

Time for Grandparents Program

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UnitingCare Community

Time for Grandparents Program Submission

Grandparents Who Take On The Primary Responsibility For Raising Their Grandchildren

UnitingCare Community Time for Grandparents Program

About the Time for Grandparents Program

1. The Time for Grandparents Program (TFGP) has been funded by the Queensland Government's Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services since June 2007, to provide support to grandparents who have the primary care of their grandchildren outside of the statutory system. Queensland grandparents not receiving the Queensland Government's Foster and Kinship Carer allowance are eligible for support from the program. The TFGP also provides information and referral to all grandparents in Queensland regardless of their caring status
2. The following initiatives are delivered to eligible grandparents by the TFGP
 - Information, referral and ongoing telephone support
 - Weekend camps for grandfamilies¹ that includes a therapeutic program² and, financial and legal sessions for grandparents
 - Financial support for sporting and recreational activities and school camps for grandchildren, with the purpose of providing some time out for grandparents from their caring role.
 - Culturally specific camps³ with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander grandfamilies held in urban and regional locations and with discrete communities.
 - Access to an identified Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worker to provide information, referral and ongoing telephone support to grandparents
3. Number of grandparents and grandchildren supported by TFGP since 2007 include:
 - 969 families with 1450 grandparents and 1683 grandchildren
 - 489 (50.46%) families were single grandparent families
 - 207 (21.36%) families identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander with 467 grandchildren

¹ Families where grandparents are the primary carers of their grandchildren

² A program facilitated by clinical psychologists and social workers providing grandparents with individual, couple and group sessions that includes parenting issues, child behaviour and trauma, problem solving, self-care and psychological support.

³ Cultural programs are developed and facilitated by an Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander worker from each community or regional location. Both grandparents and grandchildren are engaged in these activities. The camp program for grandparents also incorporates healing sessions.

- 984 grandparents have attended grandfamily camps throughout Queensland, 138 (14.02%) of these grandparents identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
- 4186 activities have been provided to grandchildren with 514 (12.27%) to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander grandchildren
- 22 683 calls have been received from grandparents seeking information and/or referral and support

Scope of Submission

4. This submission addresses a,c,e and f of the terms of reference drawing on statistical data from the TFGP and illustrated by case studies and grandparent quotes. The areas covered are:
- Challenges facing grandparents raising their grandchildren
 - Support needs of grandparents raising their grandchildren
 - Specific needs of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander grandparents

