



"The KinKare Committee"
Our brave Treasure's opinion

KinKare..... *Caring for relative carers and those denied access*

MONTHLY NEWS



KinKare Founders
Maree, Danni, Miriam

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www.kinkare.com.au



Editorial

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Hello Everyone,

Can you believe we have already put Easter behind us? This past month has seen some very **significant steps forward for the progression of awareness and improvements for grandparents**. Much of it, however, is still in the processes of government and can therefore not yet be disclosed. I really hate it when that happens!

Some, however, can be publicised and you will find an article on **the Bill Rosemary Menkens MP has put to the Q'ld parliament**. (I am hoping we will get bipartisan support on this one.)

Many of the Eagleby members will remember when she came to visit our group as the shadow minister to Warren Pitt, some time ago.

Minister Phil Reeves has, in the last month, also granted **an audience with COGs following the one KinKare** had at the end of last month. You will find an article about both following.

I continue to receive both **offers of help** to promote KinKare as well as **offers to write articles** since my plea for assistance. I thank all of you for this as it means this publication will continue to address the problems grandparents face everyday from the grassroots level.

Those of you who have been receiving this newsletter for some time will have noted that **we have gone from 2 pages to 6 and on top of that the print size has also diminished** in many parts of the publication.

This has been simply to accommodate the requests by readers for more information.

I have also had quite a few requests for a **support group on the inner north side of Brisbane** and would love to from any of you who could help with that.

Hardly a month goes by now where we are not expanding our circulation. **The circulation is approximately 500** directly, but many of our recipients forward the newsletter to others so the total is impossible to calculate. Then we have to add those who download from our website. In all it has been a very successful venture. We also **welcome yet another group to our meeting page** this month.

Hopefully we will see more in the future.

Happy reading,

Maree

Grandparents Recognized as Carers



Recently there was a private members Bill put to the Queensland parliament by **Rosemary Menkens MP** member for Burdekin (LNP), **Shadow Minister for Community Services and Housing, and Shadow Minister for Women**.

Ms Menkens, pictured, has introduced a private members Bill to the Queensland Parliament which aims to recognize grandparents raising their grandchildren. It is titled "Seniors Recognition (Grandparents providing Care) Bill"

Ms Menkens rightly refers to the lack of recognition of all Seniors by the current government and points to grandparents raising as a group "who are doing it particularly tough".

She goes on to say; **"The objectives of this Bill are simple, but essential, to provide recognition of the work and dedication of these special people, and to ensure their interests are considered when making decisions that impact on their ability to care for their grandchildren."**

Under this Bill, a Grandparent Carer Charter will be implemented. This Charter sets out the contributions of grandparents providing care, the importance of consideration of grandparents in decision making, and the unique place they hold in our community.

This Charter will form the basis of a legislative framework that provides a mechanism to allow this recognition to be used as part of a decision-making process, ensuring that when decisions are made by authorities on issues that directly affect grandparents providing care for their grandchildren, there is a framework to assist this decision making.

In this framework, a decision maker in making a 'relevant decision' must ensure the decision is consistent with the principles of the Charter. An employee of a decision maker in a multistage decision-making process must also ensure consistency with the Charter.

The Bill also requires the office of a decision maker to ensure the office has a program to allow for the training and awareness of the Charter to its employees.

The Bill also states an obligation of the **Carers Advisory Council** to work to advance the interests of grandparents providing care, promote compliance with the Charter, and make recommendations to the minister on enhancing compliance.

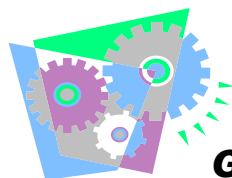
Fundamental Legislative Principles

The Bill is designed to provide consideration of grandparents providing care and their grandchildren in decisions by authorities which affect them. This gives consideration of their rights and wellbeing an official status, and is in keeping with fundamental legislative principles.

Cost to Government

It is **not envisaged there will be a significant cost** associated with the implementation of this Bill.

Please contact your local state member and ask for him/her to give support to this very important piece of legislation.



COGs Council of Grandparents



By Tracey Douglas (Chair of COGs.)

Left to Right: Damien Te Whiu (COTA), Frances Nord (State President APSL Q'ld); Maida Lilley (President Q'ld Retired Teachers); Minister Reeves (Dept of Child Safety); Tracey Douglas; (Chair COGs) Val French (OPSO); Maree Lubach (KinKare) Dr Maged Rofail.

