

Annual Report 2017-18



grandparents
V I C T O R I A



**Kinship
Carers**
V I C T O R I A



The Role of GPV/KCV

Grandparents Victoria (GPV) is a statewide 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, their communities and as global citizens
- the needs of families are complex, and collective action by grandparents to support families is required.

GPV understands that grandparents are a valuable resource and have wide-ranging skills and knowledge. They have an important role to play in voicing opinion and reminding decision-makers of the importance of investing in society's long-term future through supporting families.

GPV bases its work on the wisdom of grandparents from all walks of life and:

- works with other organisations
- collects ideas and information about what works well in the field
- communicates its views to a range of people.

Kinship Carers Victoria (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 other kinship carers, 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.



Kinship Carers Victoria is supported by the Victorian Government.

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Chairperson's Message

This year saw the commencement of 'election season', with the Victorian state election to be held in 2018 and the Australian federal election due to be held by mid-2019. 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 the politicians'.

In June GPV/KCV released its 'Log of claims – Election Victoria 2018'. This includes 14 claims and repeats a call for the introduction of child impact statements (CIS). GPV/KCV first called for a system of child impact statements when testifying to the enquiry into the East–West Link Freeway Project in 2014.

The introduction of child impact statements is called for in the knowledge that decisions being made by federal and state governments are going to have an impact on every member of our community, including today's young children and the children of the future, for many years to come.

Furthermore, GPV/KCV believes that child impact statements can be a valuable mechanism for upholding children's rights as described in the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).

GPV/KCV is calling on government and agencies to document the impacts that 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 CIS, consisting of an analysis predicting the potential outcomes for child wellbeing in the short, medium and long term.

Each CIS must measure the extent to which government policy and practices adhere to the following rights for children and young people:

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

I would like to acknowledge the efforts of my fellow board members and the GPV/KCV staff for their contributions to the governance and management of the organisation. Also, I want to thank them and the many other people who make up the GPV/KCV network for enriching the work of GPV/KCV by participating in its many directions-setting consultations.

We look forward to the 2018–19 financial year, knowing that it will be challenging but also productive.

Helen Brown, Chairperson





Director's Overview

Each year GPV/KCV strives to improve on the previous year's work. This does not merely mean increasing the volume of work achieved (although that is certainly worth celebrating, given the organisation's small number of staff). Just as important are the new ideas GPV/KCV implements. New approaches to contemporary issues are always sought – without new approaches we continue to confront old problems.

During the 2017–18 FY a record number of new projects were added to the GPV/KCV work program. Adding new items is risky, as there is the chance of overwhelming staff and the organisation's overall capacities. This has not happened, in large part due to the flexibility and commitment of the core staff and the consultants who assist with specific projects and programs. New items on the work program included:

- The GPV/KCV Artist in Residence program
- The KCV podcasts program
- Facilitation of the Pakenham kinship care support group, 'Caring Again!!'
- The creation of *The Kinship Carer Wellbeing Magazine*
- Supporting the foundation of the organisation Kin Raising Kids Tasmania
- Supporting child wellbeing campaigns, such as those advocating for the abolition of corporal punishment and extending the age for leaving out-of-home care (OOHC) to 21.

A record number of written publications (96) were produced. This was an increase of 15 on the previous year, with the largest increase occurring in the number of documents detailing GPV/KCV's views on topical issues.

Two events stand out in GPV/KCV's history in terms of the long-term impact they will have on the organisation's work. The first luncheon to celebrate Aboriginal Children's Day was well attended, while the new *Kinship Carers Handbook for Victoria* was launched to much acclaim. The luncheon will be the first of a number of luncheons and other activities focusing on support for our Aboriginal comrades, particularly the children. The handbook resulted from a working partnership with DHHS and has already been the foundation for many positive telephone conversations with carers who had never previously reached out to GPV/KCV until they encountered the handbook.

GPV/KCV also seeks to work closely with other organisations; sometimes these working relationships morph into formal arrangements to undertake work within tighter collaborative relationships. This year three new partnerships were struck with Kin Raising Kids Tasmania, Frankston LGA (local government area) and Mildura LGA. These partnerships will carry over into the next few financial years.

The partnership with kinship carers in Tasmania will add strength to our efforts to persuade the Australian Government to approach kinship care as an issue of national significance. The joint work with the LGAs will result in the delivery of activities for kinship carers within the boundaries of the LGAs.

As the Board of GPV/KCV is the ultimate decision-maker within GPV/KCV's extensive networks, it is important that it addresses topical issues. The issues most often addressed by the GPV/KCV Board in this financial year were:

- informal kinship care
- reform of out-of-home care
- training for kinship carers
- adoption
- Aboriginal liaison/self-determination.

Anne L McLeish OAM, Director





The People Who Fulfil Roles within GPV/KCV

GPV/KCV relies on the advice of an extensive network of contributors. Life members and newly joined members all have opportunities to inform the work of GPV/KCV. Continued effort is expended in maintaining the verbal culture of the GPV/KCV network because no matter how many electronic surveys or telephone conversations occur, it is the face-to-face conversations which are the foundation of the network and which are most appreciated by carers. Some of the key individuals and groups in the GPV/KCV network are:

Life Members

- Helen and Mal Brown
- Anne McLeish
- Jack Lloyd
- Trevor and Christine Wilson
- Francis and Susan Morgan
- Allan and Noelle Mawdsley

Board Members

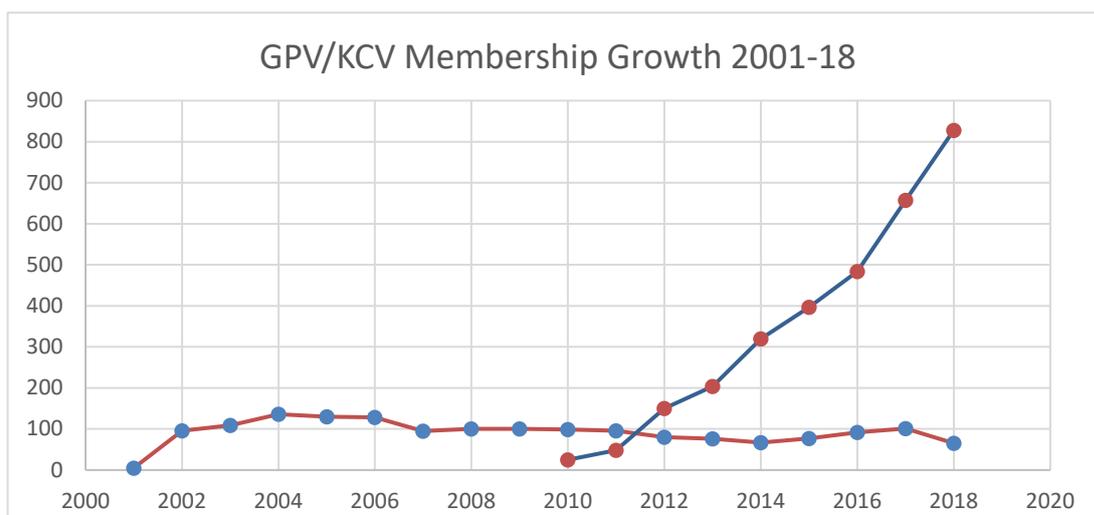
- Helen Brown – Chairperson
- Miralde Crankshaw – Deputy Chair
- June Smith – Treasurer
- Kerry Doquile – Member
- Helen Corcoran – Member
- Beverly Gardiner – Member
- Gedda Burke – Member
- Angela Hogan – Member
- Fay Brassington – Member
- Jenny Sullivan – Member
- Jenny Cheshire – Member
- Marylyn Broomhall – Member
- Adine Neill – Member

