

grandparents
VICTORIA

Grandparents shaping the future

**The work of
Grandparents Victoria
to create a safe and
happy future for all
children in Australia.
2001-2014**

GPV

The people associated with the development of this book, in alphabetical, order are:

- Ali Grantham – illustrations
- Angus McLeish – illustrations
- Anne McLeish – research, writing and graphics
- Georgia Whyley – illustrations
- Megan Crowle - research and writing
- Naomi Whyley – research and editing
- Sienna McLeish – illustrations
- Zoe McLeish – illustrations

Introduction

This book has been written to celebrate the 50th meeting of the Board of Grandparents Victoria. The first Board meeting was held in July 2001 and the 50th in July 2014. Hence, the story of the story told in this book concludes in July 2014.

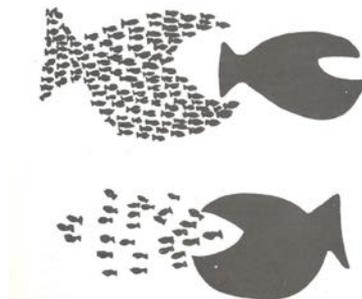
In July 2001, although the Board was committed to its purposes, there was little thought given to the organisations long term future. Lack of funds and shortage of activists available at that time prevented long term planning. The thought was the GPV would make as big an impact as it could for as long as it could and the operations were undertaken in one six month block at a time.

The Board was, and is still, driven by thoughts matching those expressed by Margaret Mead:¹

“Never doubt that a small group of thoughtful committed citizens can change the world; indeed, it's the only thing that ever has.”

Further, the Board members share believes that govern its work. The Board believes that:

- A group of people working together, even those without access to much political or industrial power, can stimulate change for the common good. Taking collective and coordinated action is something many of today’s grandparent activists have employed in the past.
- In order to improve circumstances for our individual grandchildren we need to improve them for all grandchildren. The community cannot prosper as a whole if gains for some grandchildren are made at the expense of others.
- All children in Australia should be considered as equals. Our purpose is not to protect the rights of Australian children as such but of all children on our lands.



¹ Margaret Mead (December 16, 1901 – November 15, 1978) was an American cultural anthropologist who featured frequently as an author and speaker in the mass media during the 1960s and 1970s!

Early in its history GPV recognised that it is not possible to achieve lasting improvements in the lives of children by working alone. Most of what was required necessitated changes to government policy and practice so partnerships with other organisations were crucial. The partnerships formed have been crafted in response to the needs of children and families but they would not work on the strength of a shared purpose alone. Relationships with key people in organisations other than GPV have been vital. Many issues addressed by GPV required quick action, such as letters to politicians, shot off within days. It is a credit to the power of the relationships GPV enjoys that this can often be done not by GPV alone, but by its partner organisations as well. Personal trust and shared commitment makes this quick action possible.

GPV membership has expanded in unexpected ways. Never would the Board members at the first meeting have envisaged that the organisation would form other organisations; in the case of Grandparents Australia, within a very short time after GPV was formed. Even more unbelievable would have been the thought that GPV might form an international organisation as it has with the Kinship International Network (KIN).

If the growth in structures and membership has been unexpected. So too is the growth in the scope of issues and activities that GPV has initiated or in which it has participated. Across its local, state, national and international levels of operation GPV has:

- Travelled to four countries, all states and territories of Australia and to fifty one local government areas within Victoria. When the Board first devised its outreach program the plan was to visit each local government area in Victoria. At the time this was thought to be over ambitious, but worth attempting. Each of these visits has centred on conversations with grandparents and all have resulted in much deeper understanding of issues confronting families.
- Conducted twenty three campaigns: seven that are ongoing and will probably never end, three that were lengthy but ended when results were realised and thirteen that were snapshot campaigns, designed to highlight a contemporary injustice.
- Delivered an ambitious publications program. The publication program has developed, printed and distributed (sometimes around the world) an array of documents: the reports of fourteen surveys, 50 editions of *The Grandparent* newsletter, 104 editions of *The Kinship Carer* newsletter, 26 occasional research papers, 21 press releases and 5 submissions to government enquires.

Further, the publications program has delivered books arising from projects conducted. Chief amongst these are the booklet written to assist grandparents to take action to identify and prevent problem gambling and *The Kinship Carer Handbook for Victoria*. Both these publications were distributed across the state.

It is not possible to list all the detailed issues addressed by GPV. However, it is possible to mention some of the main ones: childcare, education, kinship care, poverty, mental health, and child abuse.

This book provides an overview of all that GPV has achieved since 2001. However, the final page layout some of its priorities for the future, whether it be a further fourteen years or not.

Overview of structures

GPV has formed and provides the secretariat for three organisations; Grandparents Australia, Kinship Carers Victoria and the Kinship International Network. The purposes and workloads of these organisations are interrelated and each one was formed in response to emerging needs and growing capacity of GPV.

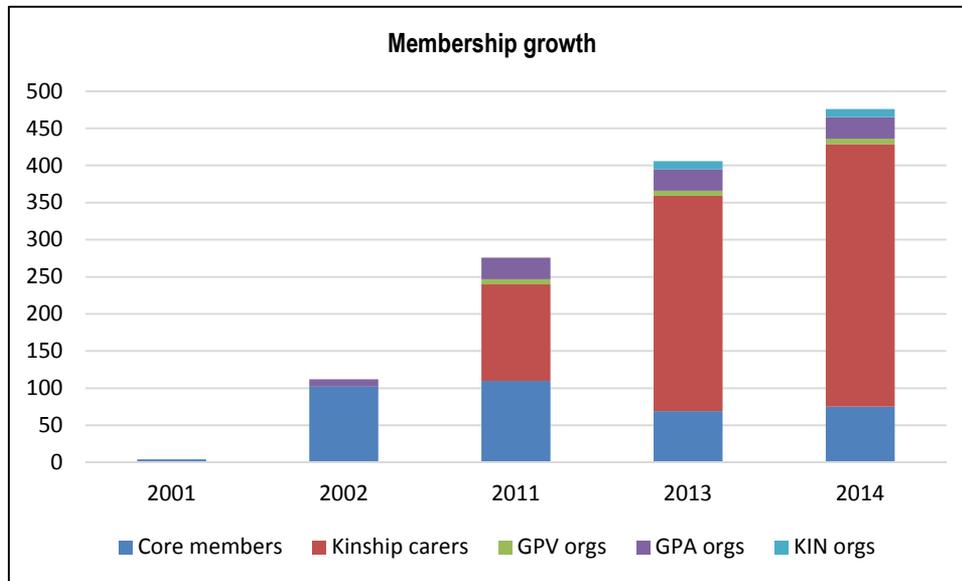
GPV has also joined some organisations with priorities closely related to those of GPV.

- 2001 **Formed** Grandparents Victoria
- 2002 **Formed** Grandparents Australia
- 2003
- 2004 **Joined** Families Australia Board
- 2005
- 2006
- 2007
- 2008
- 2009
- 2010
- 2011 **Formed** Kinship Carers Victoria
- 2012 **Joined** Mental Health for Youth and their Families
- 2013 **Formed** Kinship International Network
Joined International Play Association
- 2014 **Joined** PLAN Australia
Joined Play Australia
Joined National Council of Women (Vic)



Overview of members

From humble beginnings, with only four core members before the first meeting in 2001, GPV has flourished. By 2002, GPV had attracted over 100 individual members, and with the registration of GPA was beginning to attract member organisations from interstate (fifteen in total). A milestone was reached in 2011, when kinship care became a focus of the organisation. Since that point the number of kinship carers on the database has rapidly outpaced the number of general members. Another milestone was reached in 2013 when the formation of KIN introduced another 11 member organisations to the fold. At the time of writing, membership numbers continue to grow.



*What an interesting journey this
has been*

Helen Brown, Chairperson GPV

Overview of activities and issues

By the end of 2014 GPV was active at four geographical levels: local, state, national and international. A number of activities have been undertaken at each of these levels as outlined below. Each of these activities addressed issues specific to its area. However, some issues were addressed at all four levels and across different activities. Children’s play is a more recent example of an issue that has widespread relevance leading to discussions and action by local grandparents being matched by an international survey of grandparents and international action to promote better play amongst children.

A number of issues that have recurred over the years and have been subject of regular action by GPV; most particularly childcare provision and education. Some issues have been subject of multiple strategies with surveys conducted to determine the grandparent view, campaigns conducted to highlight the issues to decision makers and research projects conducted to stimulate deeper thinking and action amongst the grandparents. Children’s play, education, childcare and kinship care have received such comprehensive attention.

	Activities	Issues
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Visits to 51 Victorian local government areas – 28 Metro and 23 Regional ▪ 9 campaigns ▪ 7 State based projects ▪ 10 State based surveys ▪ 6 State based celebrations ▪ 4 State based Government submissions & Enquiries 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Problem Gambling ▪ Grandparents denied access to grandchildren ▪ Advocacy for kinship carers
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 10 Interstate visits – covering all states and territories ▪ 50 editions of The Grandparent periodical issued ▪ 26 occasional papers distributed ▪ 21 press releases distributed ▪ 13 campaigns ▪ 1 survey ▪ 7 Families week celebrations ▪ 1 Government submission/enquiries ▪ 77 newspaper articles in 33 different newspapers distributed across Australia ▪ 5 television and 57 radio interviews 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Education ▪ Grandparents raising grandchildren ▪ Childcare ▪ Mental health ▪ Child protection
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ 7 study tours to 4 countries ▪ 1 project ▪ 1 survey 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Poverty ▪ Respect the views of children and young people ▪ Children deprived access from environment ▪ Children loss of identity and nationality ▪ Empowerment of kinship carer families ▪ Play

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Gathering and planning

Over the years, GPV has organised a number of gatherings, sometimes informal while at other times more formal. The gatherings listed below are but a sample of them. The kinship support gatherings and the forums for grandparents denied access to their grandchildren are not all individually listed. Kinship care support groups meetings averaged 10 per year since 2009 and Denied Access Luncheons have been held annually since 2011

- 2001 First gathering to explore the feasibility of a grandparents association
- 2002 First GPV seminar to explore the role of grandparents in the 21st century - Frankston
- 2002 Echuca seminar
- 2002 Essendon seminar
- 2002 Ivanhoe seminar
- 2002 Second GPV seminar to explore the place of grandparents in family law
- 2002 Bendigo seminar
- 2002 First meeting of Moonee Valley grandparents group
- 2003 Echuca Grandparents Forum
- 2004 National Forum with Federal Minister for Family & Community Services Kay Patterson
- 2004 Third GPV seminar about the role of grandparents in the 21st century – Shepparton
- 2004 Fourth GPV seminar to explore the role of grandparents in the 21st century – Knox
- 2004 Fifth GPV seminar to explore the role of grandparents in the 21st century – Geelong
- 2006 GPV Members' forum at Hardiman's Hotel
- 2008 Forum at Moonee Valley City Council
- 2009 First Victorian Kinship Care State Conference
- 2009 First Seaford grandparents group luncheon
- 2009 Sixth GPV seminar to explore the role of grandparents in the 21st century - Chadstone
- 2010 Second Victorian Kinship Care State Conference
- 2011 Third Victorian Kinship Care State Conference
- 2011 Forum with Auditor General
- 2012 Seventh GPV seminar to explore the role of grandparents in the 21st century - Ringwood

“Grandparents are in large number and tighter they can have a say about the welfare of children and shape threew world they bequeath to all children

*Helen Brown,
Chairperson, GPV*

Foundation gatherings

On April 29th 2001, the first informal gathering to discuss the feasibility of forming a grandparent organisation was held at the home of Helen and Mal Brown. At this early stage it was not certain what the group would do, or how its activities were to be funded, but the idea was welcomed.

The gatherings listed below are those gatherings that drew grandparents together to speak amongst themselves about their views of the issues affecting their families. These gatherings established from the outset the range of issues GPV should address. Latter forums have re-affirmed and refined knowledge and understanding of what GPV should address into the future.

- 2001 First gathering to explore the feasibility of a grandparents association
- 2002 First GPV seminar - exploring the role of grandparents in the 21st century - Frankston
- 2002 Echuca seminar
- 2002 Essendon seminar
- 2002 Ivanhoe seminar
- 2002 GPV seminar to explore the place of grandparents in family law
- 2002 Bendigo seminar
- 2002 First meeting of Moonee Valley grandparents group
- 2003 Echuca Grandparents Forum
- 2004 National Forum with Federal Minister for Family & Community Services Kay Patterson (alchemist program)
- 2004 Third GPV seminar to explore the role of grandparents in the 21st century – Shepparton
- 2004 Fourth GPV seminar to explore the role of grandparents in the 21st century – Knox
- 2004 Fifth GPV seminar to explore the role of grandparents in the 21st century – Geelong

Anne McLeish remembers discussing the importance of grandparents as activists at Friends of Parents Victoria function in 1998:

"At the first meeting of the friends of Parents Victoria in the 1990s (see photograph) I remember talking about the need to encourage grandparents to be active defenders of public education. Even then we could see that the capacity of parents to be activists was reducing. At that time we were most concerned about public education being left without anyone to defend and support it.





In June 2001 Grandparents Victoria Inc. was registered, with the Department of Consumer Affairs in Victoria, as a community not for profit organisation.

“ Even as I was registering Grandparents Victoria I was not clear about how we would fund its work or exactly what it would do. It just felt like an idea whose time had come.

Anne McLeish, Director, GPV

Gathering at Parkville – a sense of great possibilities

For the first two years, GPV had a strong focus on consultation. These gathering were an attempt to learn what challenges grandparents and their families were facing in the 21st century. A series of more formal forums were also held across the state to get grandparents talking about what they saw as the most pressing issues. These seminars were popular and the themes they canvassed continue to be of interest to grandparents themselves and to the media. The early gatherings also ignited the sense of great possibility.



Gathering at Frankston – first sense of grandparents as mentors

At the gathering in Frankston, the grandmothers surprised GPV Board Members when, in response to a question asking what sort of training they would find useful in relation to their role as a grandparent, they said, 'we want much more information about "birth control"'. It turned out that many young girls were seeking advice about their sexual behaviour from their grandmothers and the grandmothers wanted to be able to give them the very best spiritual and technical advice. Guests enjoyed the Frankston Primary School Choir.



Gathering at Echuca – first GPV project

The Echuca seminar marked the start of a longer-running relationship with the Echuca community, particularly with the Echuca Police and the Echuca schools. In fact the first GPV project was conducted in Echuca, working with schools in the area to bridge relations between older people and youth in the community.



Gathering at Essendon - Grandparents Australia conceived



The seminar held in Essendon to talk about grandparents and the family law made GPV realise the extent to which many of the issues that GPV had already decided to address were affected by national family law, not just state family law and regulations.

It was at this forum that GPV made the decision to form Grandparents Australia. When Anne McLeish reported that GPV had very few funds, Justice Susan Morgan, who had spoken at the seminar, immediately dipped into her purse and handed over the \$60 required to register Grandparents Australia as a community organisation.



From 2006 onwards the gatherings had a tighter purpose. It was at these forums that issues selected from the foundations gatherings were given closer attention. Each of these gatherings has contributed to GPV's deep understanding of the issues faced and determined the next steps to be taken. Some early forums addressed what would become priority issues: gambling and kinship care

- 2006 GVP Members' forum at Hardiman's Hotel
- 2008 Forum at Moonee Valley City Council
- 2009 First Victorian Kinship Care State Conference
- 2009 First Seaford grandparents group luncheon
- 2009 Sixth GPV seminar to explore the role of grandparents in the 21st century - Chadstone
- 2010 Second Victorian Kinship Care State Conference
- 2011 Third Victorian Kinship Care State Conference
- 2011 Forum with Auditor General
- 2012 Seventh GPV seminar to explore the role of grandparents in the 21st century - Ringwood

Kinship care state conferences

The three state-wide conferences of kinship carers in which GPV has had a hand proved to be important forums for hearing what kinship carers had to say about their role. The fact that there has not been a conference held since 2011 can be attributed to some degree to the success of the structures put in place by the Victorian Government to support kinship carers. The establishment of local support groups has proven to be successful in providing carers with both practical and emotional support. State-wide conferences are not accessible to all carers – those who have young children in their care or live some distance from Melbourne are unable to attend. Therefore, training programs for carers delivered in regional centres have been popular. State-wide conferences held were:

- 2009 First Victorian Kinship Care State Conference
- 2010 Second Victorian Kinship Care State Conference
- 2011 Third Victorian Kinship Care State Conference

The first state-wide kinship care conference was held in the Moonee Valley Town Hall and was supported by the Moonee Valley City Council with a grant of \$10,000 made to GPV. The conference was a dynamic two days, with kinship carers, bureaucrats and community sector representatives all in attendance. The kinship carers proved their skill at raising issues and from this occasion strong bonds were formed.