Challenges for grandparents raising their grandchildren

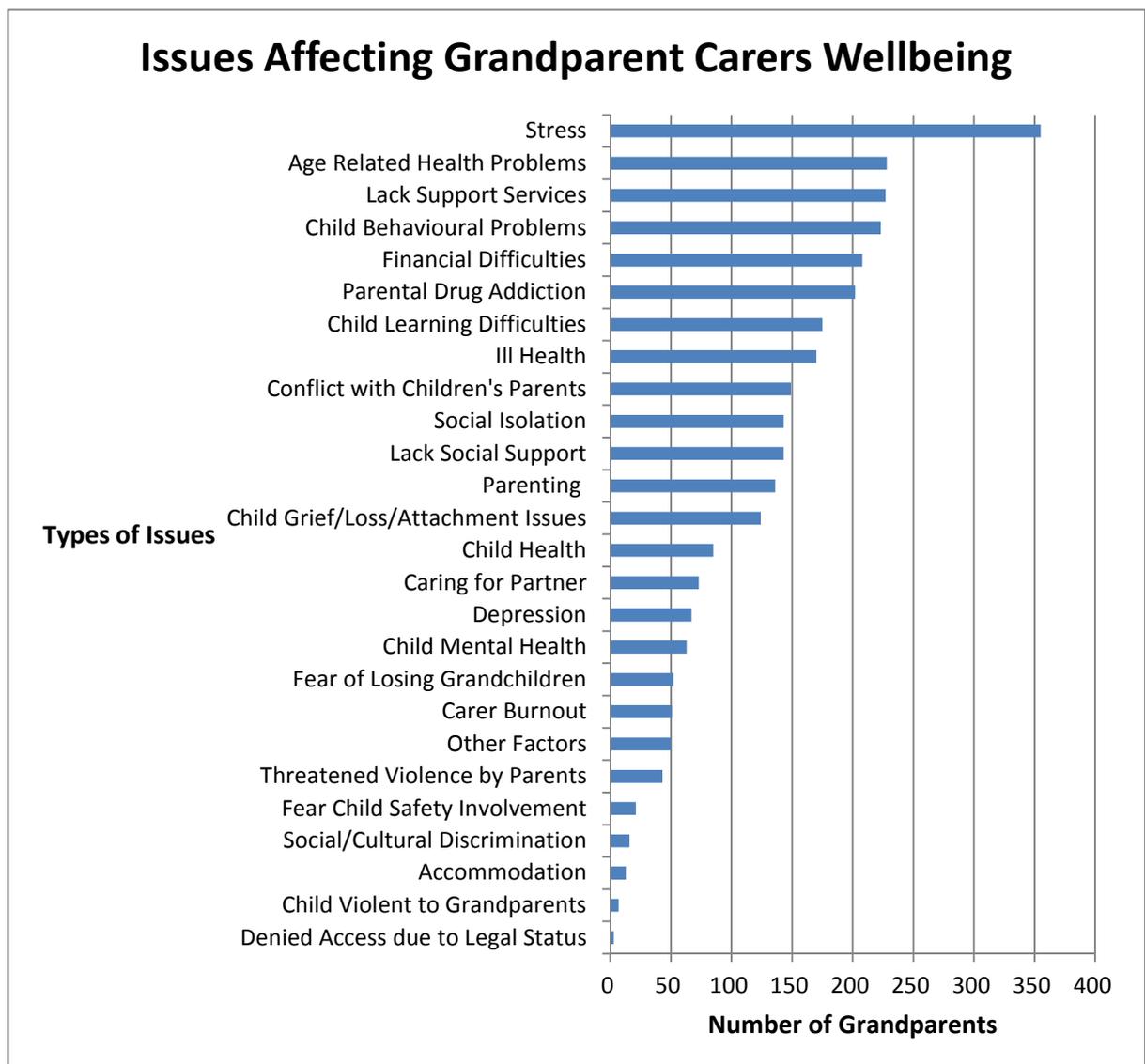
5. On intake into the TFGP staff documents the issues that are affecting grandparent's wellbeing as carers. This process is not a structured intake format instead these issues are identified based on listening to the grandparent's stories and completing a tick box of 26 broad and standard categories (Fig.1) Initially Grandparents are reticent to discuss the extent of their family circumstances due to:
- fear that Child Safety may become involved if they identify they are not coping or, if it is revealed that the parents of their grandchildren have been abusive, drug addicted or have mental health problems. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander grandparents this fear is also exacerbated by historical issues of forced removal of children from their families.
 - generational factors linked to stoicism and the view that it is important to keep family problems within the family. They do not want anyone else to know.
 - guilt around their own perceived notion they have failed as a parent because their own children have been unable to effectively parent their grandchildren.

Due to these factors it should also be noted that while the following data demonstrates that grandparent carers are often challenged by several issues, staff indicate that once a rapport has been built with a grandparent subsequent discussions will often reveal grandparents are challenged by many more issues not evident in the initial intake. This

may also account for the fact that 315 (32.5%) grandparents indicate on intake they have only 1 issue affecting their wellbeing.