Staff Members

- Anne McLeish – Director
- Naomi Whyley – Administration Officer
- Megan Crowle – Project Officer
- Beryl Gallacher – Administrative Assistant
- Catherine McLeish – Bookkeeper
- Lisa Mills – Podcast Developer
- Bradley Dawson – Website Manager

Individual members

GPV/KCV membership continues to increase and now stands at 934. There was an overall growth of 176 new members in the 2017–18 financial year.



Note: KCV membership commenced in 2010 when GPV was awarded the service agreement to establish KCV.





Group members

The discussions generated by members in local discussion groups also shape GPV/KCV's work. Each discussion is attended by an average of 10 people. In the 2017–18 FY GPV/KCV facilitated or attended:

- 14 support group meetings
- 13 support group luncheons
- five public events
- four consultations and
- three seminars (Learning Circles).

This amounts to a total of 39 events, at which it is estimated GPV/KCV had 624 individual contacts with carers.

Locations visited

GPV/KCV visited a record 27 different locations in the 2017–18 FY, with the locations listed below. Locations marked in **BOLD** were new to KCV in 2017–18. Some of these locations were visited two or three times throughout the course of the year.

International

Prato, Italy

Interstate

Gold Coast, Qld

Inner Metropolitan

Altona

Box Hill

Highett

Outer Metropolitan

Bacchus Marsh

Caroline Springs

Frankston

Karingal

Keilor

Kings Park

Lilydale

Mornington

Mordialloc

Pakenham

Rural and Regional

Ararat

Ballan

Ballarat

Castlemaine

Daylesford

Geelong

Mildura

Morwell

Shepparton

Seymour

Swan Hill

Wangaratta





Carer Wellbeing

Carer wellbeing is always a primary focus of GPV/KCV's work. However, this was reinforced as an issue after the organisation's 2017 Longitudinal Study found that carers were increasingly rating their overall attitude to their own wellbeing and experiences as carers as 'mixed' or 'negative', rather than 'positive'.

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

The carer wellbeing projects delivered this financial year included:

1. KCV Learning Circles
2. *Kinship Carer Wellbeing Magazine*
3. Kinship care camps
4. Small gifts program
5. Small grants program
6. Artist in Residence
7. Pakenham action
8. Public events
9. Telephone call-back program

KCV Learning Circles

The Learning Circles were a series of seminars funded by the Carer KaFE program to:

- provide kinship carers with the training considered necessary for them to undertake within the first three months of having children placed with them
- establish ongoing learning circles hosted by already established local kinship care support groups.

In the 2017–18 FY, 37 participants attended 10 seminars held in three locations: Bendigo, Melton and Wangaratta.

This concluded the Learning Circles series commenced in the 2016–17 FY during which 24 participants attended eight seminars held in Ballarat and Dandenong.

The external consultant employed to evaluate the Learning Circles program found that carers placed a high value on the program and that it fulfilled each of its purposes. Typical comments from participating carers were:

'I feel like I'm supported and that we carers have people in our corner that are working for our/kids' needs.' (Female carer)

'I wasn't expecting to meet other men at the seminars ... Was great to see and made me feel it's not just me as a male kinship carer.' (Male carer)

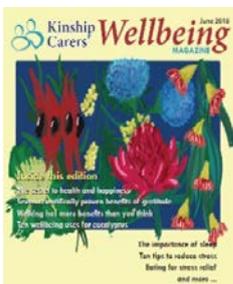
'There have been great resources provided and the folder is amazing with such a lot of papers with info, and the speakers have been informative.' (Female carer)





The *Kinship Carer's Wellbeing Magazine*

A magazine for kinship carers



The GPV/KCV Longitudinal Study found over several years that carer wellbeing was decreasing for some carers. Even those carers who reported no health and wellbeing concerns during the study still stated that they were facing stressful situations.

The *Kinship Carers' Wellbeing Magazine* was conceived as part of a larger strategy to encourage carers to look after their own wellbeing.

The first edition of the magazine was released in June 2018. It contains articles about a range of health and wellbeing issues such as healthy eating, and exercise and sleep, along with a selection of handy hints to make life easier, plus puzzles to stretch the mind. Magazine article titles included: 'The secret to health and happiness', 'Seven scientifically proven benefits of gratitude', 'Walking has more benefits than you think', 'The importance of sleep', and 'Ten tips to reduce stress'.

The magazine is also designed to be interactive. Carers who read the magazine carefully can find opportunities to claim free gifts for themselves and occasionally for the children in their care.

The magazine has been well received, and two issues will be produced in the 2018–19 FY.

Kinship care camps

A retreat for entire families

GPV/KCV worked with YMCA to achieve Carer KaFE funding of camps for kinship care families. Kinship care camps were held in four locations:

- Manyung, Mt Eliza
- Lady Northcote Recreation Camp, Glenmore
- Anglesea Recreation Camp, Anglesea
- Mt Evelyn Recreation Camp, Mt Evelyn

GPV/KCV hosted a forum at which carers who had attended a camp could speak about the value of their experience. The evaluations were positive. Some carers noted that the camps lived up to 'everything we were told' while others said the camps provided even more than they had imagined for both themselves and for the children in their care.

'Our health and wellbeing is totally dependent on their health and wellbeing – getting a break from home and the daily routine was good for all of us.' (Carer)

The small gifts program

Tokens of appreciation for kinship families

From time to time GPV/KCV distributes small gifts to kinship care families. Favourite gifts amongst carers this financial year were:

- passes to Melbourne Zoo – 200 free adult passes were distributed
- passes to the Grand Prix – passes were distributed to 13 young people and seven carers
- books for kids – 22 families benefited from the distribution of a combination of book vouchers and books for children of all ages.

