryle Gallacher – Administrative Assistant
- Lisa Mills – Podcast Developer
- Bradley Dawson – Website Manager

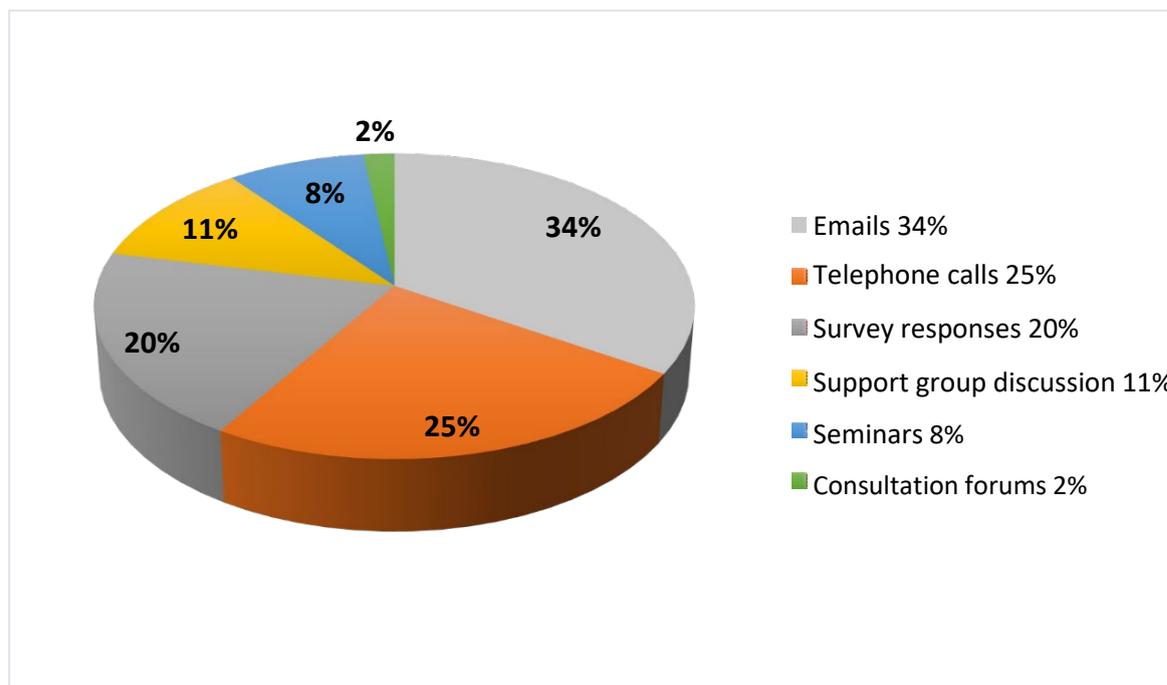
- Trevor and Christine Wilson
- Francis and Susan Morgan
- Allan and Noelle Mawdsley

1.2... THE MEMBERS SAY

GPV/KCV members fall into two categories drawn from across the state: grandparents and kinship carers. The kinship carers are mainly grandparents, but also other relatives and friends who are raising children known to them, but not their own.

Providing multiple ways for members to have a say about contemporary issues is core business for GPV/KCV. The information gathered from these contacts shapes the work program of GPV/KCV and informs the Board and staff of issues that need to be raised in discussion with other agencies.

The communication methods used to liaise with members and the balance of usage between them is set out in the chart below. The number of occasions when individuals have taken the opportunities to have their say totals 2201 as outlined in the table below.



Strategy		Number of events	# of participants	Total
Face to Face discussions ...discussions at support groups, seminars and consultation forums	Local Kinship Care Support Groups	16	249	476
	Where to Seminars	11	185	
	Peer Support Consultations	2 held	18	
	Children's Rights Forums	2 held	24	
Telecommunications ...electronic communications by phone or email.	GPV/KCV Telephone line	ongoing	538	1288
	Email/Website	6605 in	750	
Surveys ...on a range of topics relevant to members. These may be general in nature or specific to kinship care.	Longitudinal Study Survey	45 surveys issued	35	437
	Child Rights Survey	65 surveys issued	65	
	Role of Grandparents Survey	50 surveys issued	50	
	Campaign Issues Survey	100 surveys issued	110	
	Where to From Here Survey	185 surveys issued	177	
				2201

Face to face discussions are valued by GPV/KCV, as they are the best way to create and develop ongoing relationships with members. Such discussions shape the GPV/KCV work program. In the 2018-19 FY, discussions took place in:

- 4 Inner metropolitan locations
- 8 Outer metropolitan locations
- 10 Rural and regional locations

Discussions at support groups

In the 2018-19 FY GPV/KCV placed a priority on taking up opportunities to provide further training for kinship carers. For this reason, the number of ordinary support group visits by GPV/KCV staff was fewer than the previous financial year. However, the number of support group visits conducted in the 2017- 18 FY was unsustainable.

162 face to face conversations with carers were recorded through attendance at 10 support group meetings in seven locations (some locations were visited more than once):

- Pakenham
- Geelong
- Dandenong
- Scoresby
- Inverloch
- Preston
- Mornington Peninsula

Further, views were collated at special luncheons attended by 87 carers held in six locations across Victoria:

- Shepparton
- Colac
- Ballarat
- Seymour
- Warrnambool

Public consultations

Four consultation forums were held in the 2018-19 FY. These forums, held in central locations, were designed to address specific issues in depth:

- 2 consultations held in Melton and Geelong on the subject of *Children's Rights* (24 carers)
- 2 consultations held in the CBD and Kensington on the subject of *Peer support for kinship carers* (18 carers)

Seminars

185 kinship carers attended the ***Where to from here Learning Circles 2 seminars***. Attendees were drawn from 100 different suburbs and towns with seminars held in the following locations:

- Keilor
- Highett
- Pakenham
- Shepparton
- Warrnambool
- Ballarat
- Morwell
- Geelong
- Mildura
- Karingal
- Bendigo

Surveys

Respondents to written surveys were drawn from across the state, residing in both metropolitan and provincial/rural areas.