I must apologise for the lack of information that has come out of the National Conference I have had some health issues but largely it is the sheer volume of information from the conference that is taking time. After discussions with Maree, I have decided to commit to putting a COGs page into the KinKare newsletter on a regular basis to advise everyone what the Council is doing and what is planned.

The Conference certainly managed to raise the profile of both the Council and grandparent carers. Some very important strategic alliances were formed between the States and bodies like Carers Australia. The Council will be working with the National Carers body as well as the State organisation to further our determination to get grandparents recognised as carers to assist them in accessing benefits and assistance and respite. If you get the Woman's Day you will have read this week's article on Debra Byrne who has begun her work to get grandparent carers recognised. She has come on board as the Council's Patron and is also interested in getting many stories, both good and bad, together to do a presentation with her entertainment colleagues. If you have one, please pass it on to Maree. Let us know if you want to remain anonymous.

The Bill on recognition of grandparents as carers goes to Queensland State Parliament in mid May I believe so it is hoped that we have a consensual approach to its passage by all parties as we have been promised previously. I am sure we will all be following this with great interest with a possibility to an approach to Federal government members for a similar action.

The formation of the Working Party for a National Body should be finalised by the end of May and it is thanks to Maree and Neville in particular for their work in moving this forward. It will start to give a genuine capacity to grandparents to be able to lobby successfully at a national level.

Lastly, as a result of Debra Byrne's article in WD, that publication wants to serve as a media channel for good stories so if you are interested please contact me and I will pass your name and details onto the journalist who will carry this task. The Council is also hoping to set up a website for stories and links within three months. I am still discussing possible domain costs etc as well as webmaster tasking before it gets going.

That is all for this month – hope to be better organised and start getting that information flowing out to everyone. The Council is anxious that all support groups get some representation on the Council and I will be exploring further in the May issue how we may be able to do that.

This has been downloaded from
www.austlii.edu.au/au/cases/cth/FamCA/2008/176.html



The Court said What??

This article is for interest only
and has been edited

This is a very sad and unusual case. It is **an application by grandparents to spend time with their two grandchildren**. The application is **opposed by the parents** of the two children.

One of the parents is a child of the grandparents. There is no middle ground in this case; no possibility of a compromise. There was no suggestion by any party of the possibility of attempting to resolve the issues other than by judicial adjudication.

Whatever I do either the grandparents or the parents will be disappointed and probably upset by the outcome. The parents contend that the children are at risk of abuse if they spend time with the grandparents.

This is said to be because of the way the Mother was treated by her father. The allegations are denied by the grandparents. There are two children the subject to the proceedings, aged nine years and aged seven years.

The grandparents are accomplished self-employed professionals. Although I had no direct evidence about the financial circumstances of the Grandparents the inference I draw is that they are financially secure.

The Mother was educated at a private school. The parents live nearby. The Mother is not in paid employment. The Father is a professional and conducts his own business from premises at Sydney. The children spend frequent time with members of the paternal family.

I had the benefit of answers to a questionnaire. The Mother in her answer to the questionnaire contended that she has concerns, as a result of her own experiences as a child, that in the event that the grandparents spend time with the children, the children may be at risk of abuse.

I had the benefit of evidence from a court appointed expert Dr M who is a child, family and adult psychiatrist. Dr M prepared a report and in the report said:

It is my opinion that **it would be beneficial for the children to have a relationship with the maternal grandparents**. This would allow them to have a real experience, without the fantasy and questions associated with a lack of contact. As such, I see merit in the maternal grandparents' application.

It is however **my concern that this potential benefit is outweighed by the fact that such contact will be profoundly disruptive to the mother**. She was clearly distressed by the prospect of such contact.

It is my clinical impression that **such contact would trigger an exacerbation rather than a resolution of such emotional distress**. This would have the **potential to contaminate the relationship between the mother and the children** and the paternal relationship, as predicted by the father. Under such circumstances, it is my view that contact would be highly disruptive for the children. This would outweigh the potential sleeper issue of the children's awareness of time of their lack of contact with the maternal grandparents in their response to such matters should they be raised.