'My granddaughter reads many books - it will be exciting for her to receive this voucher.' (Kinship carer)

'This kind gift has come at a really tough time in our lives – thank you!' (Kinship carer)





The support group small grants program

This program delivered one central event and a series of regional events to kinship carers.

The central event conducted on 4 August 2017 was a luncheon with the Children’s Commissioner, with 60 people in attendance. The regional events attracted over 300 carers who attended luncheons held in sixteen locations across Victoria:

- Morwell
- Shepparton
- Pakenham
- Geelong
- Colac
- Altona
- Mildura
- Ballarat
- Swan Hill
- Lilydale
- Mornington
- Mordialloc
- Wangaratta
- Caroline Springs
- Frankston
- Kensington

Artist in Residence

A program of art workshops

GPV/KCV commenced a program of art-therapy workshops run by volunteer Marylyn Broomhall.

These workshops provide an opportunity for kinship carers to express themselves creatively while completing one or two simple art projects under the guidance of the Artist in Residence. Three sessions were conducted in 2017–18 in Kensington, Melton and Pakenham.

Pakenham action



Kinship carers sought assistance from GPV/KCV when a local community sector agency announced that it was no longer able to facilitate their local support group. With the wellbeing of a good many carers clearly at stake, GPV/KCV commenced a trial program facilitating the Pakenham kinship care support group, ‘Caring Again!’

The group is being run on best-practice principles which have been developed by GPV/KCV after visits to many different support groups throughout Victoria experiencing many different management styles. Activities undertaken included:

- drafting a support group handbook and code of conduct
- an art-therapy workshop
- discussion centred around the first KCV podcast.

A full evaluation is due to commence early in the 2018–19 FY.

Public events

Celebrations with guest speakers

GPV/KCV aims to hold at least one celebratory event in each financial year. In 2017–18 four public celebrations were conducted:

- **A celebration of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Children’s Day (4 August 2017)** was held with a luncheon at Kensington Town Hall. The Commissioner for Children and Young People, Liana Buchanan, spoke about safeguarding children’s rights. This was the first GPV/KCV celebration of this day, with 60 people in attendance.
- **The launch of the Victorian Manual for Kinship Care (24 November 2017)** by the Minister for Families and Children, Jenny Mikakos. This event was held at the Kensington Town Hall, with 80 people in attendance.





- **A play workshop (22 November 2017)** with Play Australia. Guest speaker Dr Wendy Russell from the University of Gloucestershire in the UK spoke on the topic 'Thinking about Play Differently' at the Archive Centre in North Melbourne. Ten people were in attendance.

Telephone call-back program

In the six months between July 2017 and January 2018, KCV logged 69 calls (amongst many other calls) from kinship carers reporting significant problems.

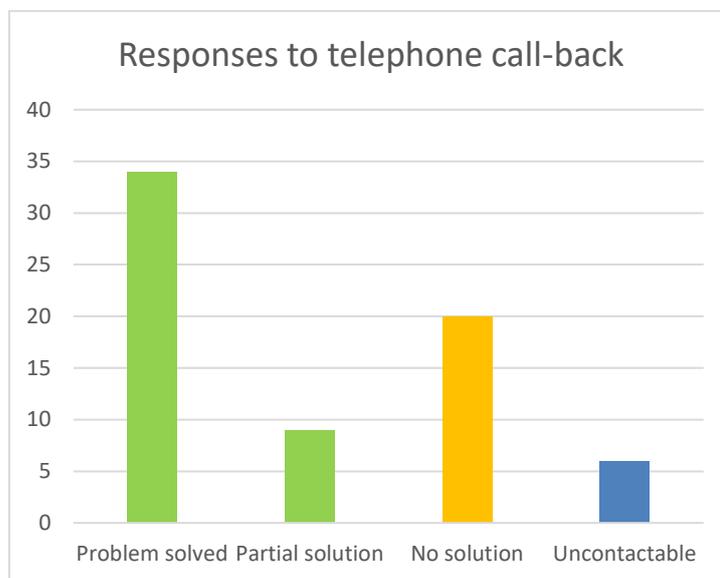
In January 2018 GPV/KCV undertook to contact these carers to determine whether or not their problem(s) had been solved.

Not every problem reported by carers can be assigned to a single issue. In some cases the issues reported by carers were complex, and involved several different aspects which may come under several different agencies (for example financial questions may involve both Centrelink and DHHS payments while placement support can involve multiple agencies).

Of the 69 carers telephoned in the call-back program:

- 49.3% (34 of 69) reported that their problem had been solved
- 13.0% (9 of 69) reported that there had been a partial solution
- 29.0% (20 of 69) reported that the problem had not been solved
- 8.7% (6 of 69) were uncontactable due to disconnected telephone numbers.

A total of 62.3% of carers had their problems solved or were well on the way to having them solved. This was a heartening revelation. However, GPV/KCV holds concerns for those who had no solutions in sight.





Research

GPV/KCV conducts two types of research on a variety of topics. This research provides a framework for GPV/KCV on which to base thinking on emerging issues.

The first type of research is 'action research', whereby GPV/KCV interacts with its members to find out what they see as the issues they face on a day-to-day basis. This area of research included:

- the KCV Longitudinal Study of Kinship Care #7
- Where are all the children now?
- an election survey
- members' consultation forums.

The second type of research is 'desktop research', where GPV/KCV explores trends emerging across a wide range of geographical areas and other sectors, and passes this on to members.

The KCV Longitudinal Study of Kinship Care #7

A survey tracking 113 kinship families over time

This series of surveys and reports maps the changes in the lives of 113 kinship care families over a 10-year period. This year the seventh report was released. Emerging issues uncovered in 2017 include:

- **Children reconciled with parents.** Since the study commenced, 28 children have been reconciled with one of their parents. An emerging trend shows that children are continuing to successfully reconcile with their parents after many years apart. Of these children 13 returned to their father and 14 to their mother, while one returned to both parents together. Of the 28 children:
 - three returned after one year
 - four returned after two years
 - one returned after three years
 - one returned after four years
 - five returned after five years
 - one returned after six years
 - four returned after seven years
 - three returned after eight years
 - three returned after nine years
 - one returned after 13 years
 - one returned after 14 years
 - one returned after 16 years.
- **New children into the study.** Since the beginning of the study in 2011, 19 children have joined already established kinship carer families, in some cases greatly extending the responsibilities of carers who had nearly reached the end of caring, and who have had to begin all over again.
- **Shared caring.** The study found that a small number of families are beginning to share caring between grandparents and parents as part of a successful transition to reconciliation.
- **Staying with biological family leads to positive outcomes.** Only a few cases have been reported to KCV of young people struggling to integrate into work or further education. The vast majority of young people in the survey who have turned 18 are experiencing positive transitions into adulthood.
- **Carer deaths.** Seven carers have passed away since the beginning of the study. In most cases this has not had a major impact on the stability of the placements.