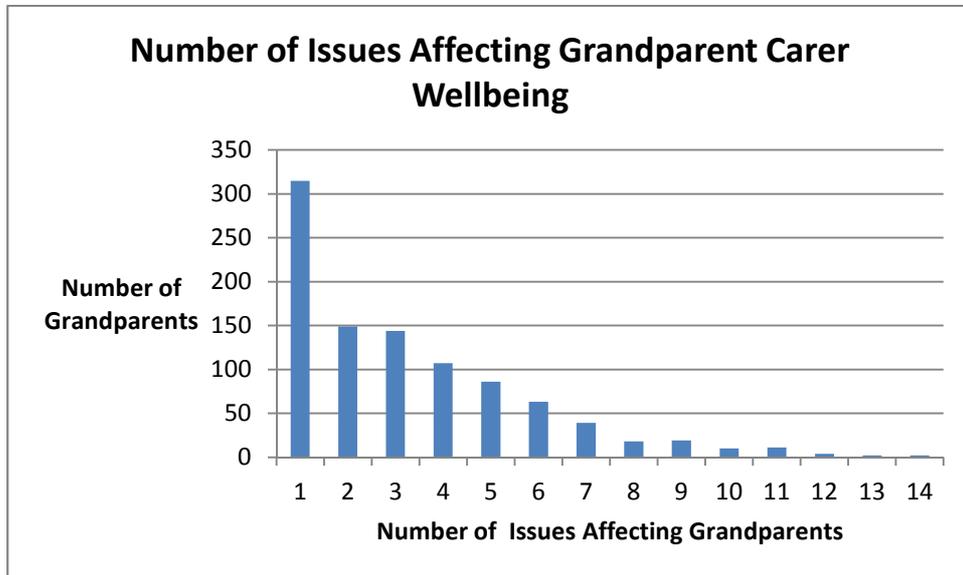
6. Grandfamilies also go through periods of crisis where more challenges may arise or some challenges may become more or less dominant. As only one grandparent in partnered families on the TFGP participates in the intake the data provided does not take into account the challenges of 481 grandparents. Nor does the data take into account the different challenges for grandmothers and grandfathers. To develop an understanding of the complex nature of challenges faced by grandparents raising grandchildren comprehensive research is needed.

Fig.1



7. Of the 969 grandparents 654 (67.49%) on intake were dealing with 2 or more issues affecting their carer wellbeing, 505 (52.11%) with 3 or more, 254 (26.21%) with 5 or more and 105 (10.8%) families coping with 7 or more issues (Fig.2).

Fig.2



Recommendations for further research

1. To identify how challenges for grandparents may change over time, how this affects their parenting, their wellbeing and the wellbeing of their grandchildren.
2. To identify how the challenges of raising grandchildren affects both male and female grandparents in partnered families.
3. To identify how the challenges of raising grandchildren may be different for single headed male families and single female headed families.

Case study 1 provides an insight into the complex challenges faced by grandparents raising their grandchildren on the TFGP.

Case Study 1

Nolene and Kevin are pensioners and have 3 grandchildren in their care 2, 7 and 9 years. Nolene is 66 years of age and Kevin is 72. It has been a struggle for Nolene and Kevin since their grandchildren arrived on their doorstep 6 months ago. Their daughter has battled depression and drug abuse for many years and was no longer able to cope with raising her children. Years of conflict with their daughter meant that Nolene and Kevin had had little to do with their grandchildren and this made the children's adjustment to living with them difficult. The children had also been neglected and abused. The children arrived with little and immediately needed clothes, bedding, furniture and food. Nolene used the little savings she had as well as support from a local charity. The two older children's schooling had been intermittent and on enrolment at school Nolene was informed that they had learning difficulties and developmental delay. Their behaviour was erratic due to the trauma they had experienced and lack of parental boundaries. The 9 year old was exhibiting sexualised behaviours and often had fits of rage, while the 7 year old was withdrawn and wet the bed nightly. Nolene and Kevin were struggling financially to raise 3 grandchildren. They had been warned by their daughter if they applied for government benefits she would return and take the children. Nolene and Kevin were terrified of this fearing their grandchildren would be at significant risk if this happened. Financial instability, coping with the behaviour of their grandchildren and dealing with the trauma they had experienced was a priority for the family. At 72 Kevin was considering returning to part time work if someone would employ him. Applying for government benefits was out of the question.