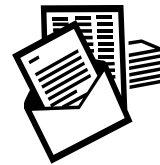
It is thus **my conclusion that despite the potential benefit of contact between the maternal grandparents and the children that this is outweighed by the mother's predictable emotional distress**. My discussion with [Ms B], the psychotherapist who had consulted with the maternal grandparents and father in the past, was consistent with these observations.

While she had been supportive of the maternal grandmother having contact with her grandchildren, she readily acknowledged the vulnerabilities within the family. When it was put to [the mother] that she would benefit from individual psychotherapy to address the significant issues arising from her family of origin experience, she indicated a willingness to pursue such an intervention. She was unfortunately unwilling to consider any rapprochement with her parents nor condone their contact with her children.

Date: 19 March 2008



We Should Write a Book!



This is the old "Our Personal Page". It is very important that readers send in their stories to be published on this page to inform others in the community just how different our lives are. This page may also contain comments on calls, or answers to queries raised from time to time.

For the purposes of this page, second generation carers or those denied access will be referred to as "grandparents" and those who rightfully should be raising the children will be referred to as "parents". In some cases the carers may be great aunts or uncles, step grandparents or even great-grandparents etc. This helps to keep the roles of all concerned clear. Similarly, all children will be referred to as "grandchildren". All stories will be edited to protect the identification of anyone involved and in keeping with available space. Accompanying illustrations are from the public domain and are not meant to reflect any party concerned.

This month's story is one I received in response to the February story. My heart goes out to all those denied access.

The Response

In reply to the Grandmother that hasn't seen her Grandchildren for seven years, we too have not seen our Grandson since 2004.

We spent our life savings in the Family Law Court despite the fact we told the truth and had subpoenaed evidence and other evidence to back that we were telling the truth.

Our daughter and her associates told many lies. One affidavit contradicted the other plus her partner has had a criminal record since 1994, the Judge left our Grandson with his Mother.

We reared the little boy for the first eight years of his life as our daughter had an addiction. We have lived in our home for 35 years and gave this child a good start to life when he was with us. Since leaving us he has lived in a tent and he is a very troubled child.

We were contacted by the police when he was in trouble at school and we were asked to sit in on a interview with him at the police station. We declined. The reason being he has been brainwashed by his mother and partner and told we were trying to put him in a boys home.

The truth was when we decided to go to court it was to give our Grandson a good start to life which every child has a right to, and we were hoping his mother/our daughter would seek the help she needed.

It appears one can go to a Doctor and tell them lies and they will believe you. Never checking with the family if it is truth or fiction.

As far as we are concerned the decisions made in the Family Law Court in many cases are wrong. It is a joke! They are there to make money and the Registrars/ Judges have no idea what goes on in the real world.



Children are used as pawns and the monies their parents receive from the Government allows them to support the life style they like at the child's expense.

We think of our Grandson everyday but there is no way we would go back to the Family Court.

We only hope and pray that when this little boy is older and starts thinking for himself he will be able to piece things together and sort the truth from the lies.

Our thoughts and prayers go out to all grandparents that are in the same situation as us.

Editors Note

As many of you will know, **I too was a grandparent denied access to my grandchildren for about seven years.** I saw two of my grandchildren when they were in intensive care immediately after birth, then no more, and did not see the next grandson for the first five years of his life.

Happily, I can now report to you that I have a very wonderful relationship with these boys as well as with my daughter. Things were very miserable at times though, and I often wondered if I was losing the plot.

For me, there was no court intervention. I have also spoken to other grandparents who have had positive outcomes and, mostly, they also decided not to go to court.

Having said all that, there is still a great need for the court processes to be more grandparent friendly and KinKare, in association with COGs, is working on a submission to assist in this.

An earlier article re the **dilemmas facing the Family Law Court judges** will, hopefully, serve to enlighten you as to the very complex nature of such a venture.

Your input and experiences would be most appreciated as we can only go by the evidence we have to hand.

Please help us to make our submission as factual and comprehensive as possible by sending your experiences.

Only those stories specifically given for publication are ever printed. **You can decide if you are prepared to disclose to our readers or not.**

Laughter is the best Medicine

Featuring..... Maxine



John Wagner, Hallmark artist since 1970, says Maxine was inspired by his mother, his maiden aunts and his grandmother, the woman who bought him art lessons when 'fill in the pumpkins' was about the extent of his art classes.

John remembers doodling as a preschooler and says both his grandmother and his mother encouraged his artistic interests. He eventually landed at Hallmark as part of an artists group. But it was the birth of the humorous Shoebox Greetings in 1986 The Shoebox way of seeing the world unleashed his talents and he created Maxine.