Where are all the Children Now?

A survey tracking children and young people

This survey traces the outcomes for 196 children and young people since the beginning of the Longitudinal Study and has found that:

- the vast majority of children and young people in the study are experiencing positive outcomes, and progressing well in education or employment appropriate to their age and abilities
- concerns have been raised for a small minority of young people (three teenagers) who are known to have been disengaged from education, are not in employment, and are suspected of damaging or criminal behaviour
- a number of young people in the study (three men and five women) are now parents themselves and are successfully raising their own children.

Election survey

A survey of randomly selected grandparents

One hundred grandparents were surveyed to ascertain which issues they would like included in claims to be made in both the federal and state elections. The Logs of Claims developed for the Victorian and federal election campaigns reflect the survey results. They include claims related to:

- **children in out-of-home care** – implementation of the recommendations of the Victorian Commissioner for Children and Young People's report, 'Safe and Wanted: An inquiry into the implementation of permanency arrangements', funding for family contact centres for access visits, and flexible funding to address the needs of children in kinship care
- **education** – brokerage funding for Lookout Centres, establishment of an education allowance for kinship carers, development of a professional development module for educators based on the needs of children in OOHC
- **health** – government-led campaigns promoting healthy eating and the value of children's play
- **welfare reform** – blocking of the cashless welfare card, encouraging better adherence to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child, re-instatement of right to legal representation for children under ten, and residential parenting support programs for young mothers.

Desktop research

From time to time GPV/KCV undertakes desktop research and research amongst our networks to uncover emerging ideas. In 2017–18, the following topics emerged:

- A shift away from 'trauma-informed practice' to 'healing-centred engagement'
- Restorative justice communities for young people

Members' forums

These forums are designed to gather feedback which may influence the development of programs currently in progress, or planned for the future. In the 2017–18 FY, four face-to-face consultations were undertaken on:

- the contents of the *Kinship Carers Handbook for Victoria*
- evaluation of the camps for kinship care families
- a trial-run workshop for the GPV/KCV Artist in Residence program
- preferred contents for the *Kinship Carers' Wellbeing Magazine*

Conferences

GPV/KCV was represented at two conferences in the 2017–18 FY. In October 2017 Anne McLeish presented an overview of the work of GPV/KCV at a research conference held in Prato, Italy.

In June 2018 the Doing Schools Differently conference on the Gold Coast was attended by Naomi Whyley and five kinship carers.





Campaigns

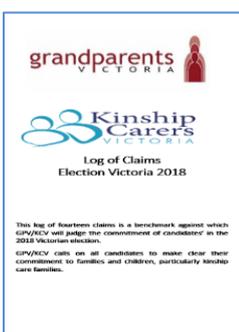
GPV/KCV engages in public discourse about what is best for children and families. Conducting campaigns is part of this engagement and because members' interests are wide and varied, the range of issues subject to campaign is also wide. In the past GPV/KCV has conducted campaigns on:

- better access to a full education for all children and young people
- provision of affordable childcare
- recognition of the disadvantages to grandchildren who are denied access to grandparents
- appointment of Centrelink grandparent advisors
- responsible governance of gambling
- the appointment of a National Children's Commissioner
- changes to child protection legislation
- recognition of kinship care
- election campaigns
- stopping the East–West Link Tollway
- withdrawal of children from refugee camps
- promotion of children's play.

In the 2017–18 FY the tradition of campaigning continued, with seven campaigns supported. Two of these were generated by GPV/KCV, and five were campaigns run by other organisations.

Election campaigns

The Victorian state election



This campaign was designed to influence policy-makers in the face of the upcoming state election, and to encourage candidates for election to make statements about their policies regarding the rights of children and families during the campaign.

GPV/KCV has produced and distributed a log of claims, comprising a number of demands for changes to government policy based on the results of a GPV/KCV member survey. This survey was completed by 100 GPV members, who were asked to identify which four issues they felt were of the highest priority from a list of seven commonly raised issues.

The final log of claims document includes 14 claims for improvements that can be made in the areas of:

- children in out-of-home care
- education
- health
- welfare reform.

In addition to these claims, the document calls for governments to place greater emphasis on the rights of children and families when making policy decisions, and calls for governments to develop child impact statements to be submitted along with any suggested changes to legislation.

Each of the claims was also accompanied by a reference to the relevant sections of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child (UNCRC).





Family rights campaigns

In 2017–18 GPV/KCV supported a number of campaigns driven by other organisations which were aligned closely with the aims of strengthening families and family rights. GPV/KCV's involvement in these campaigns consisted mostly of raising awareness, and of promotion of the campaigns through the GPV and KCV websites. The campaigns supported were:

- **Same-sex marriage**

During the national postal plebiscite regarding same-sex marriage, GPV/KCV posted a statement on its websites in support of allowing same-sex couples to marry.

- **Support for more flexible working hours**

This campaign is designed to raise awareness of the need for business to work together with their employees to provide flexible working options that balance the need to work with caring responsibilities. This is particularly important for those who are caring for young children and children with special needs.

- **The home stretch campaign**

This campaign is designed by Anglicare to have governments extend the leaving age for out-of-home care from 18 to 21, and to continue to provide financial support for their carers during this time. Many participants in the 'Where are all the Children Now?' survey were invited to support this campaign.

Child wellbeing campaigns

In 2017–18 GPV/KCV created or supported campaigns that aligned closely with the aim of protecting the wellbeing of children and young people.

- **Opposing fast track adoption**

This campaign is designed to put pressure on the government and DHHS to make placing children with families a priority, and to remove stranger adoption from the hierarchy of permanency objectives outlined in the 2014 amendments to the *Children, Youth and Families Act 2005*.

GPV/KCV wrote to all federal members of parliament to outline concerns with the approach to adoption being taken in NSW. Of particular concern was the move to advertise children for adoption on a website.

GPV/KCV also lodged a submission to the Law Reform Commission's review of adoption legislation.

- **Genital mutilation of girls**

This campaign is designed to support the work of a range of agencies working to abolish genital mutilation. The agencies supported are:

- The Australian Human Rights Commission
- The United Nations
- No FGM Australia

- **Abolition of corporal punishment of children**

This campaign is designed to help protect children by encouraging parents and carers to find non-violent solutions to disciplining children in their care.