The federal department of FACSIA representative spoke of that department's awareness about kinship care. Anne McLeish took the opportunity to present Allison from FACSIA with a copy of the GPV charter calling for the creation of a national children's commissioner – something grandparents had been campaigning for since 2002.

Pictured at the microphone is Gayle Burford, from the USA and who visited to speak about the value of whole of family conferences, including the grandparents, to make plans for the wellbeing of children removed from their parents. Ever since this speech grandparents have been asking for these conferences to happen in this country as they do in the USA and in New Zealand. In the picture showing the participants seated during conference proceedings the patchwork rug can be seen on the chair in the front row. This rug, made by the Essendon Quilt Society for GPV, was raffled at the conference with the proceeds sent to the ARK Foundation to support grandmothers raising grandchildren in Africa. The middle picture is of some interstate kinship carers who attended the conference.



Consultations with government authorities

GPV has periodically met with government authorities such as staff from the Auditor General's Department, the Ombudsman to talk about the support kinship carers receive and to highlight gaps between what is received and what they need. Shown in the photographs below are kinship carers outlining, to staff from the Auditor General's office, concerns about the services offered to them. These concerns were reflected in reports issued by the Auditor General's office



Local member's forums



Over the years there have been two ongoing grandparent discussion groups formed in the early stages. These groups were established by and for grandparents other than those raising their grandchildren with the purpose of providing a forum where more general issues could be talked about. Only one of these policy forums is ongoing. The Moonee Valley grandparents group met for a number of years but disbanded due to the ill health of some leading members of the group. The Seaford group of grandparents continues to meet three times per year.

Support Groups

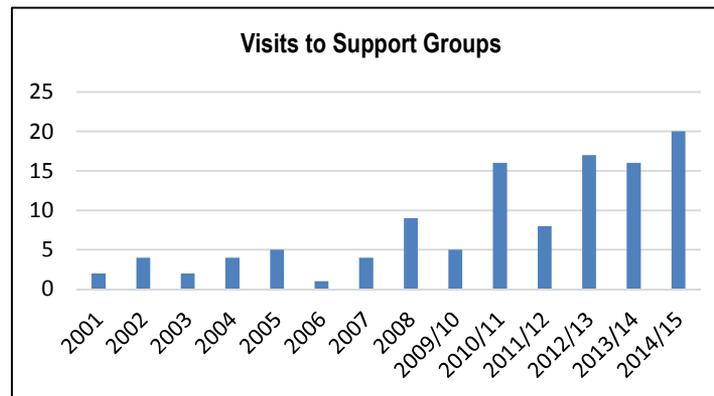


From almost the beginning of GPV, the issues faced by grandparents raising their grandchildren were noted. These grandparents (and other relatives, such as aunts and uncles) who take on the role of raising their grandchildren full time are often in need of advice and support.

GPV has assisted with the establishment of kinship care support groups. However, most support groups are now attached to local community organisations. GPV staff and Board members regularly visit groups across the state. In fact these visits are increasingly important. GPV attends 33 kinship care support groups across Victoria, at an average of 10 a year.

The photograph below shows the kinship care support group in Shepparton celebrating its 10th anniversary. Grandparents Victoria staff were pleased to attend this celebration given that they also attended the inaugural meeting of this group and has been in constant touch ever since. This group was probably the first local grandparents support group established in Victoria.

Increasing numbers of grandparents contact the GPV office explaining that they are being denied access to their grandchildren. Although GPV can offer little practical assistance to these grandparents, since 2011 it has hosted an annual luncheon allowing grandparents in this situation to meet. This issue was to prove to be difficult to come to terms with as the numbers of grandparents denied access to their grandchildren is rapidly rising and there are limited solutions available.



Board meetings

A call for nominations for Board members was issued in August 2001, and the first official meeting of the GPV Board held in early September at the Flametree Restaurant in Kensington. As only one nomination was received for each board position, no election was necessary. Members present were:

- Helen Brown – President
- Kerry Doquile – Vice President
- Anne McLeish – Director
- June Smith – Metropolitan Board member
- Ron Shaw – Manager

The issues discussed at the first meeting included:

- The responsibilities of Board members and how to attract more Board members – particularly males
- The expectations Board members had for the aims of Grandparents Victoria
- A report on the launch of Grandparents Victoria, including what to do with the leftover wine
- The state of the finances and the purchase of public liability insurance
- The priorities for GPVs work program for the 2001-2 financial year
- The employment of office staff
- The establishment of office accommodation

Board meetings were initially held in the evenings. The second meeting was also held at Flametree Restaurant but subsequent meetings were held at the GPV offices with individual Board members assigned the responsibility of providing refreshments, eg: “the next meeting will be held on [date] Helen Brown - Casserole.” Board meetings continue to be held in a variety of locations, including members’ homes, the GPV office, the Dousta Galla Hotel and Hardiman’s Hotel. However, in recent times they have always been located in Kensington due to easy train access and proximity to the office.

Life members

Many people have assisted GPV over the years. However, there is a core of people who reappear across the years. Prime amongst these are the Board members and Life members who took a leap of faith in joining GPV in the early days. The Board created the category of life membership in 2002. The life members’ commitment was particularly important and welcome because without their early injection of funds basic expenses attached to establishing the organisation would never have been met. The Life members are:

- 2002 - Helen and Mal Brown
Anne McLeish
John Mitchell
Susan and Francis Morgan
Christine and Trevor Wilson
- 2004 - Jack Lloyd

Board Members and staff

Over the years there have been twenty two members of the Board. The five members at the original Board meeting are still on the Board. These people are an important core but the Board has also been enriched by the membership of others: some who stay for extended periods others who have served for one year. Board members who did not re-stand for the Board after twelve months have been prevented from continuing due to ill health or the difficulties of travelling long distances meetings.

GPV Board members:

- Helen Brown 2001 – ongoing
- Kerry Doquile 2001 – ongoing
- Anne McLeish 2001 – ongoing
- June Smith 2001 – ongoing
- Angela Hogan 2001 – ongoing
- Sue Morgan 2002 – 2003
- Barry Leeds 2003 – 2004
- Jack Lloyd 2003 – 4 (moved interstate)
- Betty Arrowsmith 2003 – June 2004
- Phamie McCall 2003 – 2004
- John Gadd 2005 – 2011 (deceased)
- Kath Rowan 2006 – ongoing
- Sue Bebarfeld 2006 – 2007
- Fay Brassington 2010 – ongoing
- Helen Corcoran 2010 – ongoing
- Bev Gardiner 2011 – ongoing (short recess in 2013)
- Gedda Burke 2012 – ongoing
- Jack Wilks 2012 – 2013

KCV Committee members:

- Pat Stewart 2010 – 2011
- Loretta Roberts 2010 – 2012
- Dassana 2012 – 2013
- Lyn Harasymyn 2013

Consultants

- Amalie Tibbits – 2004
- Ebony McLeish – 2014
- Ian Stevens – 2004
- Juliette Williams – 2012 – 2013
- Keith Redmond – 2004

Volunteers

- Catriona Brown – 2002
- Cameron McLeish - 2002
- Sharni McLeish – 2005
- Zoe McLeish – 2012 – Ongoing
- Georgia Whyley – 2012 – Ongoing
- Siienna McLeish – 2012 – Ongoing
- Catriona Brown – 2003 – 2004
- Angus McLeish – 2014
- Brad McLeish – 2014
- Ali Grantham – 2014

Office Staff

- Anne McLeish – 2001 – Ongoing
- Catherine McLeish – 2005 – Ongoing
- Ron Shaw – 2001 – 2005
- Naomi Whyley – 2011 – Ongoing
- Megan Crowle – 2012 – Ongoing
- Lynn Robson – 2007 – 2013

Recurring issues

The minutes of the Board meetings confirm that there are six issues which the Board has addressed over successive years and which are likely to be addressed into the future.

1. **Education** has been a priority since March 2002
2. **Grandparents and other relatives raising their grandchildren** has been a priority since March 2002
3. **Childcare** has been the subject of an ongoing campaign since February 2003
4. **Problem gambling** was the subject of a campaign, and has been a priority since February 2007
5. **Grandparents denied access** has been receiving attention since November 2010
6. **Mental Health** has been a priority since February 2011

Lost Opportunities

The Board generated a number of ideas that were not pursued due to lack of funding being available. Each of these issues remains of interest and some have been taken up through work with other organisations. Of those lost opportunities three remain topical:

- **Mallee Research Station Children's Camps** – this was a proposal to use the decommissioned site of the Mallee research station as a camp for children in out-of-home care. The idea was to establish the camp for use of children and young people across the north of Victoria.
- **Playgroups for grandparents** – this proposal was for the establishment of a new network of play groups for grandparents and children. Any grandparents could take their grandchildren, not only those who are raising them full time. In the meantime organisations like Play Groups Victoria have taken this issue up and there are grandparents play groups emerging.
- **Grandparents as education aides** – this was a proposal to establish a trial program to train grandparents as education aides and place them in local schools. It was envisaged that grandparents would do an excellent job of hearing children read, assisting with extra-curricular classes such as cookery or even act as mentors to individual children.

Opportunities passed up

For various reasons, it has not been possible to pursue all of the ideas and opportunities presented to the Board. Sometimes this was due to a lack of finances and/or time. Sometimes it was because the idea did not correspond with the priorities of the organisation. It is interesting to note some of the issues that the Board was unable to support.

Elder Abuse – A request was made by another community organisation to pay attention to this issue on the basis of our membership being in the age group caught up by elder abuse. This was not agreed to by the GPV Board on the grounds that our priority of working with families and young children should stand. 10/6/2004

Grandparents Day – Twice the Board has decided not to participate in or promote Grandparents' Day, as is celebrated in two other states. The board feared commercialisation of such days and preferred to promote the importance of grandparenting as part of Families Week celebrations. 15/6/2011 & 18/4/2012

Creation of a grandparents' network in a metropolitan area – This proposal did not proceed because the local government area involved did not make the necessary funds available to support GPV's work in establishing this network. 8/8/2007

Annual General Meetings

AGMs have always been low key affairs. Even the first one, where Joan Kirner, former Premier of Victoria and member of GPV was the speaker and which was held at the Moonee valley racecourse, was collegiate with the formal procedures dealt with quickly.

- 2002 – Moonee Valley Racecourse
- 2003 – At home of Helen & Mal Brown Parkville
- 2004 – At home of Helen & Mal Brown Parkville
- 2005 – At home of Angela Hogan in Mornington
- 2006 – Hardiman's Hotel Kensington
- 2007 – Doutta Galla Hotel Kensington
- 2008 – Doutta Galla Hotel Kensington
- 2009 – Doutta Galla Hotel Kensington
- 2010 – Doutta Galla Hotel Kensington
- 2011 – Doutta Galla Hotel Kensington
- 2012 – Doutta Galla Hotel Kensington
- 2013 – Doutta Galla Hotel Kensington
- 2014 – Hardiman's Hotel Kensington

At the first AGM, Joan Kirner spoke of community action as an integral part of democracy and advised that GPV:

- Form partnerships because no one can secure long lasting change by themselves.
- Have a clear sense of purpose so that people can know exactly what you stand for
- Be willing to negotiate
- Use its your best strengths - such as grandparents ability to make connections across and within families
- Have a set of values which will act as a filter helping you decide what is important to do
- Maintain a sense of balance and proportion in our work and our personal lives

In 2006 GPV welcomed Bruce Billson, at that time the Federal Minister Assisting the Minister for Defence; Minister for Veterans' Affairs, to its AGM. Bruce was an early member of Grandparents Victoria and has maintained his support for our work a number of times over the years.

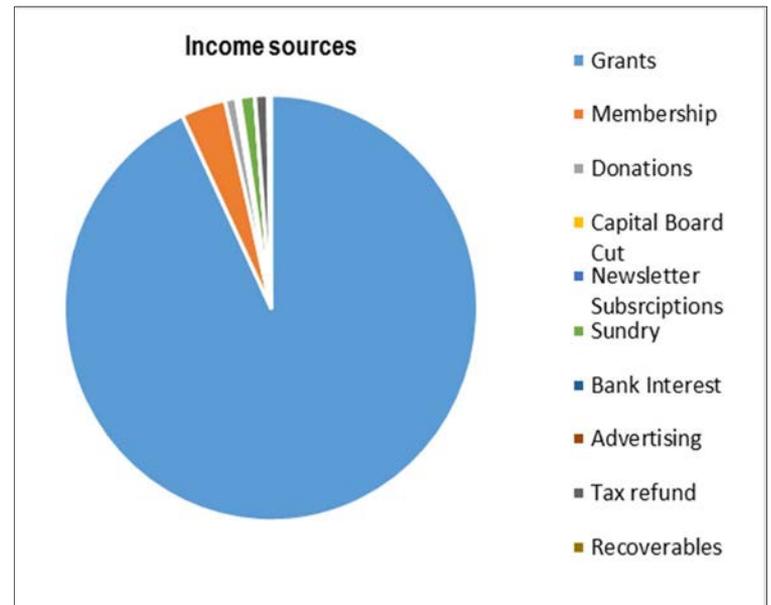
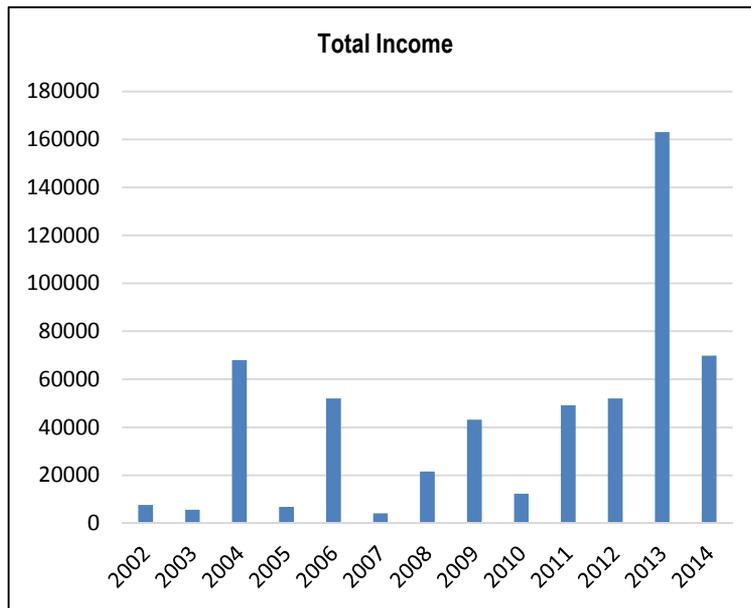


Securing funding

In the beginning GPV was entirely dependent on membership fees and small donations for its survival. Many times in the early years board minutes note that, "person X will be reimbursed for some expense as and when funds become available".

Research Grants

The income generated by membership fees and donations alone is still insufficient to keep GPV operating at its current level. Many of the projects undertaken by GPV are funded by external grants. In the 2003-2004 financial year, for example, most of GPV's income came in the form of a grant for the 'Grandparents as Alchemists' project. In 2005-2006, a large grant was received for GPV's gambling project, and in 2009 the bulk of GPV's funding was allocated to the Moonee Valley Carers' Network. It was not until the 2010-2011 financial year that GPV began to receive regular government funding to support the work of KCV, including a large grant in 2012-2013 to cover the costs of producing the Kinship Carer Handbook for Victoria.



Donations received



Both financial and in kind donations have been received by GPV over the years. While cash donations enable responsive decisions to be made the in kind support allows basic operations to proceed.

The first monetary donation received by GPV was a \$2000 grant from Australia Post. This was used to fund the design and production of the GPV information flyers and posters. Both were distributed by GPV activists across the state and are still in use today. The poster was successful in raising the awareness of people “off the beaten track”. While many people phoned to say they saw the poster in predictable locations such as their local library others saw them in more out of the way places such as the foyer at the church or the local bakery/take away shop window.