8. Financial challenges

- 208 (21.46%) grandparents indicated financial hardship as affecting their carer wellbeing. Financial hardship involves the following:
- Grandparents no longer working instead relying on the Aged Pension with no other financial support
- Self-funded retirees utilising the majority of their savings to support their grandchildren or for legal fees to seek custody through the court. Some grandparents report selling their homes to finance legal battles.
- Grandparents unwilling to access financial benefits from the Department of Human Services (Centrelink) even though they may be entitled to this assistance. This is due to fear of Child Safety involvement, concern for the parents (their own children) even if they are disappointed in them and informal care arrangements with the parents of their grandchildren. Parents may be continuing to access these payments and allowances to support themselves and often their drug habits. Parents can threaten violence and/or removal of their children from the

grandparents care. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander grandparents indicate that this can also be the case in their families.

- Working grandparents needing to forfeit their employment or moving to part-time work to care for traumatised children including babies and those too young to attend school.
- A change to Centrelink's (Department of Human Services) Parenting Payment has meant that Grandparents not eligible for the Aged Pension are required to meet work activity tests when their youngest child turns 6. These changes were originally designed to get people out of the welfare cycle and encourage single parents into work. As Grandparents, they may have already worked during their life or have been responsible for raising a family with their partner in a single income household. These policy changes are not adequate in supporting Grandparents raising grandchildren as they do not take into account the added costs of child care and the fact they may already be working part time to meet the needs of their grandchildren and to fit around school hours. In the case of grandchildren who have behavioural issues Grandparents are often required to attend school on a regular basis. Finding employment in a society that discriminates on age and finding an employer sympathetic to their situation can be challenging.
- TFGP staff often hears from grandparents having difficult negotiating Centrelink regarding payments and benefits. Queensland has only one Grandparent Advisor in the Department of Human Services whose assistance is limited to a small geographical region and given the size of the state many grandparents miss out on this support. This advisor has proven to be excellent in assisting TFGP grandparents in the designated region with organising their financial payments and other benefits.

9. Financial hardship and supporting grandchildren

- Children often arrive unexpectedly with few belongings and the need to purchase clothing, bedding, furniture for children and infants, car seats, as well as additional food costs is difficult. The TFGP has heard from grandparents where babies have arrived with no nappies, formula, clothing and bedding.
- Ongoing costs for school aged children including books, uniforms, excursions, school camps, desks, and computers and so on. Government text book allowances do not meet all the needs of grandchildren at school.

- Health related costs such as doctor's appointments, medicines and counselling. For many grandparents obtaining support for children who have been through trauma and/or who have behavioural issues, encounter waiting lists that are long or treatment options limited to a number of sessions. Accessible free counselling can be difficult to obtain or non-existent particularly in rural and remote areas. For Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander grandparents often their location means driving long distances to access services and this may not be possible.
- With informal care arrangements grandchildren can also come in and out of grandparent's care for periods of time based on removal by their parents. Grandchildren often return to their grandparents with no personal items and having experienced additional trauma.

Grandparent 2007

"my granddaughter was dumped at the railway station with a bag of clothes that were dirty and did not fit.....none of the clothes I gave her last time were in the bag"

Recommendations for financial support

1. Increase the number of Grandparent Advisors in the Department of Human Services (Centrelink) to cover the whole of Australia.
2. Change the Centrelink guidelines for the Parenting Payments for grandparents.
3. Provide immediate emergency relief and financial payments to grandparents when they first take on the care of their grandchildren to assist them with establishing their grandchildren in their home (eg: clothes, bedding, furniture, car seats, nappies, prams, cots)
4. Provide funding for school aged children in addition to current allowances in acknowledgement that grandparents of pension age have limited funds and limited chance of accessing part-time work to supplement the pension.
5. Prioritise access to free extended counselling services and allied health services for grandchildren and grandparents.

10. Other practical challenges for grandparents

- Enrolling grandchildren in school and supporting homework and learning is challenging as grandparents are dealing with a system they are no longer familiar with. Children may also have been to school intermittently (due to inadequate parenting) or have learning difficulties (175 grandparents or 18%) which requires

additional support. Grandparent on the TFGP regularly request free tutoring outside of school and this type of support is rarely available.

