



Harold G. Harvey,

28/1/14

Dear Senators,

My wife and I are grandparents who raised two granddaughters from pre-school age until they became adults. The elder was nearly 5 and the younger just over two when they came into our care. We parented them because their parents' marriage broke up due to alcohol and drug abuse and everything that went with that situation whereby neither parent was in a fit condition to parent them after they (the parents) split up. We took on the responsibility to raise them because we could not bear the thought of our own flesh and blood being raised in a foster home. Being on CentreLink payments at the time, we were placed in an invidious situation as we began the task all over again of raising a young family. This came at a time when our energies and inclinations were on the ebb-tide and without the income we had when our own immediate family was young. The extra financial load on our resources was only just manageable because of strict budgeting on our part. As a result, our grandchildren did without many things that their peers at school took for granted. The child support paid by the parents was enough to provide them with one day's school lunch per week. When the ex-daughter-in-law worked, no child support was forthcoming from her. It was only when she was on unemployment benefits that we received her contribution of \$5.00 per week. That was because CentreLink knew of her obligations. The Child Support Agency is a joke! Though information was given to them about the parents and our situation, nothing was done to remedy the glaring faults. We made much use of op shops and relied on charities such as the Smith Family to help us with education needs and the children benefitted from any government handouts that were on offer. In addition we found support from Wanslea Family Services who ran Grandcare Support Groups. We joined one of those support groups where we found several grandparents in similar circumstances as ourselves. Irrespective of those things, the granddaughters and we were severely curtailed as to our lives. The responsibilities my wife and I took on came at a time when we were least prepared for it. Most of our peers were free of raising children and the responsibilities that went with that. However, we do not begrudge our granddaughters the time given up or the lifestyle changes that we had to make for them. Looking back, what we would have appreciated by way of government assistance would have been some sort of establishment assistance because we had to find beds, bedding, wardrobes and cupboards for the girls when they first came to us. Also, we would have appreciated some measure whereby the girls could have more money for education purposes: camps, uniforms and school charges etc.

My wife and I are no longer in need for assistance as the granddaughters are now adults and have left home but I write in support of other grandparents who are currently in a similar situation as we were.

Yours faithfully,

Harold G. Harvey