Assistance with printing has been provided by individuals such as Michael Taylor, who has often printed documents at times when large print runs are called for and when the GPV printer is working overtime. Judy Maddigan, at the time when she was the state MP for Essendon, provided assistance in the early days with printing and provision of meeting venues. In 2013 when GPV visited London to host the inaugural meeting of the Kinship International Network June Williams paid the costs of Juliette Williams to attend as part to the GPV team. It is worth noting that for all international trips those people who attend pay all their own expenses. Occasionally, depending on cash flow the Board may award these representatives a token honorarium to assist with their costs.

The family name of individuals and families who have made financial donations are:

- | | | | | | |
|-----------|---------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| ▪ Allan | ▪ Bode | ▪ Fraser | ▪ Kirner | ▪ Primmer | ▪ Shaw |
| ▪ Ashe | ▪ Bourke | ▪ Haig | ▪ Milgate | ▪ Renkin | ▪ Stewart |
| ▪ Barker | ▪ Brassington | ▪ Horbury | ▪ Mosley | ▪ Rogers | ▪ Stock |
| ▪ Beatson | ▪ Cameron | ▪ Kemp | ▪ Murray | ▪ Romanes | ▪ Wight |
| ▪ Begg | ▪ Cox | ▪ Kennelly | ▪ Pilli | ▪ Sajet | |

Organisations that have made cash and in kind donations are:

- | | |
|--|-----------------------------|
| ▪ The Council for Equal Opportunity and Employment | ▪ Skills Plus Peninsula |
| ▪ Malvern Legacy | ▪ Stesi Wine Bar Kensington |
| ▪ Peninsula Health Frankston | ▪ Reflex Paper |



Donations given



GPV donates funds to other organisations. An annual donation is made to Plan. This support is in recognition of Plan’s support of the inaugural meeting of the Kinship International Network (KIN) formed by GPV. The meeting was held, free of charge for use of their facilities in the London office. Further, Plan shares the GPV focus on children; working in 50 developing communities to transform the opportunities for children.

Annual donations are also made to the ARK Foundation whose mission is to improve the quality of life for Africa’s most vulnerable children and communities by assisting them to learn strategies and skills necessary for independence. Twice this donation has arisen from the raffle of a quilt made for GPV by the Essendon Quilting Society. In 2008 the foundation wrote a thankyou note outlining the achievements our donation assisted: 800 scholarships to secondary school students, 1500 sponsorships grandmothers and programs in 13 districts of Kenya, Uganda and Tanzania



Extending responsibilities

GPV has formed three organisations. While they have complimentary purposes the workload attached to providing the secretariat for them all is substantial.

- 2002 Grandparents Australia
- 2011 Kinship Carers' Victoria
- 2013 Kinship International Network

Grandparents Australia



The decision to start a national grandparent organisation was made at a GPV legal seminar in May 2002, when the extent to which federal family law impacted on the work GPV was undertaking was realised. As there were insufficient funds to cover the registration fees, Justice Susan Morgan donated the money on the spot.

The first interstate group to join Grandparents Australia was Grandparents Rearing Grandchildren (GGRG) in Western Australia. A meeting between GPV and Bruce Horigan from GGRG took place in January 2003 in the office of GPV (see picture to the right showing Anne McLeish from GPV, Bruce Horigan and his grandson).

A further face to face meeting of Grandparents Australia member organisations was held in Melbourne in October of that year. This meeting of delegates from other states was held at the Doutta Galla Hotel in Racecourse Road which was becoming the meeting venue of choice – close to the office and public transport. Since this first meeting face to face meeting with Grandparents Australia members have been few and far between – budget restrictions are prohibitive.

Kinship Carers' Victoria



In 2010 the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) awarded GPV the contract to establish a kinship carer network across Victoria and to act as the peak group representing the views of kinship carers. GPV was pleased to be able to extend its work to support kinship carers because it had been addressing issues confronting grandparents raising their grandchildren since 2004 when the issue was mentioned in the Grandparents Speak survey.

The terms of the contract with DHHS also require GPV/KCV to:

- Promote and develop broad community awareness and understanding of kinship care and the role of kinship carers
- Link kinship carers with other carers, support services, self-help groups and other relevant networks
- Provide resources and information to kinship carers
- Develop partnerships with organisations and stakeholders to best support kinship carers



Since 2010 the number of kinship carers has grown and the role of KCV has become more widely known. This means that work of KCV now takes up the majority of GPV time and effort. While the outcomes for KCV are reported throughout the body of text in this book it is worth listing some here:

- 400 kinship carers on the database are connected with up to date information about their role
- Distribution of 112 newsletters informing kinship carers of the latest policy changes and where to go for assistance and resources
- Visits to a minimum of four kinship care support groups across the state each year
- Biannual meetings with DHHS staff to discuss a broad range of kinship care issues
- Attendance to a range of government policy forums on kinship care
- Conduct of 4 longitudinal studies of kinship carers and 4 snapshot studies of issues relevant to kinship carers

Kinship International Network



On 2nd – 4th October 2013, thirteen delegates drawn from five countries met in London to discuss kinship care. The delegates in were drawn from Australia, Ireland, the Netherlands, the United Kingdom and the United States of America. The meeting was called to identify matters related to kinship care which should be addressed on an international basis. Delegates confirmed their commitment to several shared beliefs. First, that it is beneficial to children if, wherever possible, they are raised by a member of their extended family or friends, if their birth parents are unable to do so. Secondly, that agencies and governments across the world should work

to provide programs and policy that empower and enable kinship carers to fulfil their role. Delegates resolved to work together to promote and to align their work to the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. Delegates were particularly concerned about the poverty and disadvantage that kinship carer families often suffer (Articles 7, 8 & 28 of the Convention). However, they also recognised the need to:

- Establish systems supporting kinship care families to be better coordinated, particularly at a local level (Arts. 7, 8, 20)
- Empower and enable kinship care families to be heard in public discourses (Art. 12)
- Train advocates that assist kinship families to be better able to navigate the systems and find resources (Art 20)
- Develop programs that assist kinship care families to overcome isolation (Art. 20)

Delegates prioritised clauses from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child based on that impact on kinship care:

- Article 12 – Respect for the views of the child
- Article 20 – Children deprived of family environment
- Article 27 – Child's right to adequate standard of living
- Article 07 – Birth registration, name, nationality
- Article 08 – Preservation of identity

Delegates at the inaugural meeting of KIN were:

- Grandparents Australia - Anne McLeish, Naomi Whyley, Juliet Williams
- Families Australia - Brian Babbington
- Eigen Kracht Centrale (Netherlands) - Rob van Pagee
- Family Rights Group UK (UK)- Cathy Ashley
- Wokingham (UK) - Andy Couldrick
- Kinship Carer (UK) - Shelley James
- University of Bristol (UK) - Elaine Farmer
- University of Dublin (Ireland)- Valerie O'Brien
- The University of Vermont USA- Joan Vance and Gale Burford
- National Kinship Alliance (USA) - Cate Newbanks



Delegates from Australia, the USA, the UK and the Netherlands at the KIN meeting

Forming Partnerships & Liaisons

Partnerships with other organisations

Partnerships are formalised with the payment of membership fees or the exchange memorandums of understanding and are based on shared purposes with the partner organisation and the priorities of GPV/GPA at the time. GPV/GPA has become financial members of one international organisation, two nationally based organisations and one state base organisation.



International Play Association - The IPA has members in five continents and 40 countries. Its purpose is to protect, preserve and promote the child's right to play. IPA recognizes that the wellbeing of children is a global issue and that the opportunity to play is an important element of wellbeing.

GPV/GPA joined the IPA prior to attending the IPA conference in Istanbul in 2013. The GPV Board was impressed with the efforts IPA had put into establishing Article 31 on the child's right play of the UN Convention on the Right of the Child. The GPV board was determined to assist with the work of making governments around the world act in regard to Article 31.



Families Australia – FA has proved to be a staunch ally of grandparents, particularly those who are raising their grandchildren – kinship carers. Anne McLeish was elected to the Board in 2004 and has participated. With over 750 member organisations across Australia, Families Australia is a national, peak, not-for-profit organisation which strives to improve the wellbeing of all Australian families.



Play Australia – PA is committed to promoting the value of play, to increasing play opportunities for families and to creating awareness about the importance of safe and developmentally appropriate play. GPV works closely with this organisation as a means of also working with the IPA and supporting the Australian representative on the IPA Council.



Mental Health for Youth and their Families - MHYF works to advocate for sound policies for mental health, to seek and promote new knowledge, to reduce stigma. GPV joined in response to increasing comments from grandparents about the incidence of mental ill health amongst young people. GPV's close attention to mental health issues commenced at a national gathering called in 2011 by Families Australia in Canberra. Attendees included Helen Brown, Helen Corcoran, Bev Gibson and Anne McLeish from GPV/GPA.



GPV also works closely with, but is not a member of, three Victorian organisations. These organisations are all peak groups in Victoria and each of them shares a commitment to the wellbeing of children.



Parents Victoria – PV and Grandparents Victoria are long standing allies. Both organisations share a belief about the right of all children to have equitable access to education.



Play Victoria – Is a diverse group of people and organizations who share a common vision for the health and wellbeing of all young children (conception to school entry) across Victoria, GPV is supportive of the work of play Victoria to establish grandparents play groups for grandparents who are raising their grandchildren or providing childcare whilst parents work.



Centre for Excellence – The Centre works for vulnerable children, young people and families. The Centre provides sector training, facilitates & publishes research, advocates through campaigns & media relations, and sustains ongoing programs focusing on key areas of the State care system. These include the voice of children and young people, and specific programs for foster care, kinship care and residential care.

Liaison with politicians



In February 2002, GPV attended a meeting with Judy Maddigan (MLA for Essendon from 1996-2010). This was the first of many meetings held with state and federal politicians from across the political spectrum and was soon followed by a meeting in Bendigo with Ron Best (MLC for the North Western Province from 1988-2002 (The picture to the left shows Ron with Angela Hogan, Anne McLeish and John Mitchell from GPV). Two politicians, Joan Kirner and Bruce Billson, are long-standing financial members of GPV and have been in regular contact with the office to convey support and guidance. In February 2003, Mr Billson rose in Federal parliament to speak about his support for grandparents.

Tonight I would like to talk about my support for grandparents, particularly Grandparents Australia and the Grandparents Victoria division. The organisation arises from a concern that many grandparents are not heard and their needs are not considered in the policy development process. In quite a significant number of households, the grandparents are almost the Rock of Gibraltar. They are the consistent people, the ones who are always there and can be relied on by the grandkids to give them some stability, certainty and structure while the parents might have other issues to sort through...The grandparents are the ones you can count on-the ones you can rely on-but I feel, as does Grandparents Victoria, that in many areas the voices, needs and aspirations of grandparents are not properly embraced.

I would also like to support Grandparents Victoria in the idea that they should have a voice in broader areas of social policy and community life. Some grandparents feel that their time has passed and that decision-making has moved to the next generation. I do not believe that that is the case. Everyone has experiences to offer, insights to be shared and, hopefully, a contribution to make to better policies for the country, better communities and better neighbourhoods. So I encourage all grandparents to get behind organisations like Grandparents Victoria-under the Grandparents Australia umbrella-and make sure their voices are heard. I understand the contribution they have to make, the important role they play in many families throughout the Dunkley electorate and the broader community, and also that grandparents can be pretty young and sprightly characters with many vigorous, important years ahead. We want to make sure that we get that full contribution, not only in the work force but also in the broader development of our communities.

Speaking out

There would be little point to GPV if it did not make known the views of grandparents on contemporary issues confronting families. It is hoped that by both public and private persuasion, using well-grounded arguments, grandparents will have an increasing influence on the public discourse. GPV has articulated “grandparent opinion” through:

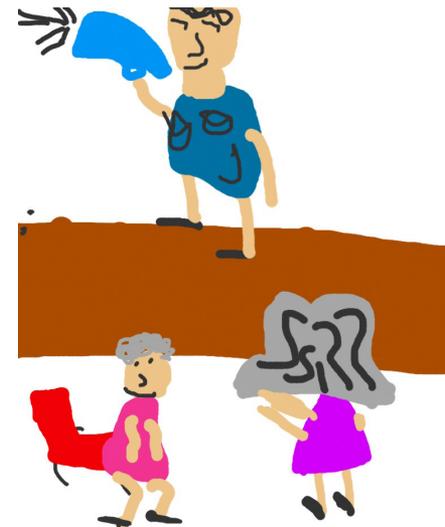
- 14 surveys of 1066 grandparents drawn from across Australia and New Zealand
- 50 editions of The Grandparent newsletter
- 5 submissions to state and federal government enquiries and 4 testimonies to enquiry panels
- 26 occasional papers distributed nationally
- 77 newspaper articles in 33 different newspapers distributed across Australia
- 21 press releases distributed to newspapers across Australia
- 5 television and 57 radio interviews

The avenues of communicating grandparent opinion listed above are ranked in order of the time and effort required to craft and deliver them. The time and effort put into both the surveys and the grandparent periodicals have been well spent with the surveys being crucial to gathering grandparent opinion and The Grandparent newsletter being crucial in raising the awareness of grandparents about issues that are confronting families. Across these avenues of communication there have been a number of recurring issues that are regularly addressed. Take for example, Kinship Care, Childcare and Grandparenting in the 21st Century.

Quote from Gedda Burke about the longitudinal surveys

“The benefits of the longitudinal study of kinship carers in Victoria are significant. The data gleaned from the study has been instrumental in determining where to effectively lobby for change and where to lobby to ensure the continuance, and indeed ramping up, of current services to kinship carers. Much of the Kinship Carers Handbook was driven by the issues exposed through the study. It has been invaluable in exposing the health concerns and the success stories. And importantly, gave and continues to give those who actually ‘walk the walk’ a voice and the feedback assured them that they were not alone.

Listen! a grandparent is talking.



Surveys

Surveys are an integral part of the work of GPV and much time and effort has been devoted to their conduct. They allow grandparents from across Victoria, and even further afield, to voice their opinions on a variety of issues. More importantly they provide the rich information upon which the work of GPV is based. The views of the grandparents surveyed in effect form the policy of the organisation.

Since 2003, GPV has conducted 13 substantive surveys: 1066 individual surveys conducted in one-on-one face-to-face conversation with grandparents, on the telephone or through email exchange. Some of these surveys have been quick with only a small number of grandparents being interviewed: the interview of 20 GPV members as part of the 2002 celebration of Families Week, for example. Others surveys have been extensive and complex. The one with the most respondents was the Grandparents Speak survey of 2004 which involved 286 grandparents from across Australia sharing their views on a wide range of issues affecting their families and the wider community

The first survey, *Grandparents Speak Their Minds (2003)*, was conducted with the assistance of a group of year 10 students from Echuca Secondary College. It became the fore-runner for *Grandparents Speak (2004)* a national survey that continues to provide the foundations for GPV's work program.

Foundation Surveys

- 2003 GPV - *Grandparents Speak Their Minds (Victoria)* –survey #1
- 2004 GPV- *Grandparents Speak (National)* – survey #2

Longitudinal Surveys

- 2011 KCV - *Kinship Care Longitudinal Study* -survey #4
- 2012 KCV -*Kinship Care Longitudinal Study*- survey #6
- 2013 KCV - *Kinship Care Longitudinal Study*- survey #8
- 2014 KCV - *Kinship Care Longitudinal Study*- survey #10

Snapshot Surveys

- 2010 GPV - *Members survey* – survey #3
- 2012 GPV- *Members survey – the role of Grandparents* – survey #7
- 2012 KCV - *Kinship Carers speak about Education* – survey #5
- 2013 KCV - *Kinship Carers speak about relationships with extended family* - survey #9
- 2014 GPV- *Grandparents Speak About Play* – survey #11
- 2014 KCV - *Kinship Carers speak about transition out of kinship care* – survey #12
- 2014 KCV -*The Value of Support Groups* –survey #13



The Foundation Survey - Grandparents Speak - 2004



The foundation survey was conducted with 286 grandparents from across Australia to ascertain the issues of most interest to them in regard to the well-being of their grandchildren.