Partnerships

GPV/KCV continues to cultivate cooperative relationships with like-minded organisations and extend networks to raise awareness of the needs of grandparents and kinship carers. In turn, these organisations provide GPV/KCV with information related to their specific areas of interest.

International

- **International Play Association**

IPA's purpose is to protect, preserve and promote the child's right to play as a fundamental human right, as stated in Article 31 of the UNCRC. IPA has member groups in almost 50 countries.

- **CRIN – Child Rights International Network**

CRIN is a global research, policy and advocacy organisation whose work is grounded in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. CRIN monitors abuses of children's rights worldwide, and advocates for change.

Information from CRIN forms the basis of some KIN newsletters.

National

Through Grandparents Australia, for which GPV/KCV provides the Secretariat, GPV/KCV takes a national perspective and works with a number of associations on particular activities. However, there are two associations with which work is ongoing:

- **Kin Raising Kids Tasmania** – GPV/KCV is working alongside this new association to help ensure that it is well established
- **Families Australia** – Grandparents Australia is represented on this national association that has carriage of the *National framework for the Protection of Australia's Children*.

State

At a state level GPV/KCV enjoys many working relationships. However, some are long standing and based on solid commitments:

- **Children's Matters** – This is an alliance of associations that includes the Law Institute of Victoria, VACCA, the Office of the Public Advocate, and Mental Health for the Young and their Families. This alliance has commenced work to identify strategies that could be used to keep families together rather than removing children.
- **Centre for Excellence in Child and Family Welfare** – This alliance is crafted around a shared commitment to identify current matters related to kinship care and to ensure that these matters are raised in appropriate circles.
- **National Council for Women Vic.** – This alliance addresses a wide range of issues affecting the community.



Office of the Public Advocate





Policy Development

GPV/KCV drafts its own policy positions as well as being represented on a number of committees that draft public policy and are influential in making decisions regarding OOHK.

Drafting policy

Kinship peer support group strategy

A report outlining strategies for strengthening peer support for kinship carers across Victoria was produced in the 2017–18 FY. The edited report was lodged with DHHS in the week ending 21 January 2018.

Development of this strategic advice report was commenced in 2016. Work to finalise this report with a local government strategy was completed in December 2017.

Negotiating policy

Attendance at external policy committees is on a needs basis as meetings are called. GPV/KCV attends various policy committees, including:

- **Carer KaFE** – (as Chair) – foster and kinship carer training
- **The DHHS Kinship Care Reference Group** – examines current issues surrounding kinship care
- **The KCV/DHHS Liaison Targeted Care Packages for Children in Residential Care** – packages of support that move children out of residential care and back into family care
- **Quality of Care for Children in Kinship Care** – examines issues ranging from corporal punishment to the quality of care children receive in kinship care
- **The Transitioning Aboriginal Children Steering Committee** – sets the framework for moving the case management and support of aboriginal children in out of home care to aboriginal agencies
- **The Kinship Service Forum at the Centre for Excellence** – a forum that brings together practitioners from community service organisations to discuss a full range of kinship care related matters
- **Permanent Care and Adoptive Families** – allocates funds to permanent carers needing support
- **The North Division Integrated Health Committee** – looking at how kinship families might receive more timely and accurate health assessments and support for the children in their care
- **The Roadmap Implementation Ministerial Advisory Group** – sets high level policy that governs both kinship care and a wider range of policy directions for families in Victoria.



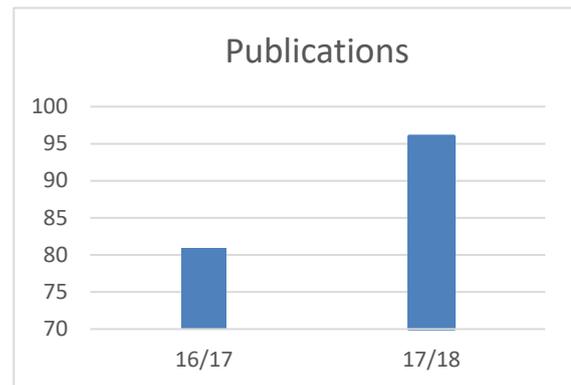


Written Publications

Written communication is an important part of the work of GPV/KCV. Written publications remain a very powerful way to connect with the general public. GPV/KCV is conscious of the fact, for example, that only 50% of kinship carers are connected to the Internet.

The year 2017–18 marked a high point in terms of the number of publications published, with a total of 96 publications released. These included:

- 67 newsletters
- 10 GPV/KCV reports
- six press releases
- three KCV occasional papers
- two submissions to enquiries
- two handbooks
- one KCV discussion papers
- one position paper
- four campaign documents



The previous record number for publications was set in the 2016–17 FY with 81 items published in that period. The number of newsletters published each year remains at approximately 60, therefore other publications account for the overall increase in the number of publications.

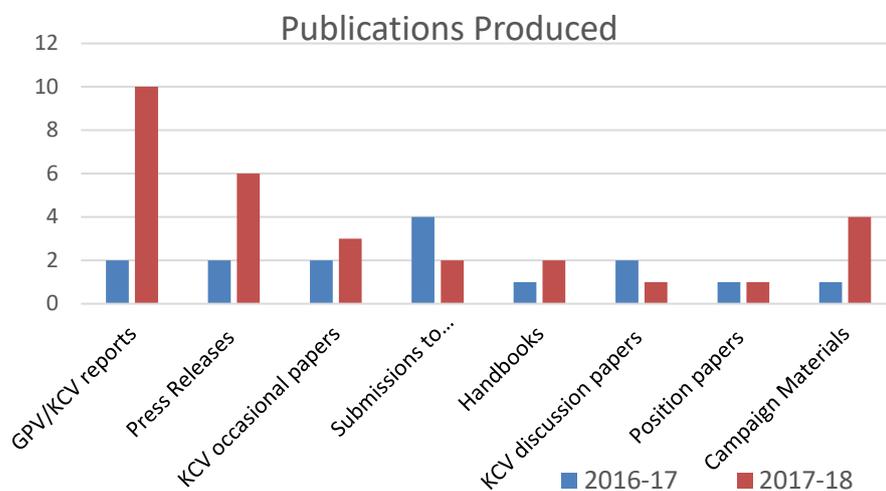
Publication	2016–17	2017–18	DIFFERENCE
GPV/KCV reports	2	10	+8
Press releases	2	6	+4
Occasional papers	2	3	+1
Submissions to enquiries	4	2	-2
Handbooks	1	2	+1
KCV discussion papers	2	1	-1
Position papers	1	1	0
Campaign materials	1	4	+3





Newsletters

Newsletters are one- to two-page regular communications detailing current/urgent resources or topical issues



