



grandparents
VICTORIA



Ms Jeanette Radcliffe
Committee Secretary
Senate Standing Committees on Community Affairs
Parliament House Canberra ACT 2600

A Submission in regard to Inquiry into the Social Services Legislation Amendment

Dear Ms. Radcliffe,

On behalf of kinship carers across Australia, most of whom are grandparents, I hereby make a submission of recommendations designed to ensure that the federal payments to kinship carers respond to their needs more acutely than they do currently and certainly more acutely than the changes proposed by the current federal government.

I do not need to remind the members of the Standing Committee on Community Affairs of the efforts kinship carers make on behalf of the nation's children. It was clear to Grandparents Australia (GPA) that each and every member of the committee with whom we had dealings during the time of the senate enquiry in to grandparents raising grandchildren had developed sympathetic and detailed understanding of the problems associated with kinship care and of the outcomes children in kinship care enjoy.

In regard to changes to the Social Services Payments as far as kinship carers are concerned, GPA believes that:

- the Family Tax Benefit B payment be made available to both single and couple kinship care families until the time that the youngest child in care turns 18 years of age,
- the Family Tax Benefit B payment be equivalent to an amount not less than those currently received with an automatic annual increase by an amount equivalent to the increase in the cost of living.
- kinship carers who are eligible for Family Tax Benefit B also be eligible for a newly designed *Kinship Care Emergency Payment*, that covers a range of unforeseeable events that attract expenditure unable to be planned for and unable to be borne by the carers. For example, the funeral costs children in the care of the kinship carer or the funeral of the spouse of the kinship carer.
- kinship carers be awarded an automatic one off newly designed *Kinship Care Placement Establishment Grant* to the amount of \$500 for each child placed with the kinship carers. These funds are to be used to purchase basics such as beds, prams, linen, clothes, baby equipment etc. Associated with raising the children and in recognition of the fact that most carers do not have such facilities in their homes at the time the children are delivered to them.
- a further two Centrelink kinship care/foster care/grandparent advisors be appointed to better respond to the increasing number of calls being from carers who are seeking advice about eligibility for payments and other services available through Centrelink.
- entitlements to child care benefits include eligibility to claim for half of the costs of two camp, either school camps or other therapeutic camps, for each child in the case of the kinship carer and
- all other payments currently available to kinship carers be maintained

Taken together we anticipate that these recommendations would clarify some confusions currently existing about the role of the Centrelink Grandparent Advisors and would make clear some specific additional payments to kinship carers. These recommendations are also designed to ease some of the pressures on kinship carers accrued at the establishment phase and in the final phase when the cost of keeping young adults at school are high. Further, some of these recommendations are offered in recognition of the burdens placed on carers who invariably dip in to their own retirement savings to the point where many are not able to cover costs such as funerals.

Yours sincerely,

Anne L McLeish OAM,
Director

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