It was funded by the Australian Scholarships Group and the report **Grandparents Speak**, outlining the results of the survey, was launched by Senator Kay Patterson ² at the Melbourne City Council on September 29th, 2004.

The media coverage of the launch and the survey report was extensive with television coverage of the launch and extensive radio and newspaper coverage in the days that followed. The media was interested in the idea of grandparents becoming organised and making public comment on issues other than those related to aged care or retirement was at this occasion that the Grandparents Australia logo made its first public appearance.

There was a general feeling held by grandparents that their role is undervalued; they often suffer financial hardship and inconvenience to fulfil it. It could well be asked: Do the pleasures outweigh the pressures?

Many grandparents raised concerns about the effects of drug and alcohol abuse, as well as family violence on their grandchildren. It was noted that in these situations, grandparents provide a sense of security for their grandchildren and that this is not widely valued.

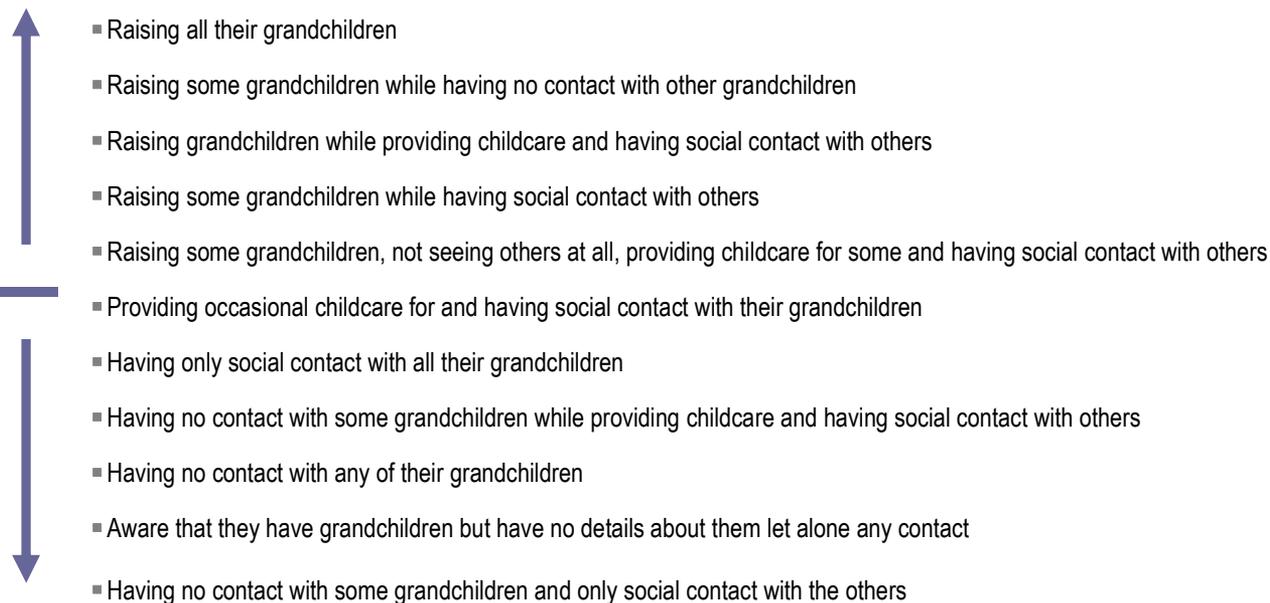


"The most stunning finding uncovered in the 2004 survey was the range of relationships grandparents have with their grandchildren. A continuum of relationships emerged with the grandparents at either extreme experiencing grief to some degree. The grandparents raising their grandchildren full-time also experienced hardship and their plight became something that GPV decided to try to alleviate.

June Smith, GPV Board member

² Senator Patterson retired from Cabinet in 2006 and from the Senate in June 2008.

The relationships documented in the Grandparents Speak 2004 report are represented below on a continuum. Many grandparents have such varied relationships with their grandchildren that they are represented on several points on the continuum at the one time: sometimes at one extreme point of the continuum as well as the other extreme point. Those grandparents who have only social contact with their grandchildren appeared to be the most financially and mentally stable, whilst those who have parental responsibility and those who are denied contact with their grandchildren are in need of support.



In 2004 grandparents saw education as a top priority and a possible salvation to many of the problems children encounter. They see a need for better funding and improved curriculum. Grandparents consider that two crucial elements in the education of their grandchildren are good teachers and a good school culture. Kindergarten education is applauded because it is child centred and usually involves a creative curriculum. Tertiary education is more removed, largely because as their grandchildren age they become more independent and thus responsible for their own lives. Their satisfaction with current education provision tends to decrease as the level of education increases.

Quite a few grandparents (about 40%) help pay for the current education costs of their grandchildren. This is not only the case for those who care totally for their grandchildren. It is also the case for non-custodial grandparents. A significant number also indicated they were saving towards future education of their grandchildren.

There is a clear message in the responses that grandparents see there is a need for values and life skills education to be included in the education provision of their grandchildren. Included in the elements of such a curriculum would be communication, respect and tolerance, good manners, honesty and trustworthiness, and a sense of community. It is of special interest that grandparents identified communication as the most crucial life skill. The mode of and frequency of communication between grandparents and grandchildren emerged as a major area of concern. Key aspects of communication included talking, listening, empathising and recognising the rights of others

Longitudinal Surveys

Since 2011, GPV has been conducting the KCV Longitudinal Study following 113 kinship care families. Each year, these carers are asked to reflect on their current circumstances and those of the children and young people in their care. The study tracks these changes and documents both the positive and negative changes along the way. KCV Longitudinal study #5 is due to be conducted in mid-2015 and it is expected to be continued up until 2021 when it will have run for ten years and at which time its feasibility will be reviewed.

There have been four reports of the longitudinal study issued with each highlighting the special themes that emerged.

Getting to know the carers and their families – 2011

This survey provided the baseline statistics essential for comparison in later years. Many details about the families' lives were collected, including: the number of children being raised, a general idea of why the children were being cared for by relatives, the general health and well-being of both carers and the children in their care.

It was noted that a high proportion of the carers surveyed were over 65, and that the youngest carer was 40. Although the majority of carers were only raising one child it was feared that this may be due to siblings being separated (e.g. one child with maternal grandparents and another with paternal grandparents). Mental health issues featured prominently, both in the reasons why care arrangements were necessary, and in concerns for the future well-being of the children.

Carers doing it tough – 2012

The second cycle of the longitudinal study provided grim reading. 40% of carers reported that their circumstances had deteriorated in the preceding twelve months, and a further 25% who had already been struggling reported no improvements. Many of those who reported improvements in their overall circumstances still reported struggling with physical and/or mental ill-health. Across the board, carers were asking for better access to services and financial support.

Contact with 16 carers was lost, and a number of carers indicated that one or more of the children in their care had either transitioned out of kinship care or moved into another arrangement. One positive in the report was the number of carers sharing that the children were beginning to settle down – doing better at school and in out of school activities, and receiving necessary counselling and medical treatment.

Things are looking up – and children are growing up – 2013

71% of respondents indicated that their living situation overall was generally positive, a large increase from previous surveys.

The number of carers with whom contact was lost in this third cycle increased to 24. Nine young people transitioned out of kinship care by turning 18. It was noted that the number of carers reporting that their young people were beginning driving lessons suggested that a large number of young people would again be transitioning before the next annual survey.

The positive news continues to increase – 2014

By this stage, only 58 of the original 113 families in the study were still caring for one or more relative children. As expected, 12 young people turned 18 during the previous year. This led to a separate snapshot survey *on Transition out of Kinship Care*. Several carers are now caring for new babies, born since the beginning of the study. Several carers who had previously been listed as 'lost contacts' re-connected with the study in 2014. The number of carers reporting that their overall circumstances were negative had reduced to 7.4%. Concerns have been raised about the rising age and failing health of carers, as well as their ability to continue to provide housing and financial support for children as the carers pass retirement age.

Snap Shot surveys

Snapshot surveys are quick questionnaires to determine grandparents' views on a specific issue. The first snap shot survey was not conducted until 2010 when it was deemed necessary to "touch base" with issues originally raised with members in the two foundation surveys conducted in the early years of the GPV. The issues had not changed at all so the general priorities of GPV held. Since the 2010 and 2012 membership surveys the number of people willing to be surveyed has broadened – particularly grandparent kinship carers. The snap shot surveys are:

1. 2010 GPV membership survey
2. 2012 GPV members survey – the role of Grandparents
3. 2012 Kinship Carers: Education for children on out-of-home care
4. 2013 Kinship Carers: Relationships with extended family
5. 2014 Grandparents Speak About Play
6. 2014 Kinship Carers: Transition out of Kinship Care
7. 2014 Kinship carers: The Value of Support Groups

"The snap shot surveys help us to understand grandparents' views on a variety of important issues. Sometimes these issues affect only kinship care families, but other issues are more universal. Education and childrens' well-being are issues that all grandparents felt very strongly about in the early days of GPV and still feel strongly about today.

Gedda Burke, GPV Board member

Grandparents Speak About Play 2014 –Let the children play



The survey, *Grandparents Speak About Play*, was a particularly important snapshot survey, as it was GPV's first international survey was conducted as an acknowledgement of the importance of Article 31 which GPV had supported from its earliest days. There are many clauses in the Convention directly related to the lives of children in the 21st century in both developed and undeveloped countries.

GPV was proud of the effort of many people in Australia that lead in February 2013 to the United Nations producing a 'General Comment' to support Article 31 which recognises the right of every child to rest, leisure, play, recreational activities and free and full participation in cultural and artistic life. The UN General Comment is designed to strengthen the application of the rights under Article 31 and to highlight the obligations of governments, the private sector, and for individuals working with children.

The play survey was completed by 100 grandparents between the ages of 49 and 90 drawn from all Australian states and from New Zealand, from rural, regional, and urban areas. Respondents lamented the fact that children are relying on electronic toys at the expense of imaginary play, and that they are spending less time outdoors. It became clear that grandparents believe that:

- Rising urban populations, increases in domestic violence, the commercialisation of play and increasing educational demands all affect the quality of play.
- Play is too often seen as the provision of structured activities when it is important to create time and space for children to engage in spontaneous play.
- Lack of play has a physical and psychological impact on children's health. Children need time to play actively and creatively, according to their own needs.

Megan Crowle, GPV staff member, says:

The play survey was a particularly large undertaking, but the interesting results made the effort worthwhile. It was fascinating to see the ways in which children's entertainment has changed across the generations – and the ways it has remained the same!



Grandparent carers speak about transition of young people out of Kinship Care 2014

Although this was a snap shot survey, it was conducted with the longitudinal study grandparents to determine what was happening with the young people who were now legally adults, and therefore no longer 'in kinship care'. The participants were asked to describe the current living and study or employment situations of the young adults for whom they used to care. It was found that over half are still living in the kinship family home. While several of the young people were unable to work or study due to physical or mental illness, the others were divided fairly evenly between working and/or studying. Almost 75% of the young people are still receiving some form of government support.

Grandparent carers speak about the value of support groups – 2014

Carers were asked to identify how highly they valued support groups. Access to information, social outings, listening to others, and sharing stories with sympathetic listeners were all ranked relatively evenly. Support Group Facilitators were asked to share what they thought would improve the situations of the carers. Issues raised included recognition of the unique situation of kinship care, the need for better funding for both groups and individuals, better access to respite care and access to legal aid.

Grandparent carers speak about the education for children in out of home care – 2012

Overall, carers reported that they were happy with the education being provided, although a number indicated that they would benefit from improved communication with the school. It was noted that it was sometimes difficult for carers to get the school to understand their particular circumstances, but that generally the schools were supportive. It was also noted that almost 50% of the children discussed in the study had some form of learning difficulty, but only 65% of those had access to special learning programs. Almost a third of carers said that they would appreciate a reduction in the costs associated with education.

Grandparent carers speak about the relationships with extended family – 2013

Relationships with extended family can be messy, but this survey revealed that for kinship care families, navigating these relationships can be a real minefield. While 75% of carers reported that they have contact with some members of the extended family and at least one of the child/ren's parents, nearly 50% have no contact with the paternal side of the family, while 25% have no contact with the maternal side. It was noted that in several cases the carers did not even know the identity of the child/ren's father/s. Some carers indicated that they were not able to have contact with extended family members due to DHS or police intervention that had resulted in AVOs or Intervention Orders.

In most cases, the quality of contact was rated between 'passive' and 'positive to the point of being practically helpful'. At the other end of the spectrum, several carers indicated that contact with their extended family was usually distressing. Almost 50% of carers surveyed indicated that they received no practical assistance from extended family, although children were often involved in occasions such as birthdays and Christmas, and received occasional gifts from extended family.

GPV Membership Survey – 2010

This survey was designed to assess the issues most affecting grandparents in 2010 and to ensure that GPV was continuing to meet the needs of their members. The issues in this survey matched the issues arising from the 2004 survey of grandparents.

Grandparents have a Families Week conversation – 2012

20 grandmothers were asked what types of support they offered their families.

- 100% of the respondents indicated that they offered moral support to their families.
- 80% offered varying amounts of financial support – from a bit of cash now and then to assisting with major purchases.
- Respondents indicated that babysitting, transport and household chores were generally only provided in times of emergency
- All the respondents were members of GPV. However, only 70% indicated that they regularly participated in campaigns and grandparent action to support families in the wider community.

Newsletters and Occasional papers

The Grandparent Newsletter



Newsletters are one of the key ways that GPV communicates with both members and non-members, providing information on a number of issues. The first edition of *The Grandparent*, in December 2001, was a four page black and white document, celebrating the launch of Grandparents Victoria and the early campaigns already in progress. The newsletters quickly grew in size and scope, at first covering only state-wide issues, but soon introducing national and even international issues. It was to be the way of letting the wider community know what GPV was doing and thinking. Since the early days GPV has employed additional strategies for making its work transparent: these include a website, occasional papers and survey reports.

In 2002 the Reflex paper company donated a quantity of paper to be used in the production of newsletters, but even so, the initial subscription price of \$10 per year turned out to be insufficient to cover the costs of producing and distributing the newsletter. In April 2004, the first colour edition of the newsletter was printed.

Newsletter articles almost always focus on the wellbeing of children, very few have been about the wellbeing of grandparents. Each article published looks at the issue from the perspective of grandparents and some articles urge them to action within their own families or beyond. For example, sometimes grandparents are asked to send messages to politicians. Increasingly since 2007 the newsletter has included articles from overseas. The main issues addressed in the newsletters are listed below in order of the attention they have received since 2001.

- Children's play
- Mental health for families
- Gambling
- East west link tollway in Victoria
- Drug addiction
- Budget
- Election campaigns
- Childcare
- Family violence and sexual abuse of children
- Grandparents raising grandchildren
- Legal issues attached to kinship care
- Immunisation of children
- Children's weight and diet
- Smacking children
- Cigarette smoking
- Homelessness

Jokes and quotes about grandparents from young children became a popular feature of *The Grandparent* and appear regularly. Since 2013, cartoons by GPV's in-house illustrators have appeared in *The Grandparent* newsletters. Resident illustrators are: Georgia Whyley, Sienna McLeish and Zoe McLeish, Angus McLeish and Ali Grantham.



Everybody should have a grandmother, especially if they don't have television, because they are the only grownups who like to spend time with us.