Three newsletters are regularly published and distributed: *KIN News*, *The Grandparent* and *The Kinship Carer* newsletter. In the 2017–18 FY a total of 67 newsletters were distributed:

- 33 editions of *The Kinship Carer*
- 28 of *The Grandparent*
- six of *KIN News*

Each newsletter has a specific audience in mind, with *KIN News* and *The Kinship Carer* addressing issues related to kinship care. *The Grandparent* addresses more general issues. However, all of the newsletters maintain a focus on the wellbeing of children. When taken together, the contents of the three newsletters covered the following themes:

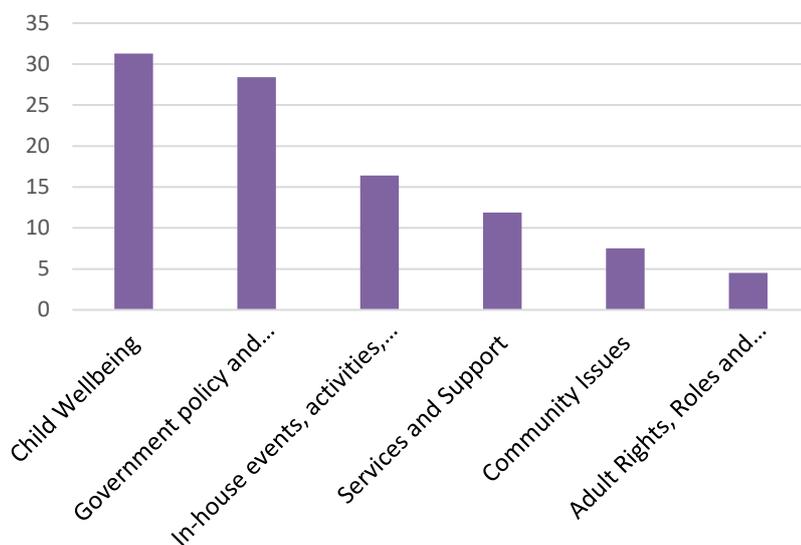
- 31.3% – child wellbeing
- 28.4% – information about government policies and procedures
- 16.4% – information produced by GPV/KCV
- 11.9% – information about services and support
- 7.5% – information about community issues
- 4.5% – adult rights, roles and responsibilities

The newsletters were widely distributed, with *KIN News* reaching contacts across seven countries and the other newsletters being distributed to large numbers within Victoria, as well as nationally.





Comparison of newsletter themes by %



The spread of the issues covered in each of the newsletters during the 2017–18 FY is demonstrated below.

	<i>The Kinship Carer</i>	<i>The Grandparent</i>	<i>KIN News</i>
Child wellbeing	10	8	3
Government policy and procedures	7	12	0
Information about GPV/KCV events	6	5	0
Services and support	1	6	1
Community issues	2	2	1
Adult rights and roles	2	0	1
Total	28	33	6

GPV/KCV reports

Multi-page documents describing the outcomes of GPV/KCV projects, or summarising kinship care-related research by other agencies

The increase in summaries of reports by other agencies emerged as a result of attention paid to specific issues related to kinship care and child protection in the 2017–18 FY. Namely, these were summaries of inquiries into:

- the implementation of the *Children, Youth and Families Amendment (Permanent Care and Other Matters) Act 2014* by the Commission for Children and Young People
- payments to kinship carers by the Victorian Ombudsman
- child protection workers’ mental health by the Auditor General.

GPV/KCV reports released in 2017–18 were:

- **The GPV/KCV Annual Report 2016–17** – a report on the activities and operations of GPV/KCV in the 2016–17 financial year.
- **Twenty-three Urgent Kinship Care Matters Arising from the ‘Care through Kinship’ Luncheon** – a report arising from a speech and occasional paper by Liana Buchanan, Victorian Commissioner for Children and Young People.





- **The Cornerstones of Peer Support: Kinship Care Support Groups in Victoria** – a report into the number and locations of support groups in Victoria, and how the network of support groups can be strengthened.
- **Summary of Adoptions Australia: 2016–17 Report** – a summary of a report released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare into the changing state of adoption in recent years.
- **Comparison of Reports into Kinship Care Released in 2017** (including reports from KPMG, the Commission for Children and Young People, and the Ombudsman)
- **KCV Telephone Call-back Project Report** – a study that followed up with carers to learn whether GPV/KCV referrals were leading to successful outcomes to their inquiries.
- **Summary of Auditor General’s Report into Child Protection** – the Maintaining the Health of Child Protection Practitioners report found that more could be done by DHHS to maintain the mental health of child protection workers.
- **Learning Circles Evaluation Report** – an analysis of the Learning Circles project, done jointly with Carer KaFE.

Amongst the reports issued two also outlined the outcomes of major surveys conducted by GPV/KCV. These reports are significant in that they portray the outstanding outcomes achieved by kinship carers.

- **The Kinship Care Longitudinal Study**

See the ‘Carer Wellbeing’ section of this report.

- **Where are all the Children Now?**

See the ‘Carer Wellbeing’ section of this report.

Press releases

These are one-page documents alerting the media to an event, emerging issue or policy position. **Six press releases** were issued:

- The Victorian state budget and kinship care
- Outcome of the Ombudsman’s enquiry into kinship care payments
- Launch of the KCV podcast program
- Victorian Children’s Commissioner Luncheon and speech on kinship care
- Passing of the assisted dying legislation in Victoria
- GPV/KCV Log of Claims for the Victorian state election campaign

Occasional papers

These are two- to four-page documents written by guest authors and addressing issues relevant to GPV/KCV areas of interest. Three occasional papers were published:

- **Care through kinship: safeguarding children and their rights** by Liana Buchanan, Victorian Commissioner for Children and Young People
- **The Criminalisation of adolescence in Victoria** by Fleur Ward, Chairperson, Children’s Matters Forum
- **Speech on retirement from the Children’s Court Clinic of Victoria** by Pat Brown, Director, Victorian Children’s Court Clinic





Submissions to enquiries

These are Multi-page documents outlining GPV/KCV's response to issues raised in state, national or international enquiries. Two submissions to enquiries were published:

- **Time to strengthen the *Family Law Act of Australia*** – a submission to the Australian Law Reform Commission's review of the *Family Law Act*.
- **Grandparents call on Australia to improve its implementation of the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** – a submission to the National Children's Commission which is preparing a report for the UN Committee on the Rights of the Child.

Handbooks

These are Multi-page books with advice and information for use by kinship carers. In the 2017-18 FY, two handbooks were published:

- **The *Manual for Kinship Carers Victoria***

Produced in conjunction with DHHS, this manual provides kinship carers with advice and information on a range of topics.

