



"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

Hello Everyone,

Thank you to those who sent in suggestions to improve the newsletter. We really appreciated them. Particularly a friend of mine who was the only one to notice the "n" missing from KinKare!

I had a good laugh at that and you will notice it is now correctly spelt .

There is also a **new regular article** planned after a grandparent offered her services to research and write for us. It will be **about results in the Family Law Courts**. The first one may not appear until next month.

Please **keep the personal stories coming** as they help so many others know their experiences are shared.

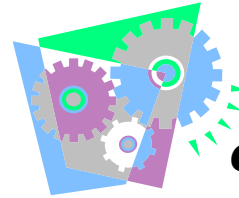
If anyone else has the time to write a column a month, **there are many more topics we would like to cover**. Particularly, we would like to hear what's happening outside our little part of the world. The newsletter is compiled during the week before the first Friday of the month and distributed by email that weekend and posted the following Monday. (All where possible.) So please, try to get your notices and articles in before then.

This month there is an article to do with a story published in the Courier Mail re grandparents who were told by the Dept that they were **too old to care for their grandchildren**.

KinKare had a speaker from the **Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre** address the Eagleby group last month and there is an update on that agency following.

Remember it is only through your input that this newsletter can remain relevant and useful to you.

Happy reading,
Maree



COGs Council of Grandparents

COGs first initiative for 2010 is well under way and we should be able to report more fully by next month. At this stage I think we can safely say that it is an initiative to assist **grandparents denied access**.

Your representative on the council will have been sent a draft document for comment. Please make sure you have input to any documents prepared by talking to your rep.

The next initiative is in the research stage and will most likely be in the area of assistance to grandparents raising grandchildren in order to keep a balance.

COGs meets on the 1st Monday of each month and is chaired by Tracey Douglas. The April and May meetings fall on public holidays and meeting times are TBA.

For details contact Tracey Douglas :

☎ 07 5596 5523 or ✉ tadcom@austarnet.com.au



Grandparents Information Time for Grandparents Programme

This programme is for grandparents raising grandchildren who are **NOT** through the Department of Child Safety and provides respite for grandparents.

SEL operates the programme in many parts of the State and are constantly extending it.

They provide assistance for after school activities, school camps and their Grandfamily camps which involve the whole family.

If you have any respite needs or even want to know where help is available for any situation, please give them a call. Their work is highly recommended by other grandparents.

Did You Hear?

There have been some disturbing stories come to light this month which we feel grandparents should be aware of.



In other States grandparent support and service providers have been receiving funding for some time now. We can only point to the "Time for Grandparents" programme here in Queensland and one or two others who are struggling to survive despite their great work.

However, the **Tasmanian and NSW governments are cutting funding in their states.** This is a worry for all of us as we have fought too long for recognition. Although it is hard for us to do a lot from our State, we can write to our Federal members asking their government to take up the short fall.

Remember to always keep your local politicians aware of the plight of grandparents. Ask them what they are doing to help and what new initiatives their party is planning.

This year is a **Federal election year** so now is the time to speak up.

Closer to home, there was an article in a recent edition of the Courier Mail about grandparents who were apparently told by Child Safety officers that they were considered **too old to raise their grandchildren.**

I have been assured that there is more to the whole issue than was reported in the paper. We all know that these situations are extremely complicated so I am sure that is correct.

However, the fact remains that there is nowhere for carers to go, in an acceptable timeframe, when they disagree with a decision except the Dept. itself. **Self regulation does not promote open and transparent reviews.**

It is not unusual for grandparents to report to me that going through the **suggested "complaints" channels of the Dept. can take years.** In the meantime, the children are traumatised by broken attachments and the adults become disgruntled and angry.

Child Safety Officers, many of whom are straight from Uni young and inexperienced in the seamier side of life, overworked and underpaid, then have to front not only gross abuse of children but angry adults. **This situation is never going to produce the best decisions for our most "at risk" children.**

KinKare understands that there is a very fine line to be walked which enables both **confidentially**, to protect children, and also **accountability and transparency** to be maintained.

It is a well known fact that secrecy hides abuse.

There has to be a way to stop this abusive cycle which can protect the children first and then carers and workers.

We therefore call on the State government to take **immediate action to rectify this situation.** NO MORE STALLING!

Go to Court **THEY** say..... You Have Rights!!!!!!

I am hearing all this more and more often. Now, it seems, even Child Safety people are saying this to grandparents.

Grandparents are constantly telling me they have been told they have rights under the new laws in the Family Law Court. That is NOT correct. **The law now says grandchildren have rights not the other way around.**

I am hearing that grandparents are being told it is the only way they can **secure** the parenting of their grandchildren. This is also not correct. **No court ruling is set in concrete forever.**

Please think very carefully before you take this option. At this point in time there have not been many happy endings to Family Law Court proceedings. A solicitor once told me that the only people smiling outside the Courts are legal people. This one is probably the true one.



The exception to all of this are cases where consent orders are made, i.e. the parent/s agree to the

arrangement, and if a parent, or parents, fails to appear. Even then the parent has the ability to prove a major change in circumstances down the track and can take it back to Court.

Although **KinKare is supporting moves to make things fairer for grandparents in the courts,** it is still not a course of action that we believe has positive, long-term results for the family as a whole. This is particularly so when there is no likelihood of abuse to the child and the parents therefore argue their case.

KinKare believes family relationships cannot be mended in a court of law.

Many times grandparents tell me they have nothing to lose, but the truth is they do. Even when it appears the family has fallen apart, there is still hope. This hope is greatly reduced when there have been court proceedings brought against each other. Accusations made can never be "unmade", whether they are true or not, mud sticks and the hurt remains.

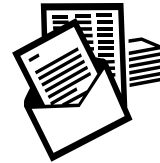
I am totally appalled to hear that officers from the Dept. are recommending this course of action to our grandparents.

I imagine they are doing so with the very best of intentions, but I wonder how many of them have had to deal with the families who have faced the repercussions of such action.

If your grandchildren are not being fed, being neglected and/or abused or living in squalor, then there might be a very good reason to go to court. Otherwise, chances are that the problems can eventually be solved by mediation. Patience, though, is really needed here. It could take years.



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 some years ago, but relevant as I am still hearing the same thing these days.

I had been trying to get the Dept. to listen to my concerns over our grandchild's wellbeing since she was three. She is now six and a half.

Our daughter, the mother, has a heavy drug and alcohol problem and her life is out of control.

It was when our granddaughter started school (thank God) that the Dept finally stepped in. Our granddaughter was removed from her mother's care and brought to our home which was always been her safe haven. The school was wonderfully supportive of our efforts and noticed a huge improvement in our granddaughter's demeanour. She no longer had to make excuses why her homework was not done. Excuses given were "mummy was sick" or "mummy had a party". She had been on the edge of a little group and now became part of the whole class.

Our daughter was always threatening to kill herself and her child rather than let us or the father have custody. When our granddaughter came to stay I said it would only be until her mummy got better. I have never demeaned her mother to her (and never will). She was very happy and settled but our daughter said she would not get help until our granddaughter was removed from our care. I know our daughter has a mental illness, but why would the Dept put the wishes of a junkie before the wellbeing of an innocent little girl? We had been investigated and two psychologists had said what a wonderful environment our granddaughter was in. Where are the rights of the child? After only 4 months of being secure this little girl was removed from our care.

The Dept appointed our granddaughter her own legal representative. I told my granddaughter to tell the truth and say what was in her heart. She said she loved her mummy more than anyone else but if she couldn't live with her she wanted to live with Nana. This was overruled! When I was asked by her legal representative what my two greatest fears were, I said "My granddaughter being reunited with her mother too soon," and "being removed from her school which apart from us was her safe haven." Both happened within a couple of months.



Unfortunately if one questions the motives of the Dept. you are put on "freeze". It does not pay to ask questions as you are seen as "undermining the Dept." I recently told my daughter's team leader that I was considering taking her to court for slander and put in an official complaint of "unprofessional conduct" by this person to the manager of her department as I believe that I had proof that this person lied. This same person then told me shortly after that she was thinking of removing our granddaughter again from her mother. It's amazing how my daughter wasn't able to acknowledge her problems for the time our granddaughter was with us but here we are 12 months down the track and suddenly she is the one the blame is attributed to!

I am fully supportive of children being reconciled with their parents provided the parents prove they are doing the right thing, but in my daughter's case she has remained in denial and the Dept has catered to her every wish. The father was denied residency—the grandmother the same. The child was withdrawn from the school she loved. My daughter is very clever as are all addicts. Public servants are supposed to serve the public! What a farce! How many more children have to die before the Dept gets a total clean out?

Here is an interesting contrast.

I was recently walking near my home. There were approximately 20 people milled around a tree. Out on a narrow branch was a koala. It was around 5:30pm and these people were discussing strategies to help the koala down safely.

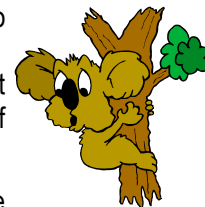
As I walked away I thought how nice for people to care for koalas but I wonder why don't children get the same community care for their welfare? We spend millions saving beached whales and the media goes into a frenzy but every day children are abused and mistreated and effectively they must die before they get media attention and inevitably the Dept is white-washed and the *veil of secrecy* continues to enshroud it.

No one seems to believe in the old adage that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure.

Shame on our legislatures and shame on the Dept who continue to misinterpret inadequate legislation.

Editors Note:

If I had a penny for every time I was reminded that abuse against animals carries heftier penalties than abuse against children I would be a wealthy woman able to carry on KinKare until we get it right!!!!



Laughter is the best Medicine

Only a Golfer Could Truly Understand

One fine day, Jim and Bob are out golfing. Jim slices his ball deep into a wooded ravine. He grabs his 8 iron and proceeds down the embankment into the ravine in search of his ball. The brush is quite thick, but Jim searches diligently and suddenly he spots something shiny. As he gets closer, he realises that the shiny object is in fact an 8 iron in the hands of a skeleton lying near an old golf ball. Jim calls out to his golfing partner in excitement, "Hey Bob, come here, I got trouble down here." Bob comes running over to the edge of the ravine and calls out, "What's the matter Jim?" Jim shouts back in a nervous voice, "Throw me my 7 iron! You can't get out of here with an 8 iron."



"The DAWN of Time"

Millions of years ago, there was no such thing as the wheel. One day, some primitive guys were watching their wives drag a dead mastodon to the food and fire area. It was exhausting work; the guys were getting tired just watching.



Then they noticed some large, smooth, rounded boulders and they had a great idea! They could sit on top of the boulders and get a better view of their wives working.

This was the first in a series of breakthroughs that ultimately led to television...and later to the remote control.

Will They Ever Understand?

Eric is sitting at the bar staring morosely into his beer. Tom walks in and sits down. After trying to start a conversation several times and getting only distracted grunts he asks Eric what the problem is.

"Well," said Eric, "I ran afoul of one of those women's questions women ask. Now I'm in deep trouble at home."

"What kind of question?" asked Tom.

"My wife asked me if I would still love her if when she was old, fat and ugly."

"That's easy," said Tom. "You just say 'Of course I will'."

"Yeah", said Eric, "That's what I did, except I said, 'Of course I DO'."



A little girl's prayer: "Dear God, please send clothes for all those poor ladies in Daddy's computer. Amen."

Questions and Answers

| | |
|--|---|
| Q: Where can men over the age of 60 find younger, sexy women who are interested in them? | A: Try a bookstore, under fiction. |
| Q: What can a man do while his wife is going through menopause? | A: Keep busy. If you're handy with tools, you can finish the basement. When you're done you'll have a place to live. |
| Q: Someone has told me that menopause is mentioned in the bible. Is that true? Where can it be found? | A: Yes. Matthew 14:92: "And Mary rode Joseph's ass all the way to Egypt ..." |
| Q: How can you increase the heart rate of your 60-plus year old husband? | A: Tell him you're pregnant. |
| Q: How can you avoid that terrible curse of the elderly wrinkles? | A: Take off your glasses. |
| Q: Seriously! What can I do for these Crow's feet and all those wrinkles on my face? | A: Go braless. It will usually pull them out. |
| Q: Why should 60-plus year old people use valet parking? | A: Valets don't forget where they park your car. |
| Q: Is it common for 60-plus year olds to have problems with short term memory storage? | A: Storing memory is not a problem, Retrieving it is the problem. |
| Q: As people age, do they sleep More soundly? | A: Yes, but usually in the afternoon. |
| Q: Where should 60-plus year olds look for eye glasses? | A: On their foreheads. |
| Q: What is the most common remark made by 60-plus year olds when they enter antique stores? | A: "Gosh, I remember these!" |

SMILE, You've still got your sense of humour, RIGHT?



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

The Sunshine Coast group now meets with Grandparents as Parents. Please see their listing.

Western Australia:

Granpower:

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

South Australia:

Grandparents for Grandchildren 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: Sharon ☎ 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.qacls.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.