A grandfather is a man grandmother



Grandparents can take their teeth and gums out

Public Education—Justice Michael Kirby

Face it – you're addicted to TV

Grandparents saving for
grandchildren's university
fees

Grandparents - wise elders with much to offer families &
community

Grandparents as custodians of our culture and beliefs

Towards a national agenda on early childhood

The purpose of kindergarten – Germany
and France

Grandmothers across
cultures

A million African grandmothers raising children

A National agenda for early childhood

Child abuse and neglect is increasing

Federal cabinet to consider family
impact statements

The 3 R's – Rights, Responsibilities and
Respect

Changes to Family Law

Are older people really that nasty

On ageing and how to stay
young

Grandparenting in the 21st Century

Greeting from grandparents
in Africa

Have I told you lately that I love you

How Australians spend their time

Those who fail to plan, plan
to fail

The state of students social and emotional
health

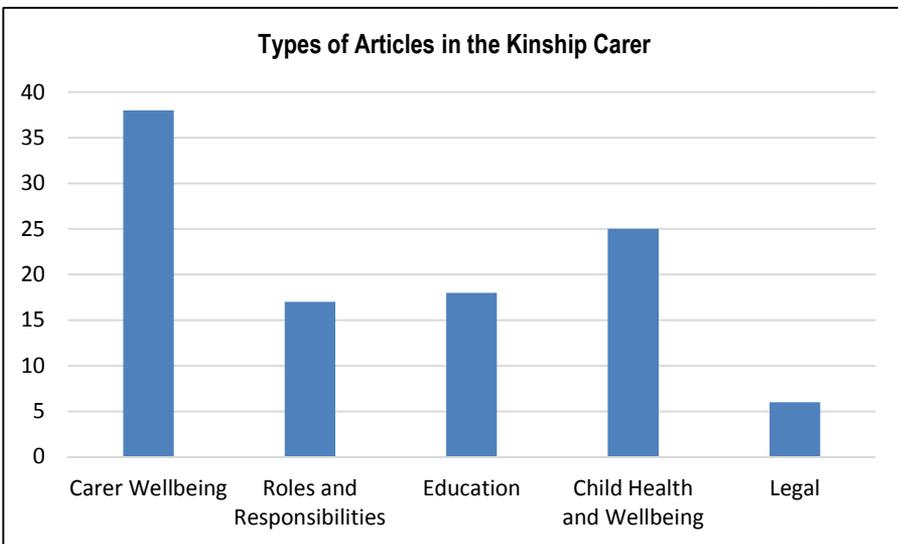


Between February 2011 and December 2014, 104 editions of The Kinship Carer newsletter were distributed across the state, and in some instances across the country. The feedback about the value of these newsletters is positive and they will likely be increased over time.

The kinship carer provide up to the minute information about policy and practice changes that will affect kinship care families. In recent years there have been many newsletters detailing cuts to payments and

changes to legislation. One newsletter that caused an avalanche of responses was the abolition of the schoolkids bonus – a national payment that assisted eligible families with the cost of getting children to school.

The newsletter also provide tips on aspects of child rearing such as how to handle children displaying signs of trauma and they also provide information about where to go for specialist support such as access to camps for children.



Occasional Papers



The occasional papers have been distributed nationally. Of these, 13 were generated by grandparents themselves, expressing their views about contemporary issues. Eight have been summaries of Families Australia papers addressing contemporary issues with which grandparents agree. The issues covered in occasional papers usually aligned with the current campaigns being run by GPV. Gambling and Childcare were frequently covered, as were issues related to the protection of children and out-of-home care.

Grandparent generated and published papers

2002	Grandparents and the law
2004	Childcare – a national crisis
2004	Grandparents Speak summary report
2006	Grandparents speak about Early childhood
2008	Grandparents against substance abuse
2008	Grandparents Shaping the community
2008	Grandparents and the family law act 2006 amendments
2008	Grandparents views on gambling
2010	Grandparents call for a national commissioner for children
2010	Vic. reform agenda for out-of-home care
2011	Exploring the future of children and family
2004 & 2008	The UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Papers summarized from papers published by Families Australia

2007	Quality in childcare
2007	Grandparenting present and future
2008	Support for carers
2008	Paid maternity, paternity and parental leave
2008	A national child protection framework
2008	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people
2008	Balancing work and family
2010	Support for grandparents and kinship carers

Papers published by others and distributed by GPV

2004	Problem gambling and young people	Council of Gambler's Help Services
2005	Out in the cold	Relationships Australia
2006	The truth about gambling in Victoria	Gambler's Help
2006	Grandparents and family law - radio transcript	Radio National
2006	Separate selves tribal ties	Richard Eckersley

Submissions and testimonies

GPV has made a total of five personal appearances to government enquiries or cabinet meetings. Most of these appearances have arisen from submitting submissions to these enquiries.

- 2007 Victorian cabinet – regional meeting
- 2008 Victorian Gambling Enquiry
- 2011 Vulnerable Children’s Enquiry – Victoria
- 2014 East-West Tollway Proposal Hearings
- 2014 Australian Parliamentary Enquiry into Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

Two enquiries are considered by the GPV Board to be of paramount importance: The Vulnerable Children’s Enquiry and the Australian Parliamentary Enquiry into Grandparents Raising Grandchildren.

The Victorian Vulnerable Children’s Enquiry

This enquiry, commenced in January 2011 was designed to investigate Victoria’s child protection system and improve the protection of vulnerable young people in Victoria. The joint submission presented by Grandparents Victoria and Kinship Carers Victoria was one of 225 from across the state. Anne McLeish was also a member of the reference group for this enquiry, and attended many meetings during this period. GPV’s recommendations stressed the need for accurate and inclusive data collection, programs to prevent drug and alcohol addiction, and better training for case workers. GPV recommendations were that:

- The Australian Bureau of Statistics and Centrelink be responsible for collecting and collating data about kinship care families in a way that can be used to support carers at a national and state level.
- Longitudinal studies be conducted to determine the complexities of kinship care and its advantages/disadvantages to carers and the children.
- The National standards for kinship care be promoted and Australia’s performance against these benchmarks be reported on.
- The enquiry commend to the Victoria government the need to develop programs designed to discourage young people from drug and alcohol abuse.
- The Protecting Victoria’s Vulnerable Children Inquiry endorse suggestions for improving family conferencing within court procedures and urges the conduct of a trial program of home visits of a multi-disciplinary team of support personnel into homes of families at risk.
- The Protecting Victoria’s Vulnerable Children Inquiry suggest the establishment of an accredited training institute dedicated to the provision of training on all issues related to child protection and for all people working child protection – from judges to local case workers and including kinship carers. The institute should be empowered to accredit training provide by public and private providers and to set quality benchmarks for training.
- The Protecting Victoria’s Vulnerable Children Inquiry suggests that DHS work with Kinship Carers Victoria (KCV) to review the level of financial support committed to KCV in 2012/13.
- The Protecting Victoria’s Vulnerable Children Inquiry suggest the need for programs to improve education outcomes for children in out-of-home care and to assist them to develop the social skills and confidence they often lack.

The Australian Parliamentary Enquiry into Grandparents Raising Grandchildren

GPV was pleased to learn that kinship care was going to be the subject of a parliamentary enquiry to investigate the circumstances of and issues confronting grandparents who take on the primary responsibility for raising their grandchildren when parents are unable or unwilling to do so, through a formal or informal care arrangement. A written submission to the committee was presented jointly under the names of Grandparents Australia, Grandparents Victoria and Kinship Carers Victoria. GPV also encouraged and assisted individual carers to write to the enquiry, detailing their own experiences.

On June 10th 2014, Grandparents Australia testified in person before members of the committee. Anne McLeish, Gedda Burke, Helen Brown, and Pam and Terry Cox all spoke in support of the recommendations made in the written submission. All of the GPV recommendations, except one, were addressed in the Senate's final report. GPV recommendations *taken up* in:

----one only of the Senate enquiry recommendations:

- A new policy framework describing grandparent kinship care as a form of extended family care
- An Australian Carers Card be designed and awarded to carers that are raising children 24/7
- An individual learning plan for children in care

----two of the senate enquiry recommendations:

- An inquiry to evaluate factors taken into account when deciding to reunify children with parents
- A national network of playgroups/support groups for children in kinship care
- The national standards for out- of -home care to include standards for kinship carers

----three of the senate enquiry recommendations:

- Collection of national data about kinship carers and sharing it between relevant agencies
- Early intervention in mental ill health

----four of the senate enquiry recommendation:

- A national "Grandparent Kinship Carer" payment scheme for eligible carers
- A national network of grandparent kinship carer support groups

Victorian Cabinet – Regional Meetings

Grandparents' views on a wide range of issues affecting families were put to members of the Victorian Cabinet. The issues raised were drawn from the 2004 Grandparents Speak survey with an emphasis on education provision.

Victorian Gambling Enquiry

GPV testified that companies conducting poker machine businesses were too favourably treated in the contracts made with government. Under the terms of these arrangements companies were meant to return a set percentage of their profit to the community in the form of community development. Of particular concern was that the definition of what constituted community development. GPV also felt that the amount of money returned to the community was insufficient, and the length of the contracts too long.

Victorian East-West Link Tollway Enquiry

GPV appeared at the government enquiry examining community views about the proposed tollway. GPVs objections was that the cost of the tollway for present and future generations was too high. Firstly there was the huge financial cost, and the burden of debt that would extend well into the future. Secondly, there was the loss of extensive areas of Royal Park. Running parallel to this campaign was the GPV play campaign, part of which was urging the safeguard of more green spaces in the state.

Media Messages

Some important issues have been marked by media events to promote better public awareness of the organisation and the issues it faces.

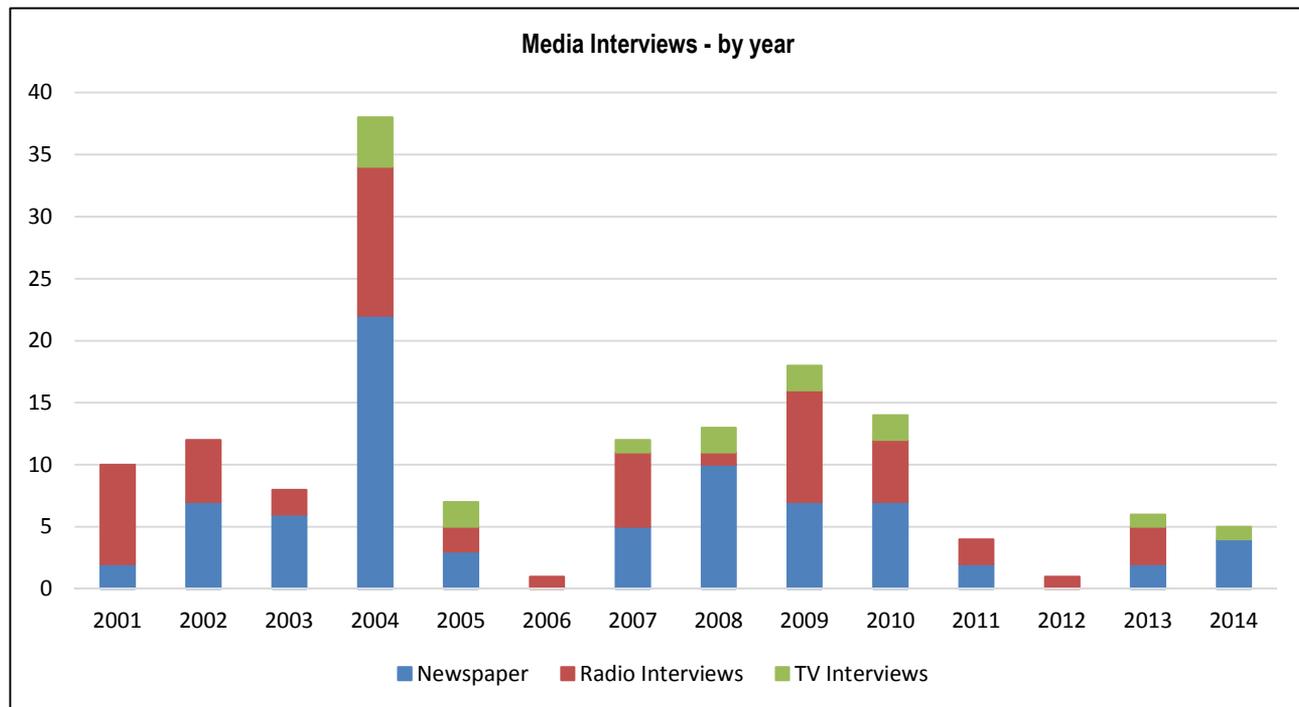


The first newspaper article appeared in a Mildura newspaper and highlighted the launch of GPV in Mildura. The article spoke about the role of GPV in bridging the gap between older people and young people with an emphasis on promoting the development of broad education and life skills in young people. Pictured in the photograph that accompanies the article are Elwyn Rogers and Dorothy Horbury with two of Dorothy's young granddaughters.

2004 represented the peak of GPV's media exposure, as great interest was shown by both print and broadcast media in the Grandparents Speak Survey and the Grandparents as Alchemists Project. No issues since have brought GPV so much intense media attention.

The earliest media releases were about the formation of GPV. However, it was not long before key issues began to emerge, and media releases about kinship care, childcare, aged care, and gambling were being distributed to a range of media outlets including radio, TV and newspapers. Media releases issued included:

- 2002 Grandparents Unite
 - Grandparents learn about the Family Law
 - Kelvin Thomson and Grandparents start planning the future for the grandchildren of Wills
 - Grandparents across Australia Unite
- 2003 Linking the Generations to Shape the Future (Grandparents Unite)
 - Open letter to the Age re Kinship Care
 - Open letter to the public re kinship care
 - Grandparents from across Australia gather in our local community for the first time
 - Grandparents in the Shepparton Area Unite
- 2004 Grandparents Speak their Minds – and their Hearts
 - Grandparents acknowledge swift government action
- 2008 Gambling press release
- 2009 State wide conference for kinship carers a first - to be held in Moonee Valley LGA
- 2010 National grandparents groups oppose closures of NSW kinship carer support services
 - Local residents call for aged care reform
 - All Grandparents Welcome Labour's Support For Grandparents Raising Grandchildren
- 2011 Grandparent activist appointed to children's roundtable
- 2012 The report of the Protecting Victoria Children Inquiry is welcomed by kinship carers
 - At Last – A National Children's Commissioner!!
 - Grandparents Victoria is to celebrate National Families Week 2012
- 2013 Governor's reception for kinship carers



2004 was a busy year for GPV in the media, with both the Grandparents Speak survey and the Grandparents as Alchemists seminars gaining significant media attention. Kinship care and problem gambling also featured heavily in that year.

Newspaper articles

GPV has been featured in 77 articles across 33 publications ranging from local newspapers through to state-wide and national publications. In the early years, many of the newspaper articles featuring GPV were promoting the fledgling organisation and encouraging new membership, as well as promoting some of the issues raised in surveys such as Grandparents Speak. In more recent years, GPV has been asked to comment on issues such as kinship care and grandparents denied access.

Television and radio programs

The GPV diaries do not list all of the television and radio programs that have featured GPV. At a conservative estimate, there have been 15 television interviews on 5 different networks, and 57 radio interviews on 6 different networks. Many of these interviews have had national exposure. GPV has been asked to provide comment on the many more radio programs over the years, however, as these were often telephone interviews conducted at short notice, they were not recorded for posterity.

Fay Brassington, GPV Board member, recalls:

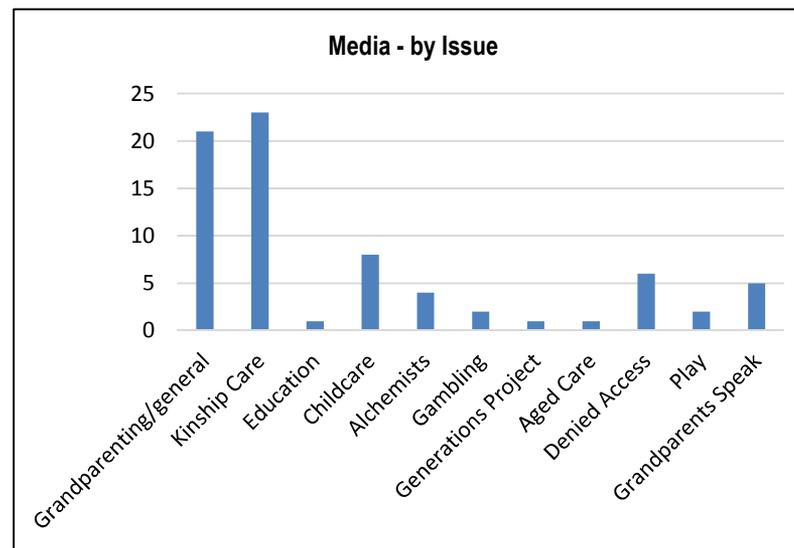
“ A not so fond memory was when The Age came to interview me and my daughter about the differences in childcare and parenting. I made a side comment about not having dummies in her day. To behold this comment ended up being the main feature of the article, much to my disappointment. I have not done an interview with the press since.

Fay had spat the dummy!!