GPV/KCV conducts a number of surveys to assist in understanding the views of members. The surveys include the annual update to the Longitudinal Study of Kinship Care, along with a number of smaller, "snapshot" surveys. Surveys undertaken this year were of:

- 35 kinship carers in the Longitudinal Study of Kinship Care.
- 50 grandparents to determine the roles grandparents play.
- 65 grandparents, parents, kinship carers and non-parent young people to identify the Children's Rights most needing protection.
- 110 grandparents and kinship carers to identify issues of most concern in the leadup to the state and federal elections – commenced in 2017-18, completed in 2018-19.
- 177 of the kinship carers who attended these seminars also completed a written survey to identify the relative importance of a number of individual and family wellbeing questions.

Telephone Conversations

GPV/KCV fields many calls from kinship carers, some of whom raise issues which have not previously come to the attention of GPV/KCV. When a large number of calls on a single issue come into the office within a short period of time, it is usually a sign that the issue needs future attention.

The creation of the kinship care help lines, operated by DHHS, has resulted in a reduction in the number of repeat phone calls to the GPV/KCV office complaining about a lack of response to their enquiries. However, it is the overall number of calls received by the office is still increasing. In the 2018-19 FY 538 calls have been logged:

- 454 KCV related calls
- 54 GPV related calls
- 30 joint GPV/KCV related calls

Of these calls:

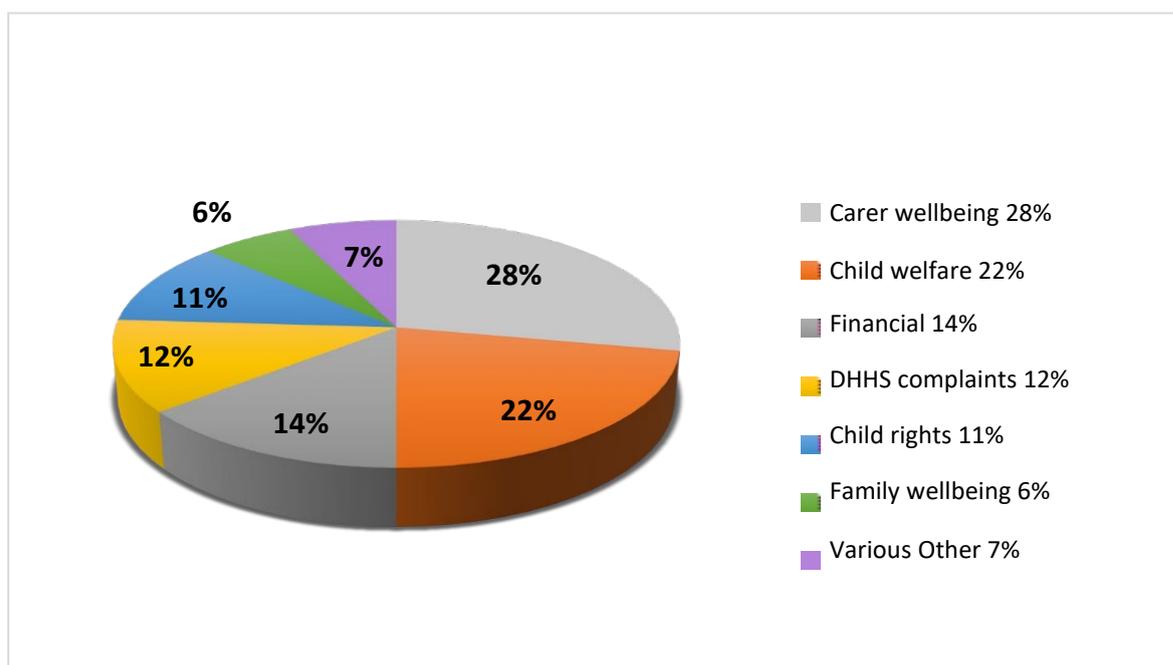
- 357 addressed one issue
- 135 addressed two issues
- 46 addressed three issues

Email and Website

Email is an emerging vehicle through which carers are alerting GPV/KCV to issues. In the past, email has predominantly been a vehicle for seeking information about services. The balance between seeking information and alerting the organisation to issues seems to be changing.

2... ISSUES IDENTIFIED BY BOARD AND MEMBERS

All of the issues raised by members affect the wellbeing of children and families, rather than just the members themselves. The chart below demonstrates the balance of issues raised and the table below shows the settings in which issues have been raised.



	Telephone	Support Groups	Where to Seminar	Grandparent Survey	Campaign Survey	Email/ Website	Longitudinal Study	Child Rights Survey	Peer support forum	Children Rights Forum
Child Wellbeing										
Carer Wellbeing										
Financial concerns										
Family Wellbeing										
Children's rights										
DHHS Complaints										
Grandparent Wellbeing										

2.1... ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN MEETINGS AND ON TELEPHONE/EMAIL

Carer wellbeing (28% of total)

Kinship carers tell us that:

- *carer stress* - There is a need for more programs targeting carer stress - the stresses of navigating day to day life and coping with other concerns have an impact on the carers' mental and physical health
- *non-statutory kinship carers* - There needs to be better access to supports and services for non-statutory kinship carers
- *support groups and training sessions* - Carers want better access to support groups which provide emotional support, advice and information, referral and brokerage, outreach activities, representation, and recreation & relaxation. There is also a call for and training sessions in **local areas**.