- Grandparents may have limited knowledge about their grandchildren. Drug addiction by parents (202 or 20.84%) and years of family conflict can mean that grandparents have not had the opportunity to form relationships with their grandchildren. Some indicate that they met their grandchildren for the first time when they took on the caring role. Lack of information about the children's health, immunisation and education can be problematic in dealing with schools and health services. Lack of information about the effects of parental drug abuse on foetal development and child development is also problematic for grandparents dealing with affected children.

Recommendations

1. Provide free tutoring for grandchildren to assist with homework and support for grandparents to develop skills and knowledge to assist their grandchildren with their education.
2. Provide support to grandparents that will facilitate their engagement with the school system (eg: assisting them to be integrated into the school community)
3. Provide information and support for grandparents who are dealing with grandchildren that have developmental delays. Grandparents need skills and strategies to enable them to support their grandchildren.

11. Child related parenting challenges for grandparents

- As grandparents take responsibility for caring for their grandchildren many on the TFGP are faced with significant child related challenges which can include one or a combination of the following issues: behavioural problems (223 or 23%); child grief and loss/attachment issues (124 or 12.8%); child health issues (85 or 8.77%), child learning difficulties (175 or 18%); and child mental health issues (63 or 6.5%). Grandparents report not knowing where to seek help when they are faced with these issues and specialised support services for their grandchildren are very limited with waiting lists. Grandparents often have complex, multiple issues to deal with and many indicate to staff that they do not have the skills or knowledge to support their grandchildren. Grandparents may also be experiencing these challenges with one or more of their grandchildren in their care. The following are provided as examples of the complex nature of child related issues that grandparents may be dealing with

- Child behavioural problems can be related to experiences of trauma and neglect, inadequate parenting where children have had few or no boundaries, developmental delay (as a result of factors affecting foetal development while in utero including drug and alcohol abuse by the mother), and mental health issues. These behaviours can be destructive, antisocial or inappropriate at home, and in a social and school environment, disrupting day to day family life and creating significant challenges for grandparents.

Grandparent 2011

“My grandchild is out of control, the school and us can do nothing with him”

- Child grief and loss and attachment issues challenge grandparents in significant ways. Children grieve the loss of their parents regardless of how they have been treated by them. Grandchildren on the TFGP also come into the care of their grandparents for a range of reasons other than abuse or neglect by parents. Parents may be in prison, deceased or have mental health problems. Some Grandchildren on the TFGP have witnessed extreme domestic violence resulting in the death of one of their parents.

Grandparent Quote 2007 - TFGP booklet “Grandma, You Make Me Want to Touch the Sky”

“A terrified, abused two-year-old little girl came to live with the grandmother she had only met a few times. She had been taken from her mother and her father by people she did not know to a home she had been to on only a few occasions. She was dirty and unkept in winter clothes in the middle of summer.....she could not bear to be touched. How could I show her that there were adults that she could trust

- TFGP staff has regular calls from grandmothers seeking mentors for their grandsons particularly when they are teenagers. Single grandmothers identify that their grandsons may never have had a reliable male role model and as they get older their behaviour becomes more difficult to handle. Grandmothers state that a male mentor could provide them with guidance and keep them on the right path to adulthood. Appropriate mentors/role models are also a source of concern for Aboriginal grandparents. Grandparents who have attended the TFGP Indigenous camps indicate that the lack of role models in communities has contributed to Aboriginal families being disconnected from traditional roles and responsibilities and parenting practices. *“Growing-up children”* into men and women through cultural teachings and ceremony has been diminished. Many traditional parenting skills have been lost.