The manual is to be given to carers as soon as children are delivered into their care, and contains details about the roles and responsibilities of carers, support which is available, information about contact with parents and extended family, health care, education and employment, children with special needs, and transition to out of care.

Between the launch of the handbook on 24 November 17 and the end of the 2017–18 FY, GPV/KCV distributed 774 copies of the manual to maternal and child health nurses, schools, kinship carers, kinship care support groups (via community support organisations), and local government areas (LGAs).

- **The *Kinship Carers' Wellbeing Magazine issue 1*** (see the 'Carer Wellbeing' section of this report.)

KCV discussion papers

These are four-page documents raising issues for discussion amongst kinship carers, written by GPV/KCV or guest authors. These discussion papers are written to stimulate talk and further curiosity amongst kinship carers.

Only one discussion paper was published in this financial year. However, it was one element of a series of activities to promote discussion of the importance of education.

- **Lookout Education Support Centres and kinship care** – this paper provided information about what the Lookout Centres are, who they support and how they operate.

In addition to this paper:

- representatives of the Lookout Centres attended sessions of the Learning Circles program
- the Director of GPV/KCV spoke at a Centre for Excellence forum on raising expectations to assist care-leavers to access higher education.

One GPV/KCV staff member also attended a conference on 'Doing Schools Differently' along with several kinship carers.

Position papers

These are position papers published by GPV/KCV to clarify the organisation's stance on a particular issue. One position paper was published in 2017–18:

- **GPV/KCV calls for child impact statements and public support for the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child** – this document was published to draw attention to the UNCRC, and the impact that changes to legislation have on outcomes for children.





Campaign materials

One- to two-page pamphlets or letters outlining GPV/KCV demands in relation to a current issue

GPV/KCV campaign materials included a printed Log of Claims, which was sent to all members of both houses of the Victorian State Parliament, as well as the headquarters of all political parties registered in Victoria who were considered by GPV/KCV as likely to be putting up candidates for election.

The final log of claims document includes 14 claims for improvements that can be made in the areas of:

- **children in out of home care** – in particular GPV/KCV has called for immediate implementation of the recommendations in the report 'Safe and Wanted: An inquiry into the implementation of permanency arrangements' issued by the Commissioner for Children and Young People, and an independent review of kinship care cases closed by DHHS in the past three years.
- **education** – GPV/KCV has called for improved brokerage funding for Lookout Education Centres, an education allowance to help kinship carers defray the costs of education, and training for educators on the specific needs of children in OOHC.
- **welfare reform** – GPV/KCV has called for the cashless welfare card to be blocked in Victoria, for better support for the UNCRC, for the reinstatement of the right to legal representation of children under 10, and for support programs for young mothers.
- **health** – GPV/KCV has called for better promotion of healthy eating for children, research into the effect of Omega-3 fatty acids on trauma behaviours, and government action promoting the value of play, including funding for therapeutic play groups and the development of adventure playgrounds.

In addition to these claims, the document calls for governments to place greater emphasis on the rights of children and families when making policy decisions, and calls for governments to develop child impact statements to be submitted along with any suggested changes to legislation.

Each of the claims was also accompanied by a reference to the relevant sections of the UNCRC.





Digital Communications

Digital communications are an increasingly important part of the GPV/KCV work program. In addition to being the main way in which outside communications come in to the GPV/KCV office, digital communications are also part of a strategy designed to help GPV/KCV reach a wider audience.

Digital communications in 2017–18 included:

- 503 telephone calls into the office
- 26 website updates
- three podcasts aired.

Websites

The 2017–18 FY saw an overhaul of all three of the GPV/KCV websites:

- www.grandparents.com.au
- www.kinshipcarersvictoria.org
- www.grandparentsaustralia.org

While statistics for the entire year are not available, it is known that between 11 March 2018 and 30 June 2018 there were:

- 7534 visits by 3758 visitors to the KCV website
- 5615 visits by 2210 visitors to the GPV website

This averages out to 2152 visits per month for the KCV website, and 1604 per month for the GPV website.

Podcasts

In 2017–18 the KCV podcast program was launched, with three podcasts released during the financial year:

- **Welcome to KCV Podcast** – 27 April 2018. An introduction to the series.
- **The Importance of Carer Wellbeing** – 25 May 2018. Why the physical and emotional health of kinship carers and their access to support services is important.
- **Kinship Care and the Victorian Election** – 29 June 2018. A discussion about how the log of claims was developed. This podcast also includes an interview with Barbara Champion, Director of Play Australia.

Reactions from carers to the podcasts:

'I have listened to Podcast #2 and can relate to so many issues raised in the discussion, especially the isolation of being a kinship carer. It is so good to know that I am not alone in feeling this way.'

Linda Hogarth – Kinship carer

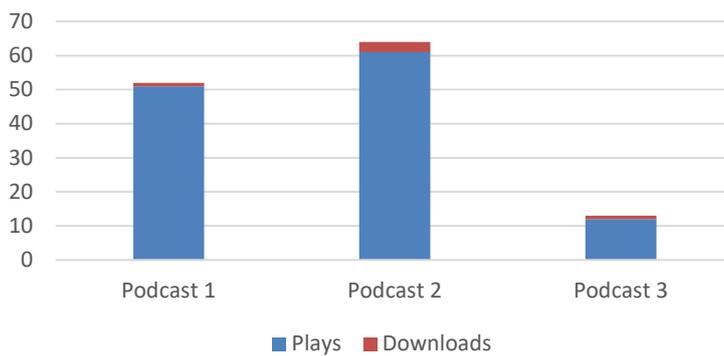
'Love it! Thank you.' Cheryl Graham – Kinship carer

Podcast #	Plays	Downloads
1	51	1
2	61	3
3	12	1





Reach of Podcasts to 30 June 2018



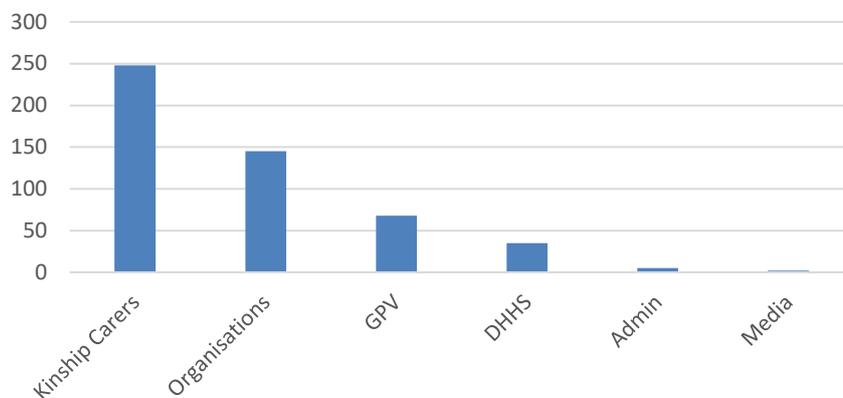
Note – podcast 3 was released only one day before these statistics were taken.