Child welfare (22% of total)

Grandparents and kinship carers are concerned about:

- *medical needs* - Lack of funding for children's and young people's medical needs, including lack of funding for healthy eating programs for children and young people
- *healing-centred wellbeing* - A shortage of programs that encourage a shift from "trauma-informed practice" to "healing-centred wellbeing" amongst children and young people
- *acute education needs* - A shortage of support for children and young people with acute education needs
- *educational expenses* - Assistance for kinship carers to defray the cost of educational expenses
- *cost of childcare* - The adverse impact of the cost of childcare on education/socialising options for young children
- *OOHC permanency objectives* - Aspects of OOHC permanency objectives that allow children to be removed from their biological families, thereby limiting opportunities for children and young people to be successfully reunited with their parents
- *reunification plans* - Lack of support for the implementation of reunification plans for children and young people
- *clear legal information* - A lack of clear legal information in issues such as court proceedings, questions about moving interstate or overseas, difficulties obtaining legal documents such as birth certificates and passports.

Financial concerns (14% of total)

Grandparents and kinship carers tell us that:

- *carer payments* - Kinship carers are not always aware of what carer payments they might be eligible for, or who to contact to find out what payments they can receive
- *late payments by DHHS* - Kinship carers on tight budgets are adversely impacted by *missed or late payments*, and need to access emergency funding for unanticipated needs
- *non-statutory carers* - Non-statutory carers feel that they are particularly impacted by the New Model of Kinship Care as it is harder for them to access support services
- *child care funding* - Changes need to be made to child care funding. Almost half of grandparents surveyed by GPV/KCV provided some level of childcare during working hours.
- *A fair and just family welfare system* - Grandparents want Australia to halt the roll-out of the cashless welfare card and rescind the Parents Next program

DHHS complaints (12% of total)

Complaints related to:

- *reimbursement payments* – kinship carers are negatively impacted by delays in receiving initial reimbursement payments, and believe DHHS red tape cause these delays
- *access visits* - kinship carers are frustrated by difficulties involved in meeting arrangements that meet the requirements set out in case plans, as well as the needs of both the carers and the parents
- *permanency of placements* – kinship carers are facing uncertainty regarding decisions about the permanency of placements, or have questions about the possibility of reunification.

Children's Rights (11% of total)

The children's and young people's rights commonly endorsed by grandparents and kinship carers as needing urgent attention were the right of children and young people to:

- *cultural identity* - connection with biological family and community
- *decision-making* - participation in decision-making about their own lives, along with their extended biological family
- *children's rights in Australia* - participation in public processes that discuss children's rights in Australia and identify areas for urgent attention
- *early intervention programs* - access to early intervention programs that prevent child and young persons' deaths by suicide and hospitalisations for intentional self-harm
- *not live in poverty* -to not be raised in poverty
- *be free from child abuse and neglect* – to be protected from child abuse and neglect
- *OOHC placements* – to be well supported when they are placed in OOHC placements
- *be protected by courts* - to be treated by courts as children up until 18 years of age
- *protection of their rights* -to have their rights enshrined in a national plan that includes, policy, legislation and budgeting processes to support children's rights in Australia.

Further, GPV/KCV believes that governments must adopt a system of Child Impact Statements (CIS) as a device that helps decide if policy initiatives are fair to children and young people. Each CIS must measure the extent to which any policy or practice enhances adherence to the following rights for all children to:

- **Not be raised in poverty**
- **Know, and spend quality time with, their extended biological family**
- **Have access to affordable, quality health care, and early intervention in mental health issues**
- **Be safe from emotional and physical harm**
- **Enjoy a free, comprehensive, quality education**
- **Participate in leisure activities**
- **Have a sense of identity**
- **Connect with the languages and religious beliefs of their family of origin**
- **Be paid fairly for fair work, and the right to safe working environments**
- **Participate in decisions affecting their own lives**
- **Be treated fairly and humanely within the justice system.**

GPV/KCV first called for a CIS when testifying to the East West Link hearings in 2014, and again in a GPV/KCV position paper released in early 2018.

Family wellbeing (6% of total)

Grandparents and kinship carers call for:

- *family preservation* - more funding for programs that emphasis keeping parents and children together with the help of extended family
- *domestic violence* - action to combat domestic violence, and promote support of families
- *Aboriginal self-determination* - more support for moves towards Aboriginal reconciliation and Aboriginal self-determination
- *role that grandparents play* – more recognition for the role grandparents play in supporting families

Various Other Issues (7% of total)

Grandparents tell us that *denied access* – they need more legal support to see grandchildren to whom they have been denied access

2.2... ISSUES IDENTIFIED IN SURVEYS

The Longitudinal Study of kinship care: Report #8

Now in its eighth year, the Longitudinal Study of Kinship Care tracks changes in the lives of kinship care families from year to year. Major findings from the eighth study include that:

- *Stability is high* - The high level of stability in kinship care placements needs to be recognised
- *children are meeting developmental benchmarks* - The majority of children and young people in the study are meeting developmental benchmarks and participating in education or paid work appropriate to their age but still require ongoing funding support up to age 21
- *kinship children are now raising families of their own* - A number of young adults from kinship care are now happily raising families of their own but often struggle with inadequate Centrelink payments
- *restorative justice is called for* - The number of teenagers and young adults in kinship care experiencing negative outcomes such as drug abuse and criminal behaviours is lower than the state average for children leaving OOHC, but this does not negate a need for restorative justice procedures for young people to keep them off criminal pathways
- *informal/non-statutory kinship carers have needs* - The New Model of kinship care has had a negative impact on some informal/non-statutory kinship carers
- *Kinship carer training programs are needed* - need to be offered in a variety of local venues to ensure that the maximum number of carers are able to participate

- *Reconciliation with parents is important* - Successful reconciliation with parents is possible years after the separation has taken place, but current legislation does not allow for this possibility
- *Access visits with parents* - should be encouraged, but need to be adequately facilitated and monitored
- *higher education is costly* - financial assistance to support young people into higher education
- *mental and physical health is precarious* - Kinship carers need to be supported to maintain good mental/physical health
- *early intervention programs for parents are crucial* - There is a need for early intervention programs for parents to reduce the number of new children being taken immediately into kinship care after birth

The Roles that grandparents play

50 grandparents explored the roles that they play within their families and the wider community. This investigation found that:

- *Age affects grandparent roles* - The level of participation in some of these roles was impacted by the respondents' ages but grandparents were still offering substantive support to families late in life.
- *grandparents play multiple roles* - Many grandparents play multiple roles well into old age, including:
 - Kinship Care
 - Childcare
 - Babysitting
 - Financial Support
 - Paid Employment
 - Volunteering

Wellbeing survey

Participants in the *Where to From Here* seminars were invited to rank a number of wellbeing related issues in order of importance. The results were, in order from most important to least important:

- *medical needs* – child wellbeing featuring more responsive funding for child medical needs
- *wellbeing* – carer wellbeing featuring more attention to carers taking action for their own wellbeing
- *rights to identity/ connection with biological family* - child rights featuring rights to identity and connection with biological family
- *decision-making about children* - Family rights featuring the rights of extended biological families to participate in decision-making about children
- *education activities* - education featuring access to a full range of education activities from day of enrolment
- *Family Preservation* – keeping parents and children together with the help of extended family
- *Healing-centred wellbeing* – featuring more focus on what is right about children in out of home care

Children's rights

Towards the end of the financial year, GPV/KCV began collecting responses to a survey ranking the relative importance of what the Children's Commissioner sees as points of concern in Australia's implementation of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. This survey will continue into the 2019-20 financial year.

At the time of writing, the top six ranked issues were:

- *comprehensive national plan, policy, legislation or budgeting processes* - No comprehensive national plan, policy, legislation or budgeting processes to support children's rights in Australia
- *Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Rights of the Child on Communications Protocol* - Australia has not ratified the Optional Protocol to the Convention of the Rights of the Child on Communications Protocol
- *national data* Insufficient disaggregated national data that meet the requirements set out by the UN
- *deaths by suicide/ intentional self-harm* - Child deaths by suicide and hospitalisations for intentional self-harm have increased
- *health, education, justice and child protection* - Significant inequalities on health, education, justice and child protection for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children
- *poverty* - Approximately 17% of children under the age of 15 live in poverty

3... LIAISON/PARTNERSHIPS WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS

3.1... INTERNATIONAL

International Play Association (IPA)

GPV/KCV is an attentive long-distance member of this association and some members of GPV are contemplating attending the 2020 IPS conference.

3.2... NATIONAL

Treating Families Fairly Alliance

This alliance is co-operating to raise awareness of family matters in the lead up to the federal election. Members are:

- GPV/KCV
- Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare
- Bethany
- Brotherhood of St Lawrence
- Council for the single mother and child
- Family Care (Shepparton)
- Good Shepard
- Swinburne University
- Melbourne University
- Financial Consumer Rights Committee
- Bureau Labor Statistic

Of most concern in the lead up to the election was the determinantal effect of the Parents Next Program, with strident criticism made by the group of the quality of research evaluating the outcomes of this national program.

Megan Mitchell, the national children's Commissioner met with the members of the Alliance to talk about children's rights. The committee undertook to submit questions she could put to the Australia government during a united nation meeting scheduled to be held in September 2019.

Play Australia

GPV/KCV meets regularly with Play Australia to keep abreast of trends in play at national and international level and to cross post articles promoting play in each other's communications channels.

Families Australia

Families Australia is a national peak organisation that strives to improve the wellbeing of Australian families, especially the most vulnerable and marginalised by providing policy advice to the Australian Government and Parliament. Anne McLeish retired from the board of Families Australia in 2019 after having been elected to the position in 2004.

<https://familiesaustralia.org.au>

3.3... INTERSTATE

Kin Raising Kids Tasmania

Support for the Tasmanian kinship carers association (Kin Raising Kids) is ongoing. Activities in which GPV/ KCV engaged in this financial year included:

- Meeting with past Children's Commissioner for Tasmania
- Attendance to a Tasmanian state-wide strategic planning day
- Assistance with the Kin Raising Kids federal election mail
- Support with the survey of kinship carers in Tasmania

3.4... VICTORIA STATE-WIDE

Victorian Local government Liaison

In this financial year efforts were made to build stronger relationships with local governments LGAs with which GPV/KCV are worked included:

Frankston LGA

Two activities were held:

- A meeting with Frankston City Council representatives to discuss support kinship care across the Frankston area
- A luncheon co-hosted by the Mayor of Frankston and KCV to thank kinship carers for their contribution

Mt Alexander LGA

An information mailout to all schools in Mt Alexander was completed and resulted in discussion with Wedderburn Secondary College, willing to undertake future work to support kinship care.