Recommendations to support grandparents with parenting challenges

1. Provide ready access to parenting programs that focus specifically on developing skills to deal with childhood traumas, difficult behaviours, grief and loss and attachment issues. Parenting programs must be easy to access and waitlist free. Programs must also take into account the unique challenges that grandparents face parenting their grandchildren. A one size fits all approach to parenting will not assist grandparents due to the multifactorial nature of their task.
2. Provide increased access to support for grandchildren with mental health issues.
3. Develop mentoring programs to link mentors to male grandchildren who are being raised in families where grandmothers are the sole carer.

12. Grandparent's health

- Stress is reported by 355 (36.63%) grandparents as being a significant issue affecting their wellbeing as carers of their grandchildren, 51 (5.26%) grandparents indicated they had carer burnout. In addition to the challenges already discussed personal health issues are also contributing factors to carer stress. Personal health issues for grandparents included age related health problems (228 or 23.52%), depression 67 (6.91%) and other health problems (170 or 17.54%).
- Grandparents on the TFGP with no partner or who lack family support have delayed treatment for cancer and for surgery related health issues. Sometimes this delay is indefinite. This is due to the difficulty in obtaining appropriate and immediate respite or, their concerns that if their grandchild is placed with an unfamiliar carer for respite, this will exacerbate the trauma they have experienced. Some grandchildren have been sexually and physically abused or experienced significant neglect and fear leaving the safety of their grandparents and their home. Grandparents also talk of forgoing their own medication to pay for their grandchildren's needs.
- Single grandparents have a genuine fear of what will happen to their grandchildren if they die. "Who will look after my grandchildren?" is a common question heard by TFGP staff.

Grandparent 2007

"I promised the kids they would never be hurt by anyone again and I will do anything to keep that promise"

Grandparent 2008

- Older grandparents find it particularly difficult caring for grandchildren. They are often less mobile and are more likely to have health related problems. Whether they are caring for a toddler or teenager many on the TFGP talk about the exhausting nature of their caring role and the fact that they are never able to get a break. Some grandparents are caring for several children over a range of ages. They may also be caring for a partner or an elderly parent which brings with it additional carer stress. 73 (7.53%) were also caring for a partner or another adult.
- Australian health statistics indicate that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples are significantly more likely to be suffering chronic diseases such as diabetes, cardiovascular and kidney disease. Many of these grandparents on the TFGP are raising grandchildren while dealing with chronic ill health.

Case Study 2

A grandmother phoned for support she was stressed and crying and was finding it difficult to care for her husband who had terminal cancer, as well as caring for her grandchildren. Her grandchildren's behaviours were challenging and her husband needed constant care and attention. Her eldest grandchild had gotten in with the wrong crowd at school and been in trouble with the police, two of her younger grandchildren needed specially fitted shoes, she had months of unpaid bills and had been accessing a local charity for food. The grandmother did not know what to do nor did she know how she would continue to put food on the table and care for everyone. The grandmother feared what would happen when her husband passed away. She indicated that she was "burnt out" and had virtually no support from family.

13. Social isolation

- Social isolation and lack of social support affected the carer wellbeing of 286 (29.51%) grandparents on the TFGP. Lack of social support and networks can be significant to the health and wellbeing of older people and subsequently affect their capacity as full time carers for their grandchildren.
- When grandparents take on the caring role of their grandchildren they can become disconnected from their peer group. Their time is constrained, they are dealing with children who have behavioural problems, the commonalities they had with friends diminishes and their finances are stretched.
- Grandparents can also have little in common with the parents of their grandchildren's friends. Grandparents have identified they can be excluded from

this social interaction due to the generation gap or because their grandchildren have problematic behaviours.

- Some grandparents on the TFGP have indicated that the ongoing care of their grandchildren and the stresses related to this has caused considerable strain on their spousal relationship. At worst these relationships have ended and one grandparent has moved out of the home leaving the other to be the sole carer and provider.
- Grandparent evaluations post attendance on a TFGP Grandfamily Camp indicate that the majority of grandparents consider these camps an excellent source of support and would like to attend several times a year. For the first time many connect with other grandparents in a similar situation to theirs and the telling of and listening to each other's stories normalises their family experiences. Some share phone numbers and email address to keep in contact. A number of grandparents from a regional location started a group to meet regularly to engage in family social activities. The importance of these camps is that they also provide a weekend of time out where the grandchildren participate in activities but are reunited with the grandparents for meals and sleep. All expenses are covered and without this many grandparents would be unable to attend. 984 grandparents on the TFGP have attended Grandfamily camps throughout Queensland, 138 (14.02%) of these grandparents identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander.

