

Grandparents raising their grand-children.

My name is [REDACTED]

My husband and I are raising our grand-daughter under a child protection order. She has lived with us officially under the order for 7 years and previously she stayed with us for days at a time due to the inability of her mother to care for her.

Her father (my son) died when she was 4 months old and her mother became depressed and turned to drugs.

My husband works and has accepted that he will now not be able to retire early or do the planned trip around Australia in the Caravan. This is something he had planned and looked forward to. He has been unable to put more of his pay into superannuation for our future because we need the funds now to assist with the daily costs of bring up a child in this modern world.

I had been working night duty as a nurse but was unable to continue with a small child and no sleep and the time required to attend to her needs, so I gave up my job.

Our grand-daughter has suffered trauma and often acted out her anger, hurts and frustrations with myself usually being the one who took the brunt of this.

It has been very difficult dealing with a traumatised child, understanding her but still trying to instil in her a good moral understanding, strong behavioural choices and an upbringing that will see her in good stead for her future.

We are finding out that pre-teen is a challenge that will tax us all! Our grand-daughter finds it difficult to come to terms with the ongoing issues due to her living arrangements. She feels that she is home here with us but struggles with being different from the kids at school.

The impact on our family has been huge, at times our marriage has suffered and our relationship with extended family has been affected as well. My family all live in different locations so we are unable to go to family for Christmases birthdays and other events because she has to be here to see her mother. We do what is necessary for her willingly but must acknowledge that it causes upsets often.

My friendships have also suffered because most of my friends have grown up children and do not have to adhere to a school timetable for outings, weekends away and catch ups. Friends do not understand that we must put the child first. We consider her needs before our own, gladly I add.

I am happy to do volunteer work at her local school but sometimes feel out of place amongst the young parents. She also has issues with having a grandparent there instead of her own mother.

The financial impact of caring for our grand-daughter has been immense. As I said I resigned from my part time job to attend meetings and psychology appointments with her. We do get some assistance because she is placed with us through Child Protection but this does not go close to covering the costs of raising a 12 year old.

We have had expenses including buying bedroom furniture, bikes, toys, computer, internet access, clothing and footwear, medical, education and entertainment costs including sport fees and uniforms.

We do not have access to legal aid when we go to court (yearly) with the D.H.S. protection order and must fund these ourselves. We do not have any legal rights because we are not her legal guardians... just carers!! We are the ones who hold her when she cries, love her unconditionally and take care of her, yet we are not allowed to sign a permission form without someone else approving it. We have lost all spontaneity to just up and away for a holiday or weekend away to my family. We must get permission first. Again we are not resentful of this but it must be noted that we do not feel any support for our efforts.

It is an honour and privilege to be there for our grand-daughter and help her to grow up with good morals and assist her to learn to be a functioning part of society.

We are saving the government thousands of dollars a year by helping to break the cycle of drug abuse Centrelink payments and violence that she may otherwise have learnt had she not been lucky enough to escape that lifestyle.

We would do it all again despite the problems, difficulties and hardships because we love our grand-daughter and only want the best for her.