Loddon LGA

An information mailout to all schools in Loddon LGA was completed, with little response from the mail out.

Five inner city LGAs

KCV briefed the following LGAs on development within kinship care in Victoria and nationally:

- Melbourne City Council
- Moonee Valley City Council
- Hobsons Bay LGA
- Maribyrnong LGA
- Wyndham LGA

CECFW - Kinship forum

This forum brings together practitioners from community sector organisations supporting kinship carers. The practitioners come from across the state to talk through operational matters related to the new model of kinship care and to interact with DHHS personnel in finding solutions to emerging problems. GPV/KCV attends to give updates about its work and to share the perceptions of GPV/KCV in regard to emerging issues.

Children's Matters

This alliance is in recess and only meets to address specific issues raised by its member organisations. In December 2018 this alliance was reformed to address the issue of adoption. Members are:

- GPV/KCV
- Fleur Ward & Partners Lawyers
- Mental Health for the Young and their Families in Victoria
- Public Advocates of Victoria
- VACCA
- Berry Street

Mental Health for the Young and their Families

Mental Health for the Young & their Families in Victoria is a collaborative partnership between mental health & other health professionals, service users & the general public. Three Board members attended the AGM of this organisation, and 3 Board members attended the Annual Rickards lecture in March 2019. This lecture was titled Mental Health and Schooling - The Educational Challenge

National Council for Women Vic

At its National conference held in Canberra in October, NCW approved two motions related to kinship care and families:

- a request for a range of questions about kinship care to be inserted into the national census and
- a request for children to be treated separately in court proceedings.

3.5... REGIONAL VICTORIA

The Mildura Kinship Care Consultative Committee MKCCC

The Mildura Kinship Care Consultative Committee established and chaired by KCV with the local assistance of CentaCare Mildura. This committee brings together local agencies that work co-operatively to strengthen provision of services to kinship carers in the Mallee by:

- sharing information from a range of sources and evaluating its impact on Mildura kinship carers
- developing plans for provision of training and camps for kinship carers and the children in their charge
- attracting funding from a range of sources to support activities for kinship carers
- promoting the role of kinship carers in local media
- strengthening the peer support strategies in Mildura

Four activities were undertaken this financial year included four meetings/workshops:

- MKCCC mtg #2 at which the committee discussed a number of issues related to supporting kinship care
- A visit by the Victorian Commissioner for Children and Young People
- A Where to From Here training seminar for kinship- carers
- An education forum for professionals from the child protection and education sectors at which participants canvass issues related to kinship care and education

The visit by the Commissioner for children and Young people

During her visit to Mildura the Commissioner met with kinship carers, representatives from a range of agencies and local government representatives, including the CEO and the Mayor. Discussion focused on the need for young people in the Mallee to participate in work being undertaken by the Commissioner to document the views of young people about their experiences in kinship care, childcare for kinship carers, aboriginal self-determination and the depressed economic circumstances in which many kinship carers in the Mallee exist.

The Mildura Education forum

The education forum, held in partnership with the DET Lookout Centre, was challenging with a wide range of issues for kinship care families canvassed, including:

- Transition from one school to another
- Healing Trauma
- Suspension and alternate disciplinary measures
- Expectations of students
- Cultural support plans for students
- Therapeutic programs
- Individual learning plans

4... PUBLICATIONS

4.1... POSITION/DISCUSSION PAPERS DEVELOPED BY GPV/KCV

- **Restorative Justice** – This paper explored a new approach to criminal justice for young, non-violent offenders. It shows that in some cases, mediation between young offenders, their victims, and the wider community can be a more effective deterrent to reoffending than a custodial sentence.
- **The Scottish Welfare System** – This paper praised the human rights-based approach to welfare payments now being taken by the Scottish parliament. This is in stark contrast to the harsh austerity-based system operating in the remainder of the UK, which has been judged by the United Nations to breach human rights requirements.
- **Loneliness** – This paper was based on research undertaken by Relationships Australia and Swinburne University. It looked at how loneliness is becoming an emerging mental health issue, citing that true loneliness cannot always be cured by social interaction, as it is the quality of the interactions as well as the quantity that effects the overall level of loneliness a person feels.

4.2... THE KINSHIP CARER WELLBEING MAGAZINE

The Kinship Carers' Wellbeing Magazine was conceived as part of a larger strategy to encourage carers to look after their own wellbeing, after the GPV/KCV Longitudinal Study found that carer wellbeing was decreasing from year to year for some carers. Even those who reported no health and wellbeing concerns during the survey were still facing stressful situations.

After the success of the first issue of the magazine in the 2017-18 FY, a second issue was released in February 2019. The keynote of the second issue was an extract from an article, "The Future of Healing: Shifting from Trauma Informed Care to Healing-centred Engagement published with permission of the author, Dr Shawn Ginwright.

Some of the other article titles included:

- Play is important for adults too!
- Walking isn't just good for you, it's good for the economy
- How stress balls can help you
- The health benefits of vinegar

The magazine is designed to be interactive. In addition to puzzles and exercises to help carers develop their understanding of wellbeing, those who read the magazine carefully will find opportunities to claim free gifts for themselves and occasionally for the children in their care.