Email from Grandparent who attended a Grandfamily Camp in 2013

"Being able to talk to people like ourselves raising grandchildren has been a comfort sharing our problems and concerns about learning and behaviour. We have come away with some great ideas that the (Psychologist) suggest we try. So one step at a time for now.....We came away feeling very rich and good about ourselves"

- While support groups exist in Queensland they are limited and scattered throughout the state thus providing minimal opportunity for grandparents to attend. Often it is hard for grandparents to get to a support group due to financial and transport restrictions or caring for young children. Thus support groups can be difficult to establish and unless supported by a worker difficult to maintain. Nonetheless they are an important source of support for those grandparents who are able to attend.

Recommendations to assist with stress, carer burnout and social isolation

1. Provide reliable respite options at short notice both for short term to reduce immediate carer stress for those in crisis, and long term to provide grandparents with the opportunity to undertake medical treatment.
2. Respite options must include staff having the skills to deal with children that have experienced trauma and who have complex behaviours and attachment issues.
3. Provide grandfamily camps (similar to the TFGP camps) as a respite option where all family members can attend and receive support from professionals, as well as having time out from the caring role. Camps should include child counsellors, case workers/family support workers to assist grandparents to deal with the many challenges they face.
4. Provide vouchers for low cost family holidays and/or activities for grandfamilies.

14. Family conflict and family violence

- 43 (4.43%) grandparents indicated that the parents of their grandchildren have threatened violence.
- Grandparents are often reluctant to take legal steps to try and stop abuse and violence from parents of their grandchildren. This can be due to fear that the violence may be exacerbated, that their own children could face legal ramifications or that legal steps would cause further rifts in the family. When grandparents have an informal care arrangement of their grandchildren there is a fear that the children will be removed from their care by their parents and that the children could be victims of further abuse and neglect. Grandparents are also reluctant to involve the police as they are concerned Child Safety will become involved and remove their grandchildren from their care. 52 (5.36%) have a genuine fear of losing their grandchildren. This is particularly the case for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander grandparents based on the historical experiences of forced removal of children. Some of these grandparents were forcibly removed from their own families.
- Grandparents report that when they take on the care of one set of grandchildren it can also create problems with others in the family, and disconnection from and conflict with other members of the family can occur. Jealousy about time spent caring for one set of grandchildren and money spent on one family and not the other can cause family conflict. Often other members of the family also find it difficult to see why their parents are caring for the children of a sibling who has created conflict in the family, who may be a drug abuser and who should be

responsible for caring for their own children. Family conflict means that grandparents can become isolated from an important network of support.

Grandparent 2007

"We have been continually threatened by our grandchild's father who is drug addicted and very violent. My husband has been physically abused and had to go to hospital. We have a DVO against him but it expires soon and we are really worried. Our grandchild has an intellectual disability and is terrified of his father"

Recommendations to assist with family conflict and the complex challenges for a grandparent raising grandchildren

1. Provide accessible intensive case worker support for grandparents raising grandchildren that will provide assistance in dealing with family conflict and the various challenges (previously discussed) that grandparents raising grandchildren face. This support needs to be ongoing, have the capacity to be increased during times of crisis and provide access to timely specialist services for both the grandparents and grandchildren. Grandparents must have the opportunity for holistic family support services.