Issues addressed in the media

GPV is sometimes approached to comment on issues that are important to grandparents. Along with general grandparenting issues, kinship care has been by far the most talked about topic in GPV media interviews. Some hot topics, such as the Grandparents as Alchemists project, the Grandparents Speak survey and the Grandparents across the Generations project had only their allotted 15 minutes of fame, while issues such as problem gambling, grandparents denied access to their grandchildren, and grandparents providing childcare recur every few years.

Year	Issues Covered
2001	2 Mildura GPV Launch
2002	7 GPV (4), Education (1), Childcare (1), Kinship Care (1)
2003	6 GPV (3), Denied Access (2), Kinship Care (1)
2004	22 GPV (3), Grandparents Speak (5), Alchemists (4), Kinship Care (4), Gambling (2), Childcare (1), Grandparenting (1)
2005	3 GPV (1), Childcare (1), Kinship Care (1)
2006	0 Nil
2007	5 Childcare (3), Denied Access (1), Grandparenting (1)
2008	10 Kinship Care (3), Denied Access (2), Grandparenting (2), Childcare (1), Gambling (1), Generations Project (1),
2009	7 Grandparenting (3), Kinship Care (3), Childcare (1)
2010	7 GPV (1), Kinship Care (5), Aged Care (1)
2011	2 Kinship Care (1), Denied Access (1)
2012	0 Nil
2013	2 Play (1)
2014	4 Kinship Care (4)



Travelling

Travel to other locations has been an important part of GPV's work because as it strives to make connections with the wider community groups and to meet with as many grandparents from different walks of life as is possible. GPV must continually be exposed to a full range of views and first hand knowledge of the changes in families and the support they need. In all its travels GPV finds grandparents playing increasingly significant and unconventional roles in their families.

GPV Board members and staff between them have visited

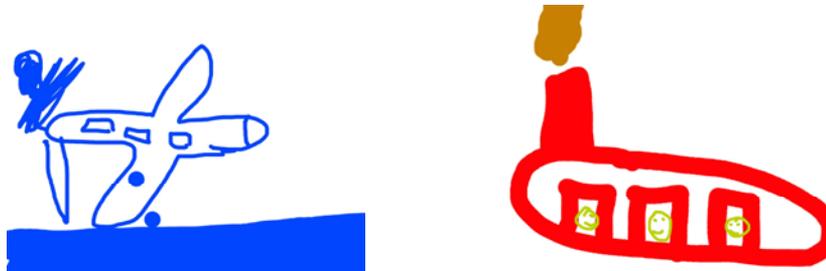
- 51 Victorian local government areas (LGAs) have been visited: 28 metropolitan and 23 regional.
- 10 Interstate visits have been conducted, encompassing all 8 Australian states and territories.
- 7 International visits have been made to 4 different countries.

The capacity to travel is limited by budget constraints. GPV is fortunate to have Board members whose commitment leads them to fund their own travel to any international trips made in the name of the organisation. Their commitment has proven worthwhile and has resulted in changes being made to the GPV work. Long standing connections with other people and organisations have been galvanised into close working partnerships. Three international excursions stand out as having had substantive outcomes:

The 2012 visit to the USA and the time spent with kinship carer groups there lead to GPV forming of the Kinship International Network (KIN). It also led to the development and publication in Australia and the USA of a series of pamphlets designed to strengthen the skills/understanding carers might need to maintain effective support groups and to act as effective representatives when dealing with bureaucrats and government officials.

The 2013 visit to London was called specifically to test with delegates from other countries, the feasibility of forming an international network of organisations interested in promoting the place of kinship care and securing better support. The meeting resulted in the issue of the KIN declaration on kinship care explained elsewhere in this book.

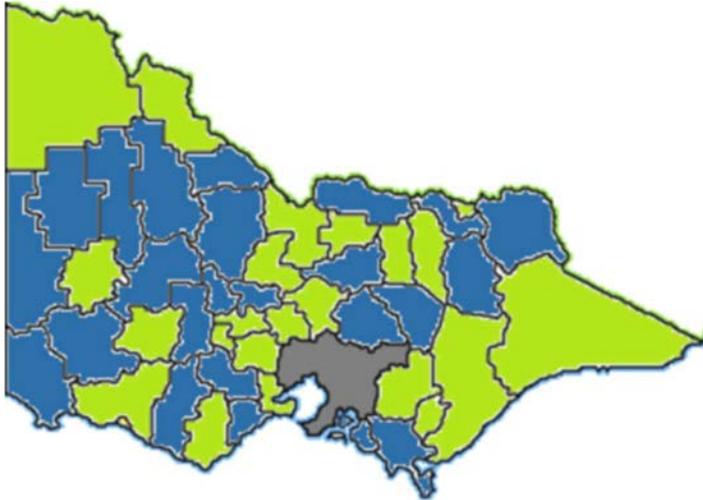
The 2014 visit to the conference of the International Play Association held in Turkey consolidated GPV's understanding of the importance of play in the development of children. For some time before attending this conference GPV had known that this issue was of increasing interest to grandparents. The conference was important because it exposed the GPV delegates to more sophisticated understanding about just how play affects children's wellbeing and what we need to do to preserve the best elements of good play. After this conference play has become an issue of top priority for GPV.



Grandparents on the move by train and plane

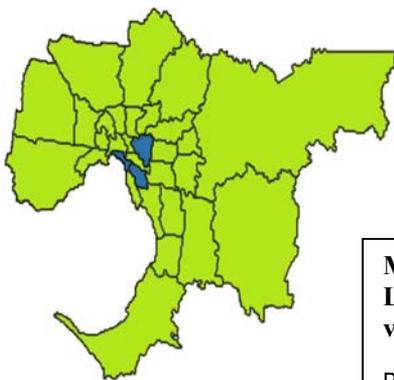
Travelling throughout Victoria

GPV staff regularly visit meetings of grandparents across the state. Most of these meetings have involved speaking with and listening to kinship carers, most of whom are grandparents. However, some meetings are more general in purpose with people increasingly interested in talking about the role of grandparents in the 21st century. GPV also speaks with community groups, such as Rotary and Lions, wherever possible. It is important to inform them about the changes in families. It is noteworthy that in these wider community groups GPV finds many grandparents – often playing significant and unconventional roles in their families



LGA's visited - Rural and Provincial Victoria (green)

Ararat	Horsham
Ballarat	Latrobe
Baw Baw	Macedon Ranges
Benalla	Mildura
Campaspe	Mitchell
Colac-Otway	Moorabool
East Gippsland	Moyne
Greater Bendigo	Swan Hill
Greater Geelong	Wangaratta
Greater Shepparton	Warnambool
Hepburn	Wellington
	Wodonga



Metropolitan Local

Metropolitan LGAs not yet visited (grey)

Boroondara
Glen Eira
Port Phillip

Metropolitan LGAs visited – *green+

Banyule	Bayside
Brimbank	Cardinia
Casey	Darebin
Frankston	Greater Dandenong
Hobsons Bay	Hume
Kingston	Knox
Manningham	Maribyrnong
Maroondah	Melbourne
Melton	Monash
Moonee Valley	Moreland
Mornington Peninsula	Nillumbik
Stonnington	Whitehorse
Whittlesea	Wyndham
Yarra	Yarra Ranges

Travelling across Australia

The first three interstate trips made were to connect with grandparents raising their grandchildren. At the time these trips were made the organisation had very little money but the importance of this issue was already clear and required urgent attention. Since that initial burst of travel there have been trips in subsequent also related to kinship care. However, there have also been trips related to other issues such as overall child wellbeing and play.

- 2003 – Queensland – Support groups – Gold Coast
- 2003 – Western Australia – Meeting with WA Centrelink Grandparent Advisor
- 2004 – Western Australia – Grandparents raising grandchildren seminar
- 2006 – New South Wales – Early Childhood Conference – Sydney
- 2007 – Australian Capital Territory – Families Australia Child Wellbeing Conference – Canberra
- 2009 – South Australia – Visits to kinship care groups
- 2012 – Tasmania – Visits to grandparent support groups
- 2012 – Queensland – Meetings with Play Groups Australia – Brisbane
- 2014 – Tasmania – Carers' Conference



As a Board member of Families Australia, Anne Mcleish has also travelled to other states on Families Australia business. Notable amongst these trips was the 2008 trip to the Northern Territory where an Aboriginal homeland just outside of Darwin was visited: leaving an indelible impression and leading to thoughts and actions related to the support of an Aboriginal grandparents raising their grandchildren.

Travelling around the World

The fact that GPV has an international profile has been a surprise development, certainly this was never envisaged in the early days. Impetus to the international work was stimulated by attendance to the conference held in the USA in 2007. This conference brought together people from both developed and developing countries to talk about kinship care. The range of views was broad with some of them very challenging. For example the definition of family was a sticking point with GPV believing that blended families are indeed families – and that if you act and think like family then you should be considered as one. Alternatively some at the conference thought that only heterosexual stable families blessed in the church should be considered as families and that only this arrangement was good for children. GPV held its own in the discussion at this conference.

- 2006 – **New Zealand – Auckland**
- 2007 – **USA – New York**
- 2009 – **New Zealand**
- 2012 – **USA – Vermont**
- 2013 – **England – London**
- 2014 – **New Zealand – Auckland**
- 2014 – **Turkey – Istanbul**
-



Each international trip contributed to GPV understanding of issues and stimulated ideas about what could be achieved in Victoria and even Australia

Five visits related to kinship care:

1. 2006 – New Zealand – Auckland - Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Foundation and Gamblers Help, New Zealand
2. 2009 – New Zealand – Auckland - Grandparents raising Grandchildren conference
3. 2007 – USA – New York - National Committee of Grandparents for Grandchildren's Rights
4. 2012 – USA – Vermont - Kinship Caring Forum for Kinship Carers and professionals working in the area of Kinship support
5. 2013 – England – London - Formation by GPV of the Kinship Care International Network KIN

From the first trip to New Zealand GPV learned that governments can indeed take creative and determined action to redress the worst effects of gambling. It takes resources and but more importantly it takes the will to do something. Likewise the kinship carers in New Zealand showed determination in their shared efforts to improve the support for their work. All the trips to New Zealand proved what could be achieved through collective action. The kinship carers there have long been organised as a national movement.

The trip to New York sharpened GPV focus with many discussions held that made the original GPV decisions to appreciate all family formations were appropriate. Just as GPV works for all children so it works for all families. One of the side benefits of attending this conference was brief meeting with staff at the United Nations who deal with family and social issues.

The trip to Vermont to the USA forged bonds with people there and led eventually to the meeting in London in 2014 to form KIN. The co-operation between the legal fraternity and the carers was unique in Vermont and set a standard of partnership that should be duplicated. All the kinship carers spoken with had high praise for the courts system. There were a number of reasons why this is so which GPV keeps revisiting and prompting.

Two visits related to play

6. 2014 – New Zealand – Auckland - GPV generated focus group on play, Auckland
7. 2014 – Turkey – Istanbul – GPV attendance to the 19th International Play Association World Conference

During this trip to New Zealand a focus group of grandparents who spoke about children's play was held. The conversation was no different to similar ones held in Australia – no surprise but pleasing to see.

The trip to Turkey was made to attend the conference of the International Play Association. Angela Hogan and Anne McLeish both thought this particular conference was exceptional. Certainly the experience of stimulated new commitment to continued work on play projects for some time into the future.



Campaigning



Campaigns address issues of significance to all grandchildren across current and future generations. Despite the frustration of slow, if any, progress GPV remains committed to keeping the ongoing campaigns active, such is the importance of these issues to the life chances of all grandchildren now and into the future. Campaigns are designed with the intention of raising public awareness as well as influencing government policy and practice. Twenty three campaigns have been waged;

- 7 ongoing campaigns, some of which are still running after twelve years
- 3 lengthy campaigns that concluded after some years
- 13 snapshot campaigns conducted for weeks or months only

The campaigns called for:

- 2002 – ongoing better access to a full education for all children and young people (Campaign #1)
- 2003 – ongoing provision of more accessible and affordable childcare (Campaign #2)
- 2003 – ongoing recognition of the disadvantages to grandchildren denied access to grandparents (Campaign #3)
- 2004 – 2010 Centrelink to appoint specialist grandparents advisors across Australia (Campaign #4)
- 2004 – ongoing government to be more responsible in the governance of gambling (Campaign #5)
- 2004 – 2012 the appointment of a Children’s Commissioner for Australia (Campaign #6)
- 2004 grandparent related questions in the ABS Census (Campaign #7)
- 2010 Changes to the Victorian child protection legislation – Victorian politicians (Campaign #8)
- 2010 recognition of the importance of kinship care - letter to all federal politicians (Campaign #9)
- 2010 grandparents’ issues to be addressed in the 2010 federal election (Campaign #10)
- 2010 grandparents’ issues to be addressed in the 2010 Victorian State Election campaign (Campaign #11)
- 2010 – 2012 improvements to the quality of Aged Care (Campaign #12)
- 2012 – ongoing early intervention in Mental Health of children and young people (Campaign #13)
- 2012 improvements to Children’s Court procedures in Victoria (Campaign #14)
- 2013 improvements to Children’s Court procedures in Victoria (Campaign #15)
- 2013 – 2015 a stop to the East-West Link Tollway Proposal (Campaign #16)
- 2013 grandparents’ issues to be addressed in the 2013 federal election campaign (Campaign #17)
- 2013 – ongoing better promotion of the value of child centred outdoor play (Campaign #18)
- 2014 – ongoing the immediate withdrawal of children from Australian Refugee Camps (Campaign #19)
- 2014 grandparents’ issues to be addressed in the 2014 Victorian state election campaign (Campaign #20)
- 2014 – 2015 the retention of the Schoolkids Bonus (Federal Budget) (Campaign #21)
- 2014 amendments to the Federal budget – letter to all politicians (Campaign #22)
- 2014 support for the report of the Senate enquiry into Grandparents raising Grandchildren (Campaign #23)

Never-ending campaigns

It is expected that the campaigns listed below will be fought for some time into the future. Despite widespread action to secure improvements in government policy related to these issues little progress has been made and families continue to be disadvantaged by inequitable or inefficient policy and practice in these areas. GPV will continue to call for:

- 2002 – Better access to a full Education for all children and young people (Campaign #1)
- 2003 – Provision of more accessible and affordable childcare (Campaign #2)
- 2003 – Recognition of the disadvantages to grandchildren denied access to grandparents (Campaign #3)
- 2004 - Governments to be more responsible in the governance of gambling (Campaign #5)
- 2012 - Early intervention in Mental Health of children and young people (Campaign #13)
- 2013 – Better promotion of the value of child centred outdoor play (Campaign #18)
- 2014 – Immediate withdrawal of children from Australian Refugee Camps (Campaign #19)

Childcare



The issues of childcare generated widespread concern across so many grandparents that it was decided to commence this campaign with a postcard that enables grandparents to easily inform politicians of their views. These postcards were forwarded to the Prime Minister John Howard in 2003 with the following message:

I believe childcare is an issue of national as well as family significance. I expect all relevant decision makers to do whatever they can to make it more affordable for families, to continually improve the quality of childcare and to ensure that those who work in childcare are well remunerated and well qualified for the task of looking after the nation's future – our grandchildren. I also believe it is urgent that we focus on child and respite care needs of grandparents who are minding or raising their grandchildren.

The campaign to get children out of refugee camps



The fact that Australia locked children into refugee centres was particularly galling to large number of grandparents. Many felt ashamed and that, as an Australian citizen, they needed to make clear to the Australian government that this was not to be done in their name. This issue tested GPVs views about representing the interests of all Australian children or all children in Australia. If GPV only represented Australian children it could be argued that the organisation did not need to bother about the plight of children in detention centres. However, the GPV Board decided that the organisation should work to improve conditions for ALL children. A postcard to allow grandparents to easily make their point, was employed for a second time. The message on the postcard was:

Dear Prime Minister,

I implore you to do whatever needs to be done to remove refugee children from all detention arrangements within the responsibility of Australia; be they onshore or off-shore. Further, I implore you to ensure that no more children enter such arrangements in the future. Holding children in captivity is unconscionable and aberrations in the long history of Australia's determination to give people a "fair go". I find it unsettling to think of myself as a citizen of a country that would subject children to unnecessarily harsh treatment in the name of all Australian citizens. Sending this postcard is an important step for me: it distances me from agreeing with Australian action which I disagree.