4.3... SUBMISSIONS TO ENQUIRIES

Submissions to enquiries are an important aspect of GPV/KCV work. Two enquiries were responded to this year:

- Victorian Legal Aid's call for responses to draft guidelines for Child Protection Duty Lawyers,
- Australian Senate Standing Committee on Social Policy and Legal Affairs: Enquiry into Local Adoption.

4.4... KCV PODCAST AND KCV INFORMATION PAMPHLET

1500 copies of the KCV info pamphlet were distributed across metro and rural Victoria and across sectors. 7 podcasts have been produced this financial year, building on the 3 produced the previous financial year

- # 4 Carer wellbeing activity – AIR Ballan (60 plays)
- #5 Lookout Centre Principal David Rose (16 plays)
- #6 Federal election 1 featuring David Tennant (24 plays)
- #7 Federal election 2 featuring Anne McLeish (20 plays)
- #8 The new model of Kinship Care for Victoria (56 plays)
- #9 The Role of Grandparent's Survey (48 plays)
- #10 Dr Karen McLean- Health of children and young people in OOHC (39 plays)
- #11 39 #11 KCV Longitudinal Study #8 (117 plays)

Across all podcast there have been 380 people who have listened or downloaded the podcast series.

4.5... WEBSITE/FACEBOOK POSTINGS

Regular updates of the website not only provide members with current information. It is also an important strategy that contributes transparency to the general public, a responsibility the organisation takes seriously. The use of the website is steadily increasing as people realise that the content is updated frequently. Indications are that a range of people other than kinship carers and grandparents are accessing the website. Use of website for the financial year:

- **KCV website** – 30,203 visits by people who engaged in continuous activity across the site
- 11,604 visitors who visited the website without continued activity
- **GPV website** - 26,107 visits by people who engaged in continuous activity across the site
- 8,207 visitors who visited the website without continued activity

In March 2019 a KCV Facebook page was launched and in the three months until the end of the financial year it attracted 76 views and 63 likes.

4.6... REPORTS OF GPV/KCV ACTIVITIES

These reports are written by GPV/KCV staff and present reports on activities undertaken by GPV/KCV. Printed and distributed were:

1. 2017-18 Annual Report
2. GPV/KCV Ethics Review report
3. Issues identified in the Telephone Analysis Report
4. KCV Longitudinal Study of Kinship Care Report #8
5. Pakenham kinship- care support group Evaluation Report
6. Learning Circles #2 "Where to from Here?" Seminar Evaluation Report
7. The Roles Grandparents Play Survey Report

4.7... PRESS RELEASES/MEDIA

GPV/KCV received a number of requests for media interviews, particularly following the release of the *The Roles Grandparents Play* survey report. The vast majority of interviews in the 2018-19 FY were for radio (11) whilst others were for print media (3). GPV/KCV issued 3 press releases throughout the financial year, announcing the results of surveys, and praising the Victorian government's proposed spending on Kinship Care in the 2019 budget.

4.8... OCCASIONAL PAPERS

Occasional papers are composed by guest writers and address issues of interest primarily to the Board of GPV/KCV

- **Shawn Ginwright – The Future of Healing: Shifting from Trauma Informed Care to Healing Centered Engagement.** This paper is being used across kinship care networks to stimulate discussion about trauma in children and young people and is being well received.
- **Julian Burnside – Justice for the next Generation? The Collapse of Values** This paper discusses the issues of climate change and refugees.
- **Amos Washington – I couch-surfed across Australia to talk to 4,000 young people about what matters to them.** This paper discusses the level of engagement of young people with political discourse, and encourages government to explore ways to ensure that the voices of young people are being heard.

4.9... NEWSLETTERS

GPV/KCV issue three different newsletters, which cater to different groups of members.

- **Kinship International News (KIN)** – 13 newsletters sharing international news to an international audience.
- **The Grandparent** – 21 newsletters on issues of general interest to grandparents, such as climate change, child care, asylum seekers, and information about grandparenting.
- **The Kinship Carer** – 31 newsletters on issues of interest to kinship carers,

5... MEMBER TRAINING

5.1... KCV LEARNING CIRCLES PART 2 – KINSHIP CARE: WHERE TO FROM HERE?

A total of 185 carers and 37 non-carers attended the *Where to from here learning circles 2 seminars*. Attendees were drawn from 100 different suburbs and towns with seminars held in the following locations:

- Keilor attended by 12 carers
- Highett attended by 11 carers
- Pakenham attended by 18 carers
- Shepparton attended by 36 carers
- Warrnambool attended by 28 carers
- Ballarat attended by 19 carers
- Morwell attended by 6 carers
- Geelong attended by 17 carers
- Mildura attended by 8 carers
- Karingal attended by 22 carers
- Bendigo attended by 13 carers

177 of the participants in the *Kinship Care: Where to From Here?* seminars elected to participate in an exercise to identify broad-based issues in which kinship carers are interested. The results are laid out below:

Issue	Votes %
Child Wellbeing	19 ... featuring more responsive funding for child medical needs
Carer Wellbeing	17 ...featuring carers taking responsibility for their own wellbeing
Child Rights	17 ...featuring rights to identity and connection with biological family
Education	13 ...featuring access to education activities from day of enrolment
Family rights	13 ...featuring the rights of families to participate in decision-making
Family Preservation	11 ...featuring emphasis on keeping parents and children together
Healing-Centred Wellbeing	10 ...featuring more focus on what is positive about children

When thinking about carers wellbeing, participants agreed that they do need to take more responsibility for their own wellbeing and that this should be a feature discussion, perhaps at support group level, in 2019.