15. Specific challenges for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Grandparent Carers

- 207 (21.36%) families on the TFGP identified as Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander with 467 grandchildren. 146 (70.53%) of these grandparents are women without partners caring for grandchildren. These include grandparents that live in cities and regional locations as well as discrete communities.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander grandparents raising grandchildren face the same issues that other grandparents experience however, these are exacerbated by the increased disadvantage they experience in comparison to the rest of the Australian population. Some of these factors include; higher rates of morbidity and mortality; inadequate and overcrowded housing; poor community infrastructures; higher rates of unemployment; historical events that have led to disconnection from traditional lands, culture and roles; the forced removal of children from their families; higher rates of incarceration; and high rates of drug and alcohol abuse and violence.
- When working with Aboriginal grandparents TFGP staff have identified that these grandparents have real concerns about the removal of their grandchildren by

Child Safety and the lack of understanding by services about cultural parenting practices. This makes them reluctant to ask for assistance. Grandparents effectively like to “fly under the radar” to ensure that their grandchildren stay with family. This fear and family violence means that they often will not seek the government financial benefits they deserve. Taking these payments from the parents could increase the violence and open their family up to scrutiny from Child Safety. Many of these families are surviving on the pension and support from others in the community.

- As well as the parenting challenges discussed above, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Grandparents who attend the TFGP Indigenous grandfamily camps also indicate that children and young people have lost respect for their grandparents and elders, for family connectedness and their culture. With few male role models available there is limited guidance for grandsons and these factors contribute significantly to the challenges that grandparents face parenting their grandchildren.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Grandparents have indicated that counselling services specifically for traumatised children are non-existent in some areas or require long travel distances which they are unable to negotiate. This is despite the fact that many grandchildren have witnessed extensive family and/or community violence including the death of family members.
- Grandparents state that the number of grandchildren they are caring for at any one time can continually fluctuate and be completely unexpected. Parents dropping their children off and leaving them in the care of their grandparents for indefinite periods of time is not uncommon. Parents rarely provide any finances to the grandparents for food, clothing, school needs and other expenses. One grandmother mentioned having custody of three of her grandchildren with up to 12 additional grandchildren to care for at various times. This grandmother was on the aged pension, had no financial assistance from the parents of her grandchildren and relied on neighbours for assistance with food.
- Grandparents have identified that there is a lack of children’s programs and activities on communities contributing to boredom and “leading to trouble especially for the older ones”. Grandparents want to ensure that their grandchildren stay out of the Youth Justice System and need extensive support to develop skills to assist with this.
- The TFGP Indigenous grandfamily camps are underpinned by respect and connectedness, utilising cultural workers from local communities to

teach/demonstrate respect for Grandparents/Elders and culturally competent staff to work with grandparents. The program is based on nurturing the relationships between grandparents and their grandchildren. On evaluating grandparents after these camps some stated that they had noticed positive changes occurring in their relationships with their grandchildren. Grandparents also reported that the sessions for them on the camps had also been beneficial.

Aboriginal Grandmother 2012

"Talk'n to the workers at the camp helped me see that I can't fix things that are out of my control.....I used to worry about everything.....now I don't angst over the little things

Recommendations to assist Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Grandparents

1. Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander grandparents require all the support needs identified in this submission however services/programs must be:
 - a) Developed in consultation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Communities to ensure services are delivered in a culturally appropriate and respectful manner.
 - b) Culturally and location specific in acknowledgement that each community has similar but also different needs.
 - c) Staffed by Indigenous workers or at the least culturally competent staff in conjunction with Indigenous community workers.

16. Summary

- Grandparents who take on the primary responsibility for raising their grandchildren are faced with many challenges that contribute to stress and their capacity to effectively parent their grandchildren. Grandparents with an informal care arrangement can also be struggling financial, and not receiving the government financial benefits available to them, due to family conflict and fear of losing their grandchildren. In addition to their caring role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander grandparents are particularly vulnerable, due to the increased level of disadvantage in health and living standards they experience in comparison to the rest of the Australian population.
- Grandparents need access to a range of free, timely support services for themselves and their grandchildren. Reliability and readily available respite as well as an appropriate level of financial assistance are also an imperative. These

services must take into account the challenges identified in this submission and the unique situation of grandparents who are parenting their grandchildren.