The Let the Children Play campaign



The play campaign is a positive one in that GPV is not battling an immediate crisis. It is designed to highlight the value of free, child centred and outdoor play for children and was undertaken in preparation for GPV attendance to the International Play Association conference in Istanbul in 2013. The survey of grandparents in Australia confirmed that the issues raised at this conference were also concerns in Australia.

The central driver of this campaign is the fact that in 2013 the United Nations nominated children's play as an issue of international significance by making Article 31 (Child's right to play) of the Convention subject of a UN General Comment. A General Comment is a statement promoting specific areas of human rights. Article 31 on the child's right to play states;

GPV has identified play ambassadors, drawn from fifteen local government areas across the state to assist with its play campaign.

- Ararat Allan Dickson, Lorraine Dickson and Toni Hobson
- Ballarat Toni Schultz
- Bass Coast Esther Harris
- Bendigo Angela Hogan and Anne Gibson
- Cardinia Chris Potter
- Casey Gayle Keys and Rhonda Collins
- City Glen Eira Kath Rowan
- Dandenong Carmel Webster
- Frankston City Bev Gibson, Helen Corcoran, Jack Donnelly, Karen Morton, Patricia Smith and Trish Smith
- Geelong Pam Reid
- Hobsons Bay June Smith
- Melbourne Anne McLeish and Helen Brown
- Moonee Valley Fay Brassington
- Mornington Peninsula Betsy Kennedy and Mary Radisich
- Pyrenees Cheryl Wakenham

Children denied access to grandparents

The campaign to raise awareness about grandparents denied access to grandchildren is not aimed at politicians and other decision makers so much as it is aimed at the general community. It is hoped that more thought will be put in by families before they deny grandchildren the love and support of grandparents. The grief being suffered by many grandparents in these situations is palpable, which is another reason GPV feels obliged to maintain efforts to highlight it.

Lengthy campaigns

These campaigns are all completed but were conducted over a period of a year or so. The campaign to have a national children's commissioner appointed took over five years of talking and writing letters to politicians, and the aged care campaign ran for barely a year and involved writing letters to federal politicians about the poor level of care for people in some aged care facilities. The aged care campaign was not the sort of issue GPV would normally address. Usually the work of GPV has to be tightly aligned to the needs of families and not older people. However, in this case it was thought prudent to say something about this issue because of the numbers of grandparents who are undertaking the heavy and sometime conflicting role of supporting the older people in their extended families as well as the younger ones. The Centrelink campaign came to an end because the Australian government appointed the advisers GPV and others were calling for. The call for a national children's commissioner ended because the Australian government created this position and appointed a person to it, and the East-West tollway campaign ceased when the new Victorian government abandoned the proposal.

In chronological order the lengthy campaigns have been calls for:

- 2004 – 2010 Centrelink to appoint specialist grandparents advisors across Australia (**Campaign #4**)
- 2004 – 2012 The appointment of a Children's' Commissioner for Australia (**Campaign #6**)
- 2010 – 2012 Improvements to the quality of Aged Care (**Campaign #12**)
- 2013 – 2015 A stop the East-West Link Tollway Proposal (**Campaign #17**)

Centrelink grandparents' advisors

Dealing with Centrelink can be a trying experience for anybody, but for grandparents coming to terms with the shock of suddenly finding themselves parents again, it can be a real nightmare. The position of grandparents raising grandchildren is a unique one, and many Centrelink staff members are not familiar with the payments kinship carers may be eligible for.

Anne McLeish remembers her first visit to kinship care support groups in Western Australia:

“ It was during this visit that I met the Centrelink grandparent advisor who specialised in addressing the claims of kinship carers. After meeting the advisor I put to the GPV Board the idea of seeking the appointment of a more such advisors across the country. Thus commenced one of our earliest and most productive campaigns.

Grandparents say no to East West Tollway proposal



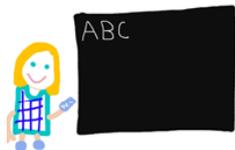
The East West link campaign was controversial in minds of a few GPV members who supported the proposed construction of the tollway. However, on weighing up all argument for and against the GPV board took a decision to campaign against it because the short term and dubious claims about the benefits of the tollway were far outweighed by the certain detrimental effects on grandchildren in the future that would be saddled with crippling public debt and a massive loss of parkland. This campaign involved letter writing, pamphlet dropping and testifying to the government hearings established to hear community views about the proposal. This issue became one of the issues about which the state election was fought.

When testifying to the panel examining community attitudes to the East West link proposal GPV raised for the first time its expectation that the Victorian Government cabinet should consider the impact on families of all major policy changes and programs, across all portfolio areas. GPV developed a checklist to assist in the determination of the possible impacts of the East West Link proposal on families.

GPV believes that proceeding through this exercise will assist to develop a summative view of the outcomes of the activity being considered and will also assist to identify detailed benefits and disadvantages and that there are areas of impact that must all be considered:

- **Economic impacts on family wellbeing**, including any added financial burdens this places on families to access their community activities
 - **Impact on Work /family balance**, including the capacity to the family to provide volunteer support for community activities or to access support from other volunteers
 - **Impact on children’s health, development and general wellbeing**, including the impact on the child’s safety and their capacity to navigate their community safely
 - **Impact on the participation of the family in community activities**, including the ability of the family to access activities and to generally get around their community
 - **Specific impacts on families coping with disadvantage**, including families where children/parents have disabilities, carer families, and low income families
- **The impact on the community resulting from the realisation of these impacts on families.** It is certain that the impacts on families will come full circle and have an impact back on the community as a whole. It is important to anticipate the effects of this cycle of impact.

Education



This campaign is an ongoing series of calls asking for the costs of education from kindergarten to tertiary education to be reduced. Of particular concern is the cost to families under financial pressure. Recent withdrawals of the Education Maintenance Allowance in Victoria and the Schoolkids Bonus at a national level have exacerbated this problem. GPV also calls for the provision of abroad general education that addresses life skills as well as work related skills. Many grandparents believe that education is much more like training rather than education.

Gambling

This issue has caused GPV much anguish and bewilderment about the proper purposes of government policy. GPV recognises the right of individuals to gamble but does not accept the right of government to craft policy that gives gambling agencies concessions that are too generous, particularly when gambling contributes to costly and socially disturbing outcomes.

Mental Health

This campaign is in relatively early stages but will receive more attention over time. The inadequate provision of health care services is becoming increasingly problematic. Demands made in the campaign to promote better provision of mental health services are that:

- more needs to be done to improve service integration across the mental health field
- there should be greater emphasis on early detection and prevention
- families should be utilised to build family mental health and wellbeing

Snapshot campaigns

From time to time issues emerge that require urgent responses. Most snapshot campaigns fit into this urgent response category and are usually stimulated by government actions of which GPV does not approve. Election campaigns are not so urgent but are nevertheless conducted with some sense of speed because there is limited time in which to have an impact. The snapshot campaigns called for

- 2004 grandparent related questions in the ABS Census (**Campaign #7**)
- 2010 grandparents' issues to be addressed in the 2010 Federal Election campaign (**Campaign #10**)
- 2010 grandparents' issues to be addressed in the 2010 Victorian State Election campaign (**Campaign #11**)
- 2010 changes to the Victorian child protection legislation – Victorian politicians (**Campaign #8**)
- 2010 recognition of the Importance of kinship care - letter to all Federal politicians (**Campaign #9**)
- 2012 improvements to Victorian Children's Court procedures – letter to the Department of Justice (Campaign #14)
- 2013 improvements to Victorian Children's Court procedures – letter to Victorian State politicians (Campaign #15)
- 2013 grandparents' issues to be addressed in the 2013 Federal Election campaign (**Campaign #16**)
- 2014 grandparents' issues to be addressed in the 2014 Victorian State Election campaign (**Campaign #20**)
- 2014 - 15 the retention of the Schoolkids Bonus (Federal Budget) (**Campaign #21**)
- 2014 amendments to the Federal budget – letter to all politicians (**Campaign #22**)
- 2014 support for the report of the Senate enquiry into grandparents raising grandchildren (**Campaign #23**)



GPV believes all children and young people have the right to their own legal representation in matters where their needs are in dispute. Moves to reduce the costs of running family courts must not be used to justify cuts to the representation of the most vulnerable in our community. This has already happened in Victoria and must not be allowed to spread. To argue that bureaucrats can fulfil the roles of legal experts in this matter is not acceptable. Children have as much right to the full protection of the law as any other citizen does.

In order to accommodate concerns about rising costs of courts GPV suggested the trial in Australia of a system being successfully applied in the USA. While visiting the USA in 2012 GPV had many conversations and with kinship carers and court officials about the *Guardians ad Litem* system used in many states there. These conversations revealed strong support from all for this program which sometimes uses trained volunteers and law students.

The *Guardian ad Litem*'s are appointed by the courts with the sole mission to advocate for the best interests of dependent children and to represent their interests in the courts. They investigate, attend to the child's emotional and legal needs, monitor the child's family, and seek to shield the child from the often bruising experience of a lawsuit. A guardian ad litem interacts with each case only for the duration of a legal action. Specialised and intensive training is mandated for Guardians ad litem, who are sometimes volunteers.



GPV believes that such a scheme would bring many benefits to Australian courts and to families and that a trial in Australia could be easily and cost effectively implemented.

Incidental protests

From time to time individual members of GPV have chosen to protest at budget cut backs affecting families. One protest march in 2013 grandparents and grandchildren marched together and for some grandchildren it was their first experience of community action. The grandparents were pleased to be part of their grandchildren's first venture in active democracy

Conducting Projects

GPV generated and managed projects are listed here in chronological order: Six of these projects have been based within Victoria. Four have been national projects conducted across the state of Australia.

- 2002-3 Echuca community development – young people and older people working together (Victorian Project)
- 2004-5 Grandparents as Alchemists (national project)
- 2005-Ongoing Grandparents Preventing Problem Gambling (Victorian Project)
- 2007-8 Grandparenting across the Generations (National project)
- 2008-10 Moonee Valley Carer's Network, including the YMCA Grandparents Project (Victorian project)
- 2012 the KIN pamphlets: *being an effective kinship care representative* and *running an effective support group*
- 2014 Kinship Carers' Manual (Victoria project)



Echuca community development – Young people and older people working together

In this case the student will be given a contract to work with Grandparents Australia to develop a data base of grandparents from the area, distribute surveys, conduct interviews, collates the surey results, write reports and give presentations about their findings. In cooperation with secondary school students from Echuca, local grandparents were interviewed about issues affecting their grandchildren. The project was part of the work to prepare young people for the world of work by giving them real work place experiences. It was hoped that as a result of this work the understandings between young people and older people in the community will increase and with it the mutual respect as well. The outcomes of the project were used to inform local decision makers about possible directions for the future and were published nationally.

Issues raised in this study included:

- drug use and family breakdown – including the first mention of grandparents being denied access to their grandchildren
- school class sizes, curriculum and funding
- childhood obesity and effects of over-exposure to electronic devices
- creation of safe play areas in communities

A number of these early themes have remained areas of priority for GPV since 2003. Particularly the issues of play, and grandparents denied access to grandchildren.

The students who worked on this project were:

- Antony Vagg
- Karli McCreddan
- Amanda Glover
- Ben Hackett



Grandparents as Community Alchemists



Grandparents as Alchemists was a two-day training program offered by GPV in association with the Australian Government Department of Family and Community Services. Its aim was to hone the skills of older people, and link them with local community programs that matched their interests. The intended outcome was for grandparents to assist in delivering such programs as hearing young children read, assisting single mothers and multiple birth families with day-to-day tasks, and mentoring at risk children who have no contact with other older people. The Federal MP for Dunkley, Bruce Billson, was the Patron of this project.



Cath Rowan, GPV Board member

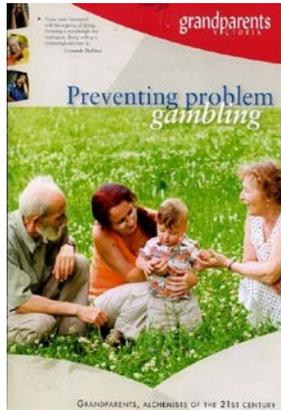
“The grandparents as Alchemists project trained grandparents in the skills required to foster better relationships within their families and the wider community. A number of seminars were delivered across the state. Bruce Billson, the federal MP for Dunkley attended one training session to present certificates to the graduate grandparents.”



Name	LGA	Status
Dolores Reid	Ballarat	Committed to volunteer work as organised through the Ongoing Ballarat group
Rene Robinson	Ballarat	Organised a grandparents group in Ballarat and undertook to develop a register of volunteer grandparents for Ballarat
June Waterhouse	Ballarat	Assisted with the development of a volunteers register and placement of the alchemists through BRACE
Betty Wilson	Ballarat	Committed to volunteer work as organised through the Ongoing Ballarat group
Dianne Russell	Ballarat	
Sonya Kenell	Ballarat	
Val McMaster	Ballarat	
Howard Ainsworth	Banyule	Opted to undertake a discussion session about self-esteem with youth
Catherine Rowan	Glen Eira	Arranged her own placement in a reading program at a primary school
June Smith	Hobsons Bay	Assisted with a play group arranged by Moonee Valley local government
Gwen Ballard	Melbourne	Assisted with a walking bus program for primary school children
Fay Brassington	Moonee Valley	
Anne McLeish	Moonee Valley	Was on a register of people who are willing to assist young mother in need e.g with Russian young mother who injured her hand and needed help.
Elisabeth Scheirich	Moonee Valley	Was delivering meals on wheels and working with children with disabilities through Moonee Valley city council

Pauline Tucker Helen, Turner Sandra Allender and Judy Semmens and Julie Begg did not commit to any particular project local government at the end of the training but did commit to finding a community project that matched their interests. Towards the end of the project one participant was forced to withdraw due to ill health, while another withdrew in order to return to full time work.

Grandparents Preventing Problem Gambling



Grandparents Victoria Inc. was funded through the Community Partnership Strategy to conduct the Grandparents Preventing Problem Gambling Project in 2005. This project, funded by the State Government, was designed to stimulate grandparents across Victoria to reflect on the effects of problem gambling and to take action to help control it.

In stage one of the project, GPV members held discussions in their homes. In stage two of the project the views of grandparents along with the results of research conducted locally and overseas were used to inform the contents of a booklet, launched in 2007.

The booklet covers the effects of problem gambling, identifying signs of problem gambling, strategies to decrease the risks of gambling in children and young people, and strategies to start conversations about problem gambling with family and friends.

Anne McLeish talks about the decision to campaign against problem gambling:

"The campaign to stop gambling in Victoria arose from the stories told by grandparents about the connection between drugs, gambling, child abuse and family dysfunction."

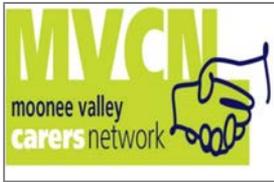
Grandparenting across the Generations



This research project, funded with the assistance of the Moonee Valley City Council, culminated in a booklet compiling the memories contributed by 35 grandparents from the Moonee Valley LGA. They discussed their relationships with their own grandparents, and how they differed from their relationships with their own grandchildren. Key differences noted included the amount of time spent baby-sitting grandchildren due to parents' extended working hours, and the extension of family visits to locations outside the home, such as restaurants and other public places. It was conducted by three students studying for a Diploma of Community Service – Lynn Robson, Dorothy Edwards and Betty Boland.



Moonee Valley Carers' Network



The Moonee Valley Carers Network was formed as a result of work completed in the Grandparenting Across the Generations project. The objectives of the project were, in relation to carers in the Moonee Valley area, to empower carers to respond to issues, to create and maintain partnerships between organisations concerned with kinship care, and to promote the issue of kinship care in the wider community. As part of this project, the local YMCA agreed to provide support and access to their programs for kinship families in the Moonee Valley area, and GPV agreed to promote this program to grandparents.

Grandparents Victoria and the YMCA joined forces to support grandparent carers. In February the YMCA and Grandparents Victoria, in conjunction with the Moonee Valley Carers Network, launched the YMCA grandparent carer's project. This project is a community based intervention which provides subsidised access to YMCA programs and services to grandparents raising grandchildren. The program has been introduced in the Moonee Valley local government area in Victoria with a view to implementation in other areas during 2010 and beyond. The program is offered alongside new support to kinship carers being offered by the Victorian government in 2010. Pictures above are: Ann Callanan from the Moonee Valley City Council, Anne McLeish from the Moonee Valley Carers Network, Ruth Champion from the Department of Human Services and Bob Nicholson from the YMCA.