5.2... CONFERENCE ATTENDANCE

Eight representatives attended 3 conferences

- **Champions of Change** 17/08/18 – 2 representatives s attended the Lookout education centre conference (August)
- **National Kinship and Foster conference** - 4 kinship care representatives attended
- **Understanding Trauma conference** 27/09/18 – 2 representatives attended (Whyley/Kennedy-Greig)

5.3... THE KCV INFORMATION CLEARING HOUSE

The organisation of the resources clearing house into a single room in the office was completed. To date approximately 1161 items have been posted through surface mail:

- 237 medium/large packages of information have been distributed to agencies
- 924 small packages of information distributed to individuals

6... SUPPORT PROGRAMS

6.1... THE SMALL GIFTS PROGRAM

Occasionally GPV/KCV distributes small gifts to kinship care families. Gifts distributed this financial year were:

- **Gift vouchers** – 266 vouchers ranging in value from \$20 to \$55 were distributed to carers
- **Melbourne Zoo** – 200 free adult passes were distributed, along with 29 tickets to the zoo Dream Nights for families of children with disabilities.
- **Grand Prix** – 16 passes were distributed.
- **Books for kids** – 13 families benefited from the distribution of book vouchers and books (CECFW supported)
- **Gratitude journals** – a small number of these were distributed as part of the wellbeing program.
- **KCV Badges** are being sold at half the production cost – 43 badges have been purchased to date

6.2... PAKENHAM ACTION

Kinship carers from the Pakenham area sought assistance from GPV/KCV when a local community sector agency announced that it was no longer able to facilitate their local support group. It was clear that the wellbeing of a good many carers was at stake so GPV/KCV commenced a trial program facilitating the group, 'Caring Again!'.

After an evaluation of the trial outcomes it was determined that it was not feasible for GPV/KCV staff to continue to facilitate this group. GPV/KCV could not continue to bear costs of transport and staff time required to attend support group meetings at Pakenham at the expense of attendance to other support groups. GPV/KCV negotiated that the 'Caring Again!' support group be taken over by Uniting/Wesley.

6.3... CELEBRATIONS

In 2018-19 two public celebrations were conducted:

- **Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children's Day** - A luncheon for invited guests from a range of community organisations, held at Kensington Town Hall with guest speaker was Megan Van De Burg from VACCA. (August).
- **Question for the Minister** - An afternoon tea featuring a question and answer session with the Minister for Families and Children, Jenny Mikakos. This event was held at the Melbourne Town Hall. (September).

6.4... ARTIST IN RESIDENCE WORKSHOPS

Workshops, where kinship carers participated in therapeutic art activities, were held in: Ballan, Frankston and Daylesford

7... CAMPAIGN ACTION AND POLICY INFLUENCE

7.1... VICTORIAN STATE POLICY COMMITTEES

GPV/KCV is represented on thirteen committees charged with shaping future policy directions, including the roadmap to reform Committee chaired by the Minister. This committee sets long term directions for reforming the approaches taken to child and family support so that they better align with family needs based on research evidence from a wide range of sources. GPV/KCV also chairs the Carer KaFÉ strategic directions committee which sets future directions for foster care and kinship care training across the state.

7.2... VICTORIAN STATE ELECTION CAMPAIGN

A pre-campaign survey was undertaken towards the end of the 2017-18 FY to determine which issues were most important to GPV/KCV members. These issues were then translated into demands for action which were forwarded to state and federal politicians in the form of a "Log of Claims" distributed towards the end of the 2017-18 financial year. There were:

- 7 substantive responses to the Victorian log of claims (3 Labour, 4 Liberal) including one from the Premier. Further, there were phone conversations with some MPS.
- 18 substantive responses to the federal log of claims (6 Labor, 6 Liberal, 2 National, 1 Centre, 1 Greens, 1 Independent and 1 One Nation)

Letters were also sent to all federal MPs to convey GPV/KCV views in response to the enquiry into families and to convey our objections to the approaches being taken to adoption.

- 11 substantive replies were received in response to the letter about the family review
- 4 substantive replies were received in relation to the letter about adoption.

8... BUDGET REPORT

6th September 2019

Grandparents Victoria Inc
14 Youlden Street
Kensington VIC 3031



Dear Members,

RE: Review of Financial Accounts for Year Ended 30th June 2019

We, CSS Partners, have reviewed the accounts of Grandparents Victoria Incorporated for the twelve (12) months for the Year Ended 30 June 2019 with the intention of determining the following: -

Accuracy of the Accounting transactions;

We have reviewed the books as supplied to by Anne McLeish and find that the accounting transactions have been recorded and allocated accurately.

We find that they are a true and fair representation of the affairs of the organisations.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul Vassiliadis', is written over a light blue horizontal line.

