

Press release, 30th April 2020

## GRANDPARENTS CALL ON AUSTRALIAN GOVERNMENT TO OFFER HELPING HAND TO KINSHIP CARERS

Right across our land informal kinship carers, grandparents and other relatives raising children, are struggling to cope in these most difficult times.

Even in the best of times kinship care families are faced with the most challenging set of circumstances imaginable. In the time of Coronavirus these challenges are magnified. Challenge mounts upon challenge as these families try to raise children with high needs on a diminishing income in a much more isolated existence.

Anne McLeish, Director of Grandparents Victoria and Australia said:

"We implore the Australian government to consider a

one-off \$500 payment for the kinship care families currently assisted by Centrelink. This payment could be confined to those carers who already qualify for some level of assistance so its scope will be predictable and confined. This payment would be easily applied – it would be a matter of asking the Centrelink Grandparent Advisers to use the existing databases."

The circumstances leading to the breakdown of many kinship care families under current pressures can be avoided with such a payment. The vote of thanks to our kinship families implied by the payment would also be much appreciated.

### Full letter to federal MPs

To all federal MPs.

These are difficult times for many families. We can see from your public responses that you understand this.

However, we take this opportunity to draw your attention the hardships being endured by the grandparents raising grandchildren across Australia. These families endure increased pressures on their ability to raise the children in their care at the best of times. In times of extra strain and cost they find it even harder to cope. We believe that many families headed by grandparents and other relatives will break down under the pressures, leaving the nation to pick up the pieces.

In 2013 grandparents from Australia hosted a meeting in London. We drew 13 delegates from five countries together to discuss kinship family care.

One of the concerns held by delegates was that kinship care was not well enough appreciated and should be differentiated from other types of care. The biological connection with family was undervalued. We expect that your government also holds this view.

Further, the London delegates identified the poverty that kinship carer families live with to be debilitating.

With this in mind it was particularly pleasing that in 2014 the Australian Senate Community Affairs Reference Committee issued a report: Grandparents who take primary responsibility for raising their grandchildren. The report highlights the areas of concern and interest relevant to

the rapidly growing contemporary feature of family life – grandparent and other relatives raising their grandchildren. This report alerts us the empathy for kinship families held by the Australian Senate.

In 2020, kinship care families are faced with the most challenging set of circumstances imaginable; challenge is mounted upon challenge as these families try to raise children with high needs on a diminishing income within a much more isolated existence.

We implore you to consider a one-off \$500 payment the kinship care families currently assisted by Centrelink. This payment could be confined to those carers who already qualify for some level of assistance so its scope will be predictable and confined. This payment would be easily applied – it would be a matter of asking the Centrelink Grandparent Advisers to use the existing data bases.

We close by restating the fear that we expect many kinship care families to break down under current pressures and believe that such a payment along with the vote of thanks to our kinship families would be much appreciated.

Yours sincerely,

Anne L McLeish OAM

Director,  
Kinship Carers Victoria and Grandparents Victoria  
Grandparents Australia