Kinship Carer's Handbook

As part of the State Government's efforts to support kinship carers, GPV was funded to compile a manual for use by kinship carers in Victoria. It was intended to be a 'one-stop-shop' for carers, giving them all the information they would need in one location. It includes sections on:

- Looking after yourself
- Health and wellbeing
- Roles and responsibilities
- Cultural connections
- Legal matters
- Financial assistance
- Early childhood
- Education and learning
- Key terms and contacts



The finished work was a team effort, spearheaded by consultant Juliette Williams and was launched at the Melbourne Museum in 2014. It has been well received since, with 3 print runs at the time of writing, and over 8,000 hard copies distributed. In addition, a further 2,000 copies were distributed on CD ROM, and another 8,000 hard copies are expected to be printed in the near future. It has now been endorsed by two Victorian Ministers for Community Services.

The KIN pamphlets

Two pamphlets were written by GPV in co-operation with Vermont Kin as Parents, a kinship care support organisation based in Vermont USA. The pamphlets were distributed within Australia and Vermont providing advice on two themes: advocacy and offering support through support groups. Each pamphlet is based on basic understanding about how notions of participation through representation might serve kinship care.

Being an effective kinship carer advocate *Participation through representation*

The kinship care movement needs to be efficient and effective in the ways it works to achieve increased recognition, rights and support for kinship carers.

Having some kinship carers act as representatives, arguing the case for all kinship carers, is a proven way of ensuring that the general kinship carers' voice is heard.

This pamphlet provides ideas about how individuals could represent the needs and views of all kinship carers.



How to run an effective Kinship Carer Support Group *Power through support groups*

Support groups provide a solid foundation of support for kinship carers. They are an effective mechanism for exchanging information, providing emotional support and learning new strategies to deal with the unique challenges faced by kinship carers.

This pamphlet provides ideas about conducting an effective kinship carer support group.

Profile of an unsuccessful group



Profile of a successful group

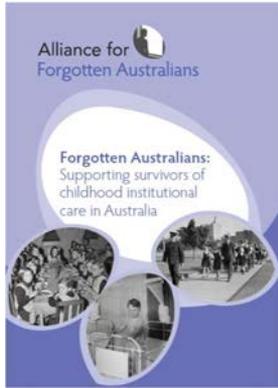


Vermont Kin as Parents

Other projects supported by GPV

GPV also supports projects conducted by other organisations. The support takes many forms but usually involves GPV offering feedback and attending committees which govern the projects. Sometimes GPV support involves connecting grandparents with the projects as participants. Some of those have been:

Alliance for Forgotten Australians



Chief amongst the Families Australia projects supported by GPV is the project to highlight the past experiences of children placed in institutional care in Australia.

Through support for the Alliance for Forgotten Australians GPV assists to promote the interests of the estimated 500,000 people who experienced institutional or other out-of-home care as children and young people in the last century in Australia, many of whom suffered physical, emotional and/or sexual abuse while in 'care'.

GPV is committed to the notion of children being cared for within their family, even extended family, as a first preference. The positive outcomes arising from kinship care would indicate the folly of not taking this option.

Celebrating

Since 2001, GPV has organised a total of 12 major celebrations. Most of these events have been organised by GPV alone. Those that have been organised in conjunction with other organisations are marked with an asterisk (*).

Most of these celebratory functions have been funded by GPV. Those events that have attracted external funding are marked with a (\$)

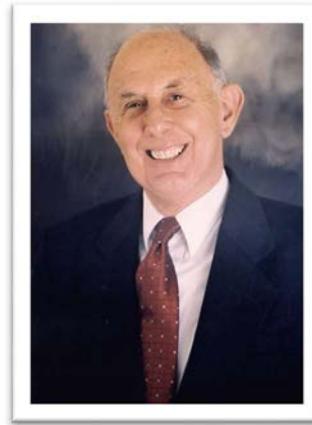
- 2001 Launch of GPV at Canterbury Stables, Kensington
- 2001 Launch of GPV in Mildura
- 2002 Celebration with a Mayoral Reception for GPV in Ballarat
- 2004 Launch of the Grandparents Speak report and grandparents seminar
- 2006 Launch of Early Childhood Statement – Families Week function #1
- 2008 Moonee Valley City Council forum – Families' Week function #2
- 2009 Rosebud grandparents' gathering – Families' Week function #3
- 2011 Families' Week luncheon, Doutta Galla – Families' Week function #4
- 2012 Seaford Families' Week Luncheon - Families' Week function #5 – followed by attendance to a Families' Week function at Ballarat on 19th May
- 2013 KCV Governor's Reception, Government House - Families' Week function #6
- 2013 KCV Families' Week Luncheon Heritage Hill Museum Dandenong - Families' Week function #7
- 2014 Launch of the Kinship Carers' Handbook for Victoria - Melbourne Museum
- 2014 KCV carers group, Shepparton – 10th anniversary
- 2014 Families Week Luncheon - Oakleigh Bowls Club – Families' Week function #8



The launch of Grandparents Victoria

GPV was launched in three settings with the main official launch held in Melbourne and subsequent launches held in Mildura and Ballarat.

The Melbourne launch held at the Canterbury Stables in Kensington was attended by 170 people. Apologies were also received from a further 20 people, including many members of the State Government. Governor John Landy presided over the official ceremonies, and then The Governor and Mrs Landy spent much time talking with the guests and the statement about the importance of grandparents.



The launch of the Grandparents Speak report and grandparents

This celebration was held in the Yarra Room at the Melbourne Town Hall and was attended by over seventy people. It was the first occasion when GPV made public its views on a range of issues affecting families. The report *Grandparents Speak* arose from GPV's first major survey of grandparents. (see survey section of this book).



Families' Week



INTERNATIONAL
DAY OF FAMILIES

In 1993, May 15th was declared by the United Nations to be the International Day of Families, in recognition of the importance the international community places on the family unit. Where possible, GPV attempts to hold their families' week functions on this date.

The first GPV Families' Week function was held in May 2006, and a further seven have been held since. No families' week functions were held by GPV in 2007 or 2010, but two events were staged in 2013.

- 2006 Launch of early childhood statement
- 2008 Grandparents luncheon at Moonee Valley City Council, Moonee Ponds
- 2009 Grandparents luncheon at Rosebud
- 2011 Luncheon at the Dousta Galla Hotel, Kensington
- 2012 Luncheon at the Seaford RSL, Seaford - followed by attendance to a Families' Week function at Ballarat
- 2013 Governors Reception for kinship carer grandparents at Government House, Melbourne
- 2013 Luncheon for kinship care grandparents at the Heritage Hill Museum, Dandenong
- 2014 Luncheon for kinship carers at the Oakley Bowls Club, Oakley



Senator John Madigan, Democratic Labor Party Senator for Victoria, hosted a Saturday morning 'open house' at a café in Ballarat to celebrate Families Week. Families were invited to drop in and have a coffee or breakfast and a bit of fun. The children enjoyed the cup cake decorating competition the most – some adults, including grandparents, did as well. Anne McLeish, Families Week Ambassador, attended to thank the senator for the initiative.

Launch of the Kinship Carers' Handbook for Victoria

The kinship carers' handbook was launched in March 2014. The launch marked the end of eighteen months solid work by a team of people working with kinship carers to ensure that their interests were accommodated in the contents of the handbook. Chief amongst those who worked on this project were Juliet Williams, the consultant who wrote it and Reuben Shannon who laid out the document. When the participants at the launch saw the document they were well please with it and feedback since has confirmed that the contents of the handbook is relevant to the everyday lives of kinship carers. To date 16,000 copies of the handbook have been distributed across Victoria



Where to from here?

It is suggested that the following issues be given priority attention over the next few years:

- **Free general education** - for every child in Australia
- **Climate change** - action so that future grandchildren can inherit a healthy natural environment
- **Mental health** - of children and young people
- **Children's play** - around the world, but most particularly in Australia
- **The effects of diet on child wellbeing** –
- **Kinship carers** - with a view to securing their rights in legislation and regulations

The following issues have been on the GPV/KCV work program for some time and will be subject of a watching brief:

- Grandparents and grandchildren denied access to one another
- Problem gambling and drug addiction



Calendar of Key Activities

2001

January

February

March

April **1st policy gathering** – to explore the feasibility of forming a grandparent association

May

June Grandparents Victoria (GPV) registered as a community organization 

July **1st celebration** – the launch of GPV by the Governor John Landy
1st media – TV interview

August **2nd celebration** - the launch of GPV in Mildura

September **2nd policy gathering** – GPV Board meeting #1

October **1st** address to a wider community group – RSL East Keilor

November

December **1st** GPV newsletter

2002

January

February

1st Meeting with a politician – Judy Maddigan MP, Essendon

March

3rd gathering- GPV Seminar to explore the role of Grandparents in the 21st century - Frankston

April

1st campaign – A call for better access to a full Education for all children and young people (Victorian Education Roundtable)

May

4th gathering – GPV legal seminar at which that decision to register Grandparents Australia was made

June

27th – Registration of Grandparents Australia 

July

August

September

3rd celebration - Mayoral Reception for GPV in Ballarat

1st AGM at Moonee Valley Racecourse

October

November

December

2003

- January **1st** meeting with GPA member organisation – Grandparents Rearing Grandchildren in W.A.
- February **2nd campaign commences** – A call for provision of more accessible and affordable childcare with meeting at LHMU re the commission hearing about child care workers wage claim
- March
- April
- May **5th gathering-** GPV Grandparents' Group at Moonee Valley
- June **1st** Court Network Forum attendance
- July **1st Survey Report** – Echuca project – Grandparents speak their mind
- August
- September **1st GPV Research Project** – Echuca community development project and survey
3rd campaign – A call for recognition of disadvantages to grandchildren denied access to grandparents
- October **1st** Grandparents Australia meeting. – face to face meeting in Melbourne
- November **1st Interstate visit** to kinship care support groups – Gold Coast
2nd Interstate visit to kinship care support groups – WA
- December

2004

- January Victorian cabinet – regional meeting
- February **1st** Visit to a Victorian kinship care support group – Shepparton
- March **6th** gathering – National Forum with Federal Minister for Family & Community Services Kay Patterson
- 2nd** GPV research project – Grandparents as Alchemists training seminar in Frankston
- April **4th** campaign commences – A call for Centrelink to appoint specialist grandparents advisors across Australia
- May
- June **5th** campaign commences – A call for government to be more responsible in the governance of gambling with attendance to gambling seminar at Moonee Valley
- July
- August
- September **2nd** survey - Grandparents Speak launched at Melbourne Town Hall
- 2nd** Television interview
- October Gambling submission lodged
- 1st** time A. McLeish elected to Board of Families Australia
- 1st** meeting of Grandparents Australia with delegates from states other than Victoria
- November **6th** campaign – A call for the appointment of a children’s commissioner for Australia
- December **7th** campaign commences – A call for grandparent related questions in the ABS Census

2005

2005

January

February

March

April

May

1st meeting with DHS – at Geelong Lorea Love

June

3rd GPV Research Project – Grandparents preventing problem gambling

July

August

September

October

November

December

2006

2006

January

February

1st attendance to an Interstate conference – Early childhood Conference Sydney

March

1st **International Study Tour** - to Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Foundation and Gambler's Help in New Zealand

April

1st working session on Grandparents preventing Problem Gambling project

May

4th **celebration** - Families Week function #1 – Launch of Early Childhood Statement

June

1st workshop presented at a national conference – Intergenerational Conference

July

GPV members' forum

August

September

October

November

Members' forum

December

2007

January

February

March

April **1st testimony to government – Appeared at the Regional Victorian Cabinet Meeting and Premiers' Reception**

May **2nd International Study Tour – Meeting with UN Delegation in New York and Attendance to Conference in New York**

June

July

August **Moonee Valley Survey**

September **4th GPV research project – Grandparenting Across the Generations Project**

October

November

December

2008

February **2nd** testimony to a parliamentary enquiry – Victorian Parliament Gambling Select Committee

March **Launch of Grandparenting Across the Generations Book**

April

May **5th celebration** – Families Week function - Moonee Valley city council forum, Brian Babbington
CEO Families Aust

June

July

August

September

October

November

December **5th GPV research project** – Finalise Moonee Valley Carer's Network Report

2009

January

February

March **1st** attendance to International Women's Breakfast

April **6th** GPV research project – YMCA project - Meeting at YMCA

1st Meeting for the National Framework for Protection of Children

May **6th** celebration – Families Week function #3 – Rosebud

June **7th** gathering – Victorian kinship carers State conference #1 at the clock tower Moonee valley

July

August

September

October **3rd** International Study Tour – Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Conference, Auckland

November

December

2010

January **3rd Survey - 1st snapshot survey - GPV membership survey**

February

March **1st Seaford Grandparents Group luncheon**

8th campaign – A call for changes to the Victorian child protection legislation – letter to politicians

9th campaign – A call for recognition of the importance of Kinship care – letter to Federal politicians

April **10th campaign** – A call for grandparents' issues to be addressed in the 2010 federal election campaign

May

July

August **11th campaign** – A call for grandparents' issues to be addressed in the 2010 Victorian State election campaign

September

October **8th gathering- 2nd Victorian Kinship Carers' State Conference, Melbourne**

November **1st Meeting – ACARA**

12th campaign – A call for improvements to the quality of aged care

December **Launch YMCA project at Ascot Vale YMCA**

2011

2011

January

February **1st** KCV Committee meeting

March **1st** work session to commence the KCV Longitudinal Study

April **3rd** submission to a major government enquiry – Victorian Vulnerable Children’s Enquiry

May **7th celebration** – Families’ Week luncheon #4, Doutta Galla

June **1st** meetings re Walpeup research station proposal, Mildura

4th Survey - Longitudinal Study survey

July Meeting re Victorian Carers’ Bill

August

September **1st** Denied Access Luncheon

9th gathering – Victorian Legal Aid seminar

October

November **3rd** State Kinship Care Conference, Melbourne

1st meeting of the Australian Children’s Round Table

December **1st** Auditor General’s Forum re Kinship Care

2012

January

February

March **5th Survey** – snapshot survey (KCV) – education

April

May **Presentation at Play Victoria conference**

8th Celebration – Families Week Luncheon #5 – Seaford

June

July **13th campaign** – A call for early intervention in Mental Health of children and young people

1st Partnership – Joint meeting of MHYF and GPV

6th Survey – Longitudinal Study Survey

August

7th Survey – GPV role of grandparents (families Week)

September **4th international visit** – Visits to support groups in the USA

October **7th Project commences** – Kinship Carers' Handbook

November

December **14th campaign** A call for improvements to Children's Court procedures in Victoria – Letter to Victorian department of Justice

2013

- January* **15th campaign** – A call for improvements to Children’s Court procedures in Victoria – Letter to State politicians
- February*
- March*
- April* ✧ **Registration of Kinship International Network (KIN) website**
- May* **9th celebration** – Families’ week function #6 – Governor’s Reception, Government House
10th celebration – Families’ Week Luncheon #7 at Heritage Hill Museum Dandenong
- June* **16th Campaign** - A call for grandparents’ issues to be addressed in the 2014 federal election campaign
- July* **8th Survey** – Longitudinal study survey
- August* **17th campaign** – A call to stop the East-West Link tollway proposal
- September* **5th International Study Tour** – UK - Kinship International inaugural meeting
- October* **9th Survey** - KCV relationships with extended family
- November* **1st International Survey commences** – Play
18th campaign – A call for better promotion of the value of child centred outdoor play - letter to politicians
- December*

2014

- January* **6th international Study Tour** – Grandparents Play focus group NZ
- February*
- March* **Commence submission to Senate Enquiry into Grandparents raising Grandchildren**
- Meeting with opposition spokesperson on Children & Families Jenny Mikakos- Melbourne**
- Launch of the Kinship Carer's Handbook for Victoria, Melbourne Museum**
- 19th campaign** – A call for immediate withdrawal of children from Australian Refugee camps
- April* **Ballarat Launch of the Kinship Carer's Handbook for Victoria, Ballarat**
- 20th campaign commences** – A call for grandparents' issues to be addressed in the 2014 