Paul Vassiliadis

CSS Partners

Accountants & Business Advisors

Telephone (03) 9337 3222

FAX (0)3 9337 2911

E MAIL info@csspartners.com.au

ADDRESS Level 1, 30 Amis Crescent East

Keilor Vic 3033

ABN 5490016106

Grandparents Victoria Inc

ABN: 54 173 492 849

Income statement

For the year ended 30 June 2019

	2019 \$	2018 \$
Income		
Fee Income	167,895.44	441,138.94
Fundraising Receipts	152.73	-
Members Receipts	945.47	1,032.75
	168,993.64	442,171.69
Expenses		
Accountancy Fees	448.50	2,201.88
Advertising	-	878.21
Bank Charges	143.73	136.35
Bookkeeping	3,500.00	900.00
Consultancy Fees	139,696.48	193,773.36
Donations	-	150.00
Freight & Cartage	-	454.55
Hire of Plant & Equipment	-	141.69
Insurance	313.25	-
Interest Paid	-	3.98
Light & Power	1,234.68	1,496.09
Meeting Expenses	18,693.92	19,367.27
Office Expenses	2,689.15	1,386.93
Permits, Licences & Fees	736.09	2,344.92
Postage	2,693.64	3,111.74
Printing & Stationery	12,445.16	11,767.46
Rates & Taxes	32.06	344.84
Rent	21,600.00	18,521.25
Repairs & Maintenance	309.96	-
Sundry Expenses	1,165.81	7,648.34
Superannuation Contributions	-	5,000.00
Telephone	2,991.74	2,256.23
Travelling Expenses	6,971.25	10,905.24
	215,665.42	282,790.31
Net profit (loss)	(46,671.78)	159,381.38
Retained earnings at the beginning of the financial year	211,015.69	51,634.31
Retained earnings at the end of the financial year	164,343.91	211,015.69

2018-19 Donors

- B Gardiner
- F Brassington
- P Sullivan
- Y Fix
- B Cameron
- G Kurth
- J Faulds
- H Murray
- Anonymous #1
- M Bode
- K Rowan
- J Smith
- Anonymous #2
- E Wright
- Anonymous #3

9... THE 2018/19 PROJECTS IN SNAPSHOT

1. Campaigns	<p>Distribution of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - a Log of Claims for the Victorian State Election - a Log of Claims for the Australian Federal Election - letters to federal MPs regarding the possibility of an enquiry into families, and changes to adoption legislation.
2. Conference attendance	<p>GPV/KCV representatives attended 3 conferences:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2 kinship care reps attended the Lookout conference – ‘Champions of change’ - 4 kinship care reps to National Kinship and Foster conference - 2 GPV reps to Understanding trauma conference
3. Consultation forums	<p>3 forums facilitated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Facilitators forum re: future of peer support across Victoria - Carers forum re: future of peer support across Victoria - Melton Carers Forum – Melton Council
4. Gifts for kinship families	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 266 gift vouchers - 200 family passes to the zoo - 29 passes to Dream Night at the Zoo - 16 passes to the Australian Grand Prix - 10 book vouchers - 6 gratitude journals
5. GPV/KCV celebratory state-wide events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Luncheon to celebrate Aboriginal Children’s Day - Morning tea with Minister for Families and Children, and carers.
6. GPV/KCV Ethics review	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Interviews of Board members and staff, and final report completed by an outside consultant - GPV standing orders re-written based on the findings of the report
7. KCV Longitudinal study	<p>Of the 113 original respondents to the survey, 35 continue to provide kinship care</p>
8. LGA/GPV-KCV liaison	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Mildura Kinship Care Consultative Committee was established (MKCCC) • Contact made with 8 metropolitan LGAs
9. KCV Podcast and information pamphlet	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 8 episodes of the KCV podcast were produced: • 1500 copies of the KCV information pamphlet have been distributed across Victoria.
10. KIN newsletter	<p>13 issues were distributed</p>
11. Media- press releases etc	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 11 Radio interviews - 3 Print media articles - 3 press releases
12. Occasional papers by guest writers	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Shawn Ginwright – The Future of Healing: Shifting from Trauma Informed Care to Healing Centered Engagement - Julian Burnside – Justice for the next Generation? The Collapse of Values - Amos Washington – I couch-surfed across Australia to talk to 4,000 young people about what matters to them.
13. Position papers by GPV/KCV	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - October 2018 – Restorative justice for adolescent offenders – A welcome breakthrough - November 2018 – Welfare reform in Scotland: Taking a rights-based approach to combat the rise in poverty - December 2019 – Loneliness, based on research by Relationships Australia

14. Printed GPV/KCV reports	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 2017-18 Annual Report - GPV/KCV Ethics review report - Telephone analysis report – July to September 2018 - KCV Longitudinal Study of kinship care #8 - Pakenham evaluation report - Learning Circles 2 Where to from here seminar evaluation report - The Role of Grandparents survey April 2019
15. The Grandparent newsletter	21 issues distributed
16. The Kinship Carer newsletter	31 issues distributed
17. Partnerships with other organisations	Ongoing partnerships with 9 organisations:
18. Policy Committees	Participation in 15 policy committees:
19. Submissions to enquires	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Federal review of adoption - Testimony to the VLA review of child protection duty lawyer guidelines – A McLeish attended a consultation at the VLA – Review and verbal feedback
20. Kinship Care – where to from here?	185 carers attended training sessions at 11 venues across the state.
21. GPV/KCV Clearing House	<p>Approximately 1161 items have been posted through surface mail:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 237 medium/large packages of information have been distributed to agencies - 924 individual letters distributed to members and others
22. KCV Artist in Residence	3 sessions held between July and October 2018.
23. Telephone Referral	<p>538 calls raising substantive issues were logged:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 454 KCV related calls - 54 GPV related calls - 30 joint GPV/KCV related calls
24. The K/Carer Wellbeing magazine	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 300 copies of Issue #1 distributed - 400 copies of Issue #2 distributed
25. Pakenham Support Group	Trial facilitation of a kinship care support group and transference of facilitation of the group was transferred to Uniting Care Dandenong.
26. Support group consultation	<p>Attended:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 16 support group meetings or luncheons - 3 forums facilitated by non-KCV staff to ascertain carers' views on topical issues