



GRANDPARENTS IN PARENTING ROLES

COTA POLICY & INTERGENERATIONAL WORKING GROUP

" COTA (NSW) believes policy change is necessary to recognise the growing variety of roles grandparents play in their grandchildren's lives in Australian society. Current State and Federal policy lags behind the issues emerging around grandparenting, so it is important that policy support this emerging social trend, by ensuring that financial, legal and other forms of support are available to grandparent carers with consistency across jurisdictions. "

COTA (NSW) Grandparenting Policy Paper 2007

From the Ground Up

- ◆ Policy taps into grass roots grandparenting organisations and their grandparent advocates
- ◆ Hearing the many voices help us understand the issues
- ◆ COTA (NSW) policy is informed by research and the issues identified through the working group

Summary of Recommendations from the Working Party

1. That both Federal and State Governments recognize the growing importance of grandparents caring for their grandchildren with translation into resources and support services designed with the specific needs of grandparent carers and their grandchildren in mind.
2. Establish a National Information Service such as a 24 hour telephone line and website that provides information about financial assistance, family law and other legal matters and referral to local services and supports.
3. Ensure all grandparents, regardless of their formal or informal care arrangements with their grandchildren have access to financial entitlements and that those entitlements 'follow the child'.
4. Financial support should be available under the Commonwealth Child Care Rebate Scheme to grandparents who care for their grandchildren on a long term day-care basis.

Recommendations cont'd

5. Ensure all policies and procedures within the New South Wales Department of Community Services (DoCS) are transparent and consistently applied across all regions.
6. Ensure the Legal Aid Commission of NSW and the NSW Attorney General make legal aid more accessible to grandparents and their grandchildren.
7. Ensure that Commonwealth Family Relationship Centers (FRCs) develop specific policies and programs that recognize and integrate issues related to grandparents and their grandchildren.
8. Create a support system within the community and relevant Commonwealth & State government departments that helps ensure the needs of grandparents and their grandchildren are met.
9. Create a variety of respite options for grandparent carers.
10. Recognize the need for further research.

The Principle

Collaboration between researchers, policy makers and the community is the key to creating the most effective outcomes for grandparents caring for their grandchildren

The tool

THE COTA (NSW) 2008 GRANDPARENTING FORUM

Funded by the NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC) and the NSW Department of Community (DoCS)

The 1996 Forum - "When Families Break Down"

- ◆ The Ministerial Council on the Ageing (MACA) and COTA (NSW) held a Forum in 1996 for grandparent carers.
- ◆ Papers from the Forum were compiled into a publication titled, "When Families Break Down."
- ◆ The publication was a valuable source of information for grandparent carers and associated support group and networks
- ◆ In a proposal to the NSW Department of Ageing, Disability and Home Care (DADHC), COTA (NSW) suggested holding a **new Forum** to update the information in the publication.

The Proposal

That COTA (NSW), in consultation and collaboration with DADHC and the Ministerial Advisory Committee on Ageing (MACA), convene a Forum to revisit the rights, roles and responsibilities of grandparents a decade later.

The Purpose

To bring together grandparents in various caring roles with researchers and policy makers to work together to identify common issues and drive policy change for the future.

The 2008 Forum Structure

- ◆ The Forum will include perspectives from a variety of stakeholders including grandparents undertaking various caring for their grandchildren researchers in the field, service providers, government representatives and policy makers
- ◆ A working party chaired by Professor Sol Encel from the Social Policy Research Centre at the University of New South Wales will provide expert advice and guide the project
- ◆ Other working party members include Professor Bettina Cass from the SPRC, Sue Field from the University of Western Sydney representing the Ministerial Council on the Ageing (MACA) Coral Slattery from NSW Family Law Reform Association and representatives from DADHC, DoCS and COTA (NSW).
- ◆ The Forum will feature speakers in the morning and interactive afternoon workshops
- ◆ A summary session on day two will identify key issues and policy recommendations
- ◆ The new publication will include the papers and the issues and recommendations identified in the Forum

The 2008 Forum - no 'one-size fits all'

The Forum will explore the unique needs and issues of grandparents from both indigenous and culturally & linguistically diverse communities

The Outcomes?

- ◆ Policy change that recognises the diverse roles grandparents play in Australian society.
- ◆ Policy that supports this emerging social trend by ensuring financial, legal and community infrastructures are available and consistent across all jurisdictions.

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren NSW

- ◆ An initiative of COTA (NSW)
- ◆ An alliance of grandparents who have fulltime care and responsibility for their grandchildren
- ◆ The major focus of the project has been on providing an information resource for grandparents and associated support groups, as well as lobbying for better support services and networks for grandparents who have full time parental responsibility for their grandchildren
- ◆ The result of several years of research and collaboration with grandparent support groups and community services representatives including:
 - Van Kinship Care
 - Western Sydney Grandcarers (Penrith)
 - CAGS (Orange)
 - Samaritans (Hunter Valley)

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren NSW - where do you go to for HELP?

- ◆ Information booklet made possible through a grant from the Sydney Community Foundation
 - Includes information regarding legal issues, financial assistance, education, childcare and respite and support services
- ◆ Website:
www.raisinggrandchildren.com.au

RESEARCH GAPS

Research Gaps

- There is a need for further research regarding the differing needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander groups and culturally and linguistically diverse grandparents. This type of research would fill a gap and lead to development of specific interventions to better assist these groups.
- The research is conflicting, so further investigation needs to be done to look at the outcomes for children who are cared for by their grandparents compared to those who enter the formal foster care system.

Research gaps cont'd

- ◆ More detailed demographic data – many grandparents caring for their grandchildren are 'hidden' or 'hiding'
- ◆ Regional differences between the needs of urban and regional grandparent carers
- ◆ Grandparents raising teenage grandchildren – the expectations and the challenges

FUTURE FOCUS

Future Focus

- ◆ Are there common goals that can drive future collaboration?
- ◆ Research focus - should policy drive research or the other way around?
- ◆ Policy recommendations – who is responsible?
- ◆ Who drives change?