Telephone Communications

In the 2017–18 FY, 503 incoming phone calls were logged by GPV/KCV.

- 248 calls were from kinship carers
- 145 calls from organisations
- 68 calls about general GPV business
- 35 calls from DHHS
- five calls about administration/compliance matters
- two calls from the media

Incoming phone calls



Media

In 2017–18 GPV/KCV was approached for media comment on a variety of issues.

- **Television** – GPV/KCV’s Director was interviewed for the ABC’s *7:30 Report* on the subject of child care.
- **Radio** – GPV/KCV’s Director was interviewed on the subject of the role of grandparents, including those grandparents denied access to grandchildren.
- **Magazines** – GPV/KCV’s Director was interviewed for articles in several magazines, however only an article, in the *Australian Senior*, was published. This article covered a range of grandparents’ issues.
- **Newspapers** – Amongst other issues, GPV/KCV was featured in an article in the *Herald Sun* about issues in OOHC, particularly the lack of support for non-statutory carers.

GPV/KCV also provides background information to a range of journalists.





Governance

GPV/KCV aims to keep time spent on governance to a minimum so as to allow as much staff time as possible to be directed to programs and campaigns. However, GPV/KCV takes compliance seriously, and abides by the guidelines set down in its service agreement with DHHS, the standing orders lodged with Consumer Affairs Victoria, and other Australian business standards.

The board regularly reviews GPV/KCV risk-management policies and procedures, and the GPV/KCV office is regularly monitored to ensure that it remains a safe working environment.

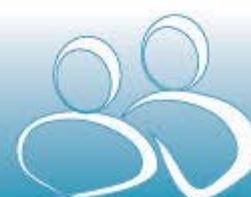
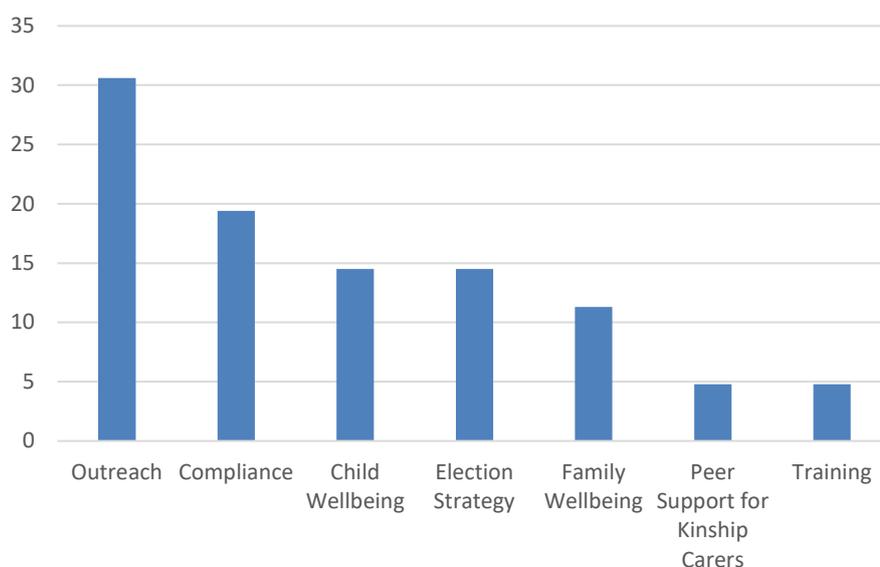
Board decision-making

The Board is the ultimate decision-making entity of GPV/KCV.

Sixty-two decisions were made across six face-to-face board meetings (#61-66) held in 2017–18. These decisions related to a variety of issues already covered in this report and are divided broadly into seven categories.

Category	% of decisions
Outreach	30.6
Compliance	19.4
Child wellbeing	14.5
Election Strategy	14.5
Family wellbeing	11.3
Peer Support for kinship carers	4.8
Training	4.8

% of Board decisions by category





Financial Management

In this financial year a number of projects were held over to the 2018/19 financial year. For example, it was decided after consultation with kinship carers to produce three copies of a wellbeing magazine rather than one single book and to spread the distribution of the magazine over a twelve-month period. The effect is that funds for the completion of these projects is held in reserve in this budget.

	Proposed Expenditure	Actual Expenditure
Consultancy	\$172,400.00	\$192,796.30
ATO payments	\$35,000.00	\$28,528.00
Grants to groups – Learning Circles & wellbeing	\$41,000.00	\$20,409.56
Office rent	\$21,600.00	\$20,321.25
Meeting expenses and conferences	\$19,500.00	\$18,427.20
Office supplies/equipment maintenance/upgrade	\$4000.00	\$11,528.34
Travel/accommodation	\$20,000.00	\$12,308.43
Printing – external & internal	\$32,000.00	\$9006.51
Postage/freight	\$5930.00	\$3800.96
Telephone	\$4000.00	\$3168.03
Internet/email/website	\$11,000.00	\$2970.47
Professional development – staff & board	\$4,000.00	\$2938.50
Utilities	\$1700.00	\$1990.99
Petty cash	\$500.00	\$1000.00
Dues & subscriptions	\$200.00	\$367.36
Bank fees	\$300.00	\$140.33
	\$373,130.00	329,702.23
	Proposed Income	Actual Income
DHHS service agreement & projects	\$289,160.08	\$414,115.85
Memberships & donations	\$2000.00	\$1136.00
Carer KaFE Learning Circles grant	\$60,000.00	\$53,060.00
Carer KaFE mailout grant/sitting fee	\$0.00	\$18,032
Miscellaneous	\$0.00	\$480.00
Total Income	\$351,160.08	\$486,823.85
Cash reserve/balance at end of financial year	\$61,975.31	\$224,696.93



5th September 2018



Grandparents Victoria Incorporated
14 Youlden Street
Kensington VIC 3031

Dear Members,

RE: Review of Financial Accounts for Year Ended 30th June 2018

We, CSS Partners, have reviewed the accounts of Grandparents Victoria Incorporated for the twelve (12) months for the Year Ended 30 June 2018 with the intention of determining the following: -

- Accuracy of the Accounting transactions;

We have reviewed the books, as supplied to me 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 organisation.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Paul Vassiliadis', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Paul Vassiliadis
CSS Partners

1/30 Amis Cres
Keilor East VIC 3033
(03) 9337 3222