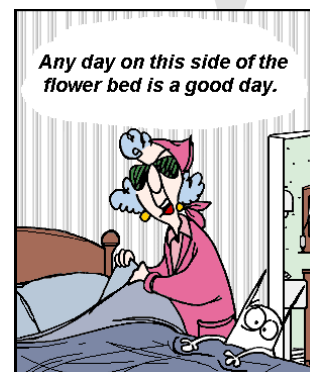
'Cartoonists are sensitive to the insanities of the world; we just try to humanize them,' John says. 'If Maxine can get a laugh out of someone who feels lonely or someone who is getting older and hates the thought of another birthday, or if she can make someone chuckle about stressful interpersonal relationships, then I'm happy. Putting a smile on someone's face is what it's all about.'

Those smiles have led to Maxine's becoming a bit of a celebrity. Letters from consumers and fans to John and Maxine reveal a very personal connection to Maxine. Many people say they are just like her.

Why the name 'Maxine'? 'People at Shoebox started referring to the character as 'John Wagner's old lady,' and I knew that would get me into trouble with my wife,' John says.

The Shoebox team had a contest among themselves to name the character and three of the approximately 30 entries suggested 'Maxine'. John says the name is perfect. John, who says he's humbled by such acceptance of Maxine, admits he's proud of her.

Now you know the story of how Maxine came to be.



Senior health care solution according to Maxine

So you're a sick senior citizen and the government says there is no nursing home available for you - what do you do?

Our plan gives anyone 65 years or older a gun and 4 bullets. You are allowed to shoot 2 MP's and 2 Ministers – not necessarily dead!

Of course, this means you will be sent to prison where you will get 3 meals a day, a roof over your head, central heating, and all the health care you need! New teeth - no problem. Need glasses, great. New hip, knees, kidney, lungs, heart? All covered. (And your kids can come and visit you as often as they do now)

And who will be paying for all of this? The same government that just told you that you they cannot afford for you to go into a home.

Plus, because you are a prisoner, you don't have to pay any income taxes anymore.

IS THIS A GREAT COUNTRY OR WHAT?



Meeting Notices



KinKare Groups:

Beaudesert:

Place: Beaucare 44 Tina St
 Day/Time: 4th Friday of the month 10:30am
 Contact: Maree ☎ 3287 1664

Cleveland:

Place: Donald Simpson Ctr, 172 Bloomfield St
 Day/Time: 3rd Friday of the month 10:30am
 Contact: Maged ☎ 3207 7200

Eagleby:

Place: Eagleby Community Ctr, Cowper Ave
 Day/Time: 2nd Friday of the month 10:30am
 Contact: Maree ☎ 3287 1664 or Danni ☎ 3299 1764

Goodna:

Place: Neighbourhood House, 33 Queens St
 Day/Time: 3rd Monday of the month 10:30am
 Contact: Maree ☎ 3287 1664

Inala:

Place: The Hub, Corsair Ave
 Day/Time: 2nd Tuesday of the month 10:30am
 Contact: Maree ☎ 3287 1664

Nerang:

Place: Nerang Neighbourhood Ctr, Martens St
 Day/Time: 4th Wednesday of the month 12:30pm
 Contact: Marjie ☎ 5527 3034

GAGS Inc

Place: Energex House, Cnr Wallace Nth & Tallon St
 Caboolture
 Day/Time: 2nd Wednesday of the month 10:00am
 Contact: Helen ☎ (07) 5498 9333
 ✉ gagsinc@hotmail.com

WELCOME to our newest group!

Western Australia:

Granpower:

Email: info@granpower.org.au
 Ph 0409 294 231

South Australia:

Grandparents for Grand-children SA Inc:

Ph Denise (08) 8410 6642
 Email: denise.gfgsainc@bigpond.com

Grandparents as Parents

Sunshine Coast:

Place: Comm. Capital Ctr, Sportsmans Pde, Bokarina
 Day/Time: 2nd Friday 10am-12noon
 Contact: ☎ 5437 9499

Indigenous G'parent Support Group:

Place: Centrecare
 Day/Time: Weekly
 Contact: Tess Rowley ☎ 3252 4371

North Queensland:

Cairns and District Grandparents Support Group:

Place: Hambledon House Community Ctr, Edmonton
 Day/Time: 1st Wednesday of the month 9:30am
 Contact: John or Janet ☎ 4055 5161

Grandparents in need of Support (GINOS)

Contact: Nev ☎ (07) 4723 3520
 ✉ trcota@bigpond.net.au

The Townsville G'parents Social Support Group:

Place: Dan Gleeson Memorial Gardens
 Day/Time: Last Friday of the month 10:30am-12 noon
 Contact: Nev ☎ (07) 4723 3520

G'parents Raising Grandchildren – Atherton Tablelands:

Place: Family Support House, 38 Mabel St
 Day/Time: 1st Tuesday of the month 9:30am-11:30am
 Contact: Nicole or Kirsty ☎ (07) 4091 3850

Always room for more!

Please send in details that you would like published on this page.

(To ensure publication, send written information to Maree as per the footer contact details.)



Seniors Enquiry Line – 1300 135 500

This is not just for the old and frail! Ask about the **Time for Grandparents Programme** while you are there.

Centrelink (Parent or Guardian Line) – 13 61 50

www.centrelink.gov.au

Centrelink social workers know about most of the community organisations in the area, not just money matters.

Please make an appointment. It is worth your while.

Child Support Agency – www.csa.gov.au

The CSA is a Federal Government organisation which helps support separated parents – and grandparents who are primary carers – with the transfer of payments for the benefit of their (grand)children.

Community Legal Centres

The national website is www.naclc.org.au

or for Queensland, see www.qails.org.au

Usually these centres can provide free legal services, short of actually representing you.

Legal Aid – www.nla.aust.net.au (the national website)

and **Legal Aid Queensland** – 1300 651 188

www.legalaid.qld.gov.au

Family Law Court Australia (Queensland) – 3248 2200

www.familycourt.gov.au (national website)

Parentline – 1300 301 300

www.parentline.com.au

This is for all types of parents and you are not excluded!

Kids' Help Line – 1800 551 800

www.kidshelp.com.au

This is for your kids. They often need a place to talk privately and so far I have had only good reports.

Commission for Children Young People and Child Guardian

1800 688 275

3224 4225 (Queensland office)

www.ccypcg.qld.gov.au

Relationships Australia – 1300 364 277

www.relationships.com.au

Don't forget to look after yourself and your relationships with other family members and spouse!

Crisis Care (Dept Child Safety Queensland after hours)

1800 177 135

3235 9999

www.childsafety.qld.gov.au

Keep a Diary:

The diary should include day, date and time of any contact and notes regarding the event. This might simply be that you sent a birthday card or email.

For those denied access, there could well come a time when the children ask why you were not there when they were growing up. As adults, they can see that you wanted to be and tried hard to be there for them. For those raising, the day may come that you are accused of stopping their parents from seeing them and the above applies again.

In either situation, the diary may well be helpful if ever the matter does go to a court.

Ask Questions of any Professional:

No matter if you are speaking to a lawyer, medical person or a Child Safety Officer, you are entitled to be fully briefed on their role and what they can and can't do for you as well as their qualifications.

Ask legal people how many grandparent cases like yours they have handled and what their success rate is. Ask medical, or similar, people if they are prepared to sign a report that you can give to your solicitor or Child Safety.

Never attend a Child Safety Meeting without someone else with you and make sure you are given a Carer Handbook. In Queensland it is permissible to tape the session as long as you declare your intention.

Make an appointment for a Centrelink Social Worker:

If you need to deal with Centrelink, don't just do so over the phone or even the counter. The social workers are much more knowledgeable. Tell them your basic situation at the time of making the appointment to give them time to look into the subject.

Seek Free Legal Opinion first:

There are many places where you can get free legal opinion other than Legal Aid. The Community Legal Centres have nothing to gain by misleading you as they are not funded by your wallet.

Look after YOURSELF!!!

No matter if you are denied access, raising or somewhere in between, the pressures are huge. Even young grandparents can be worn down by the constant anxiety and frustration.

Your grandchildren need you to be at your best!

Make sure you attend your doctor regularly and mention your situation. It is also very important for you to have someone outside the situation to talk freely to.

This is where support groups are at their best.

You can talk to others who understand your concerns and may even be able to tell you how they coped in a similar situation.

You will find there are other very good parents who have had the same thing happen to their family.

You will find you are not alone.