

UnitingCare Community

Time for Grandparents Program

(Report for the Honourable Senator Claire Moore)

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UnitingCare Community - Time for Grandparents Program

Overview of 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 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 grandparents families that includes a therapeutic program 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 camps with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander grandparents families, 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

Time for Grandparents Program Initiatives

Information, Referral and Telephone Support

- The TFGP utilises UnitingCare Community's Seniors Enquiry Line service (a state-wide telephone information and referral service for older Queenslanders funded by the QLD Government) which acts as the contact point for all Queensland grandparents.
- Information and referral is provided to all grandparents in Queensland including those not eligible for the TFGP. The service provides referrals to grandparents for services in their local area and also to various telephone services (eg: Family Relationship Advice Line, Parent Line) for specialised advice. Common issues for grandparents calling Seniors Enquiry Line include:
 - Grandparents denied access to their grandchildren

- Grandparents dealing with the Department of Child Safety
- Grandparents raising their grandchildren and the range of issues associated with this.
- For grandparents eligible for the TFGP ongoing telephone support in addition to information and referral is available. Ongoing telephone support involves:
 - each grandparent client being allocated to a worker in order that a relationship of trust is developed between worker and client. This has been an important component of the TFGP as grandparents are often reticent to engage in conversation about their family issues for fear that if they ask for assistance they will give the impression they are not coping and Child Safety may become involved.
 - grandparents being encouraged to telephone their worker whenever they have the need for support. These families often go through periods of crisis and it is important that they have a contact person who has knowledge of their circumstances and someone who is able to actively listen to their concerns and provide them with support. Many grandparents are unable to talk with friends and family and are often not connected to any other grandparents who are raising their grandchildren. This telephone support also assists in normalising many of the experiences that grandparents are dealing with and provides the worker with the opportunity to validate the important role that grandparents are playing as parents. Grandparents often remark to workers that this contact is the first time that they have had anyone who has really listened to them and understood their concerns.
 - clients being contacted on a regular basis as part of the TFGP's evaluation process (post activities and grandparent family camps) and these calls also provide an opportunity for the worker to check in with the grandparents and provide support where necessary.
 - having an Indigenous worker dedicated to supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander grandparents.
- Workers on the TFGP have completed the Lifeline Telephone Counselling Course.

Grandparent family Camps

- 12 grandparent family camps are held per year in various locations across Queensland and include the grandparents and the grandchildren they are raising supported by psychologists/social workers and Accredited Outdoor Education Instructors.
- Grandparent family camps include:
 - Overnight accommodation (at times this can be extended to 2 nights, dependent on distance of travel to site)
 - Meals
 - Transport (may be included depending on distance, cost and logistical aspects)

- The aims of the grandparent family camp program are to provide:

Grandparents with:

- the opportunity to spend some time on their own while their grandchildren are being looked after and participating in the children's activity-based program.
- an opportunity to meet other grandparents who they may stay in contact with (this has been an outcome for some grandparents; one group of grandparents at Yeppoon started their own social group as a result of meeting on a grandparent family camp).
- support from the professional staff regarding coping in their role of primary carer for their grandchildren – therapeutic support
- an opportunity to discuss their issues of concern on an individual basis with a professional or as a couple
- financial and legal sessions
- the opportunity to identify with a professional, information and referral needs to relevant support services in Queensland

Grandchildren with:

- the opportunity to participate in an exciting and challenging program of activities
- the opportunity to meet other children who are also being raised by grandparents and learn that their situation is not unique
- the opportunity to learn new skills and build self-esteem in an outdoor environment
- the opportunity to learn about and build respect for their grandparents, themselves and other children

- The Grandparents Program consists of 5 main components
 - formal group based sessions
 - private sessions with individual grandparents or couples
 - informal contact with facilitators over the duration of the program
 - information sessions from legal services, financial services and other relevant support services
 - debriefing with all participants and facilitators at the end of each camp to share experiences

Indigenous Grandparent family Camps (Jar-jum Nim-bul-ima)

- Together with the above aims of a grandparent family camp, additional aims of the Indigenous Grandparent family Camp program are to provide:

For Grans

- a formal opportunity to join and connect with other Grans who are in the same situation within their community
- an opportunity for Grans to share and hear of other ways of managing the demands of raising Grannies
- an opportunity for mainstream grandparents raising Aboriginal and Islander grandchildren to provide their grandchildren with a connection to their cultural backgrounds

For the Grannies

- an opportunity to strengthen their cultural connections with their community
- an opportunity to strengthen their relationship with their Grannies and other community Elders
- an opportunity to join with other Grannies from their community and learn ways of giving thanks and respect to their Grans for taking on the parenting role
- an opportunity to link activities with responsibility, listening skills and respectful interaction with others.
- to learn traditional song/dance and be exposed to storytelling and cultural learnings

- The Indigenous Grandparent family Camps are premised on having a strong cultural component which includes:
 - respect for cultural differences within communities and altering camp programs accordingly for each community

- acknowledging the preferred ways of communication through yarning/storytelling, men's business and women's business
- use of yarning circles to build relationships and provide a supportive environment where Grans can come together and assist and help each other move through similar situations
- extensive use of outdoor settings
- opportunities to walk and feel the country on which the camps are held
- traditional welcome and respect for country ceremony
- mindfulness and respectfulness of Aboriginal child-rearing styles differing from mainstream parenting practices
- the use of silence and respect
- differing types of knowledge (eg: spiritual knowledge)
- kinship ties and communication practices related to kin
- use of Indigenous workers to assist in the facilitation of camps
- use of a cultural worker specific to the Grannies program to provide a cultural experience and assist with the management of behaviour in culturally appropriate ways

Funding support for sporting and recreational activities and school camps

- The TFGP provides funding for sporting and recreational activities and school camps for grandchildren.
- The aims of funding is to:
 - provide time-out for grandparents from their caring role - activities and camps must be at times when grandparents are not at work or in the case of school camps outside normal school hours (eg: overnight camps or school holidays)
 - provide an opportunity for grandchildren to participate in activities that are similar to their peers and often not affordable to grandparent clients
- Each grandchild is allocated a specified amount of funding per year based on their anniversary date of entering the program and funding is dependent on the number of clients in the program at a specific time.
- Any recreational or sporting activity provider that meets the legal requirements for operating a child-related business in Queensland is eligible to be a provider for grandchildren.
- Funding for activities can include memberships, insurance, weekly fees and uniform items (dependent on cost and funding allocation available per child).

- On request from grandparents, the TFGP organises all activities directly with providers.

Budget

The TFGP is funded by the Queensland Government's Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services.

Total Budget Allocation 2014-2015: \$768 175

Brokerage Funds for camps and activities: \$367 200

Employee Expenses: \$334 439

Other Expenses include administration, operational costs etc.

Statistics

The following statistics are for the period 1 June 2007 to 30 June 2014

Camp and Activity Statistics (Includes Non-Indigenous and Indigenous Clients)

Total Number of Camps	91
Number of Indigenous Camps	14
Number of CALD Camps	3
Number of Regional Camps	25
Total Number of Grandparents Attending Camps	1 023
Total Number of Grandchildren Attending Camps	1 256
Total Number of Activities for Grandchildren	4 569
Number of Calls	24 479

Statistics for Indigenous Clients only

Number of Grandparents attending Camps	196
Number of Grandchildren attending Camps	212
Number of Activities for Grandchildren	1 436