



## An Australian Senate inquiry Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

In December 2013, the Australian Government referred  
the matter of grandparents raising grandchildren to the Senate

### The Australian Government's Announcement

West Australian Liberal Senator Dean Smith said the number of grandparents who have postponed retirement to look after children was on the rise, yet the government knew little about the challenges they faced.

*"Some of the stories these grandparents have shared are inspiring and heartrending in equal measure.. At a time when many of their friends are making retirement plans, these heroic grandparents are dealing with the many physical, emotional and financial challenges that come with raising young children." said Senator Smith*

The inquiry which due to report by September 30, 2014. will investigate:

- The Practical challenges facing grandparents raising their grandchildren, and their support needs.
- The role and contribution of grandparents raising their grandchildren, and how this should be recognised;
- Other challenges that grandparents raising their grandchildren face in undertaking their role, including in circumstances complicated by family conflict, mental illness, substance abuse, homelessness, child abuse or neglect, or family violence.
- The barriers that grandparents raising their grandchildren face in acquiring legal recognition of their family arrangement, including Legal Aid entitlements for grandparents seeking to formalize their custodial arrangements through the Family Law Courts
- The practical measures that can be implemented by the Commonwealth, state and territory governments and the community sector to support grandparents raising their grandchildren, including key priorities for action;
- The specific needs of particular groups within the caring population, including Aboriginal and Torres Straight Islanders grandparent carers, grandparents caring for grandchildren with disability, grandparents from culturally and linguistically diverse background, grandparents with mental health needs and grandparents with an informal care arrangement for their grandchildren.

### The Grandparents Australia response

Grandparents around Australia have welcomed the news of the senate inquiry. This level of recognition of the role these grandparents play is most welcome by all grandparents. Even grandparents who are not raising their grandchildren are concerned that those who are undertaking this role are not well enough supported.

Not only are grandparents who raise their grandchildren contributing to the well being of their own families, they are also contributing to the overall wellbeing of the nation. Children are our most precious resource and the more of them who are happy and well the better off the nation will be.

Studies around the world are showing that the care given by grandparents is of the highest quality - with even the most troubled children benefitting from the unconditional love that only grandparents seem able to give. However, the financial, emotion and physical cost for grandparents is high and it is through enquiries such as this we will get a clear picture of the pressure points and how to relieve them.

*"This inquiry will be relevant far beyond Australia's shores. I believe that a national inquiry on this matter is a first, certainly amongst the nations with whom grandparents Australia has close contact", said Mrs. McLeish.*

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