

From:
To: [Community Affairs Committee \(SEN\)](#)
Subject: Committee Inquiry: Grandparents who take primary responsibility for raising their grandchildren
Date: Friday, 7 February 2014 2:04:12 AM

Dear Senators,

I have a 7 year old granddaughter in my care full-time and have had her since birth.

My daughter was young 18 years old when she had the child, She was living with the father of the child

But after 4 months decided he did not want to be in a relationship and did not want to have responsibility of a baby, so he just up and left my daughter with the 4 month old.

By the time the granddaughter was 12 months old my daughter also decided she could not care for a baby and just walked out as well leaving me to care for this granddaughter.

Not knowing what to do or who to turn to, where to get help to guide me. I turned to Department of Child Protection

In the Northern suburbs. I made three phone calls and one visit to the department.

To tell them I was left with this child to care for my daughter did not leave me any contact details what so ever.

I was asked by the DCP

1. Was the child abused? NO
2. Was the child neglected? NO
3. Was the child sexually abused ? NO
4. Was the child malnourished ? NO

Well we cannot help you I tried to persist but each time I was told the same thing

Next on the list was to contact Centrelink another huge hurdle

They insisted I get proof that Granddaughter was living with me full-time

One letter from the day care she attended

One letter from my Church

One letter from a close friend but could not a relative.

They also wanted contact details of my daughter to backup my "story" so they could speak to her

As I had nothing for my daughter it took more than 6 months to beg, plead with CentreLink to give me

the Tax Benefit A and B Benefit. I cannot begin to explain the stress I was feeling at the time.

Centrelink even forced me to claim Child Support from both Mother and father which I didn't want to at the time

But was told if I didn't put in a claim for child support I would not receive any benefits from Centrelink.

That was in 2007 I am pleased to find out this practice does not exist today.

But as I am now locked into the Child Support Agency for the last 6 years this dept is the

biggest joke in the whole of Australia. The daughter owes me over \$5,000.00 and the father

owes me over \$6,000.00 in maintenance. Does Child Support try to recover this debt? NO . As

they do not make any payments this debt rises and Child Support expects me to find out

information as to where parents live and work? I continue to get pages and pages of letters in

the post to say your Child Support payments have changed. How worrying is that and

extremely stressful. It all goes in the bin.

Why does Centrelink take the grandparents income into consideration ?

Why not the parents ?

I am always treated like the parent I am not the parent I am the grandparent

I believe there needs to be more understanding in Centrelink and grandparents income and assets should not be taken or means tested. Perhaps a newly created area for grandparents .

Time had come for granddaughter to attend 4 year old Kindy

A original birth certificate was required and immunization records

As I am not the mother I was denied this information

I was forced to leave the local public school because the school principal hounded me for these records which I could not obtain. The granddaughter is now in a private school who listened to my story and she has been a student there for the past 3 years. School fees are very high and I do not get any rebate or discount being a pensioner. I will be paying school fees long after she has finished school but I hope she will do well at school and have good principles and never feels she has to rely on Centrelink in her life-time.

Access to Legal Aid was denied as I am "Tennants in Common" with another person and own property.

So either parents could come any time, any day and take the child away as I do not have any Legal rights.

Can I obtain a passport for the granddaughter If I happen to win lotto? Absolutely no way.

Respite, Respite, Respite, Urgently needed for grandparents or subsidized so grandparents can have respite to charge up the fuel tanks again. Grandparents wellbeing is over looked every day of the week. Old age is creeping up very fast.

I am fortunate to belong to a grandparents support group where respite is a top priority and every so often I can have a one day of relaxation and pampering 9am to 2:15pm (school hours of course) a weekend away with the granddaughter in nice surroundings. There is no one who I could leave the granddaughter with this helps but would be nicer to go without a child. If I was to become sick or end up in Hospital I do not know where the granddaughter would go. This worries any grandparent all the time. It never leaves your mind.

Even a grant for practical home help given quickly when one or both grandparents become ill would be a great help from the State or Federal Government.

Grandparents raising grandchildren full-time make an enormous contribution to the state and Federal Governments in caring for these children especially if you have no involvement with DCP.

I believe informal grandparents should be given the same entitlements as Foster Carers.

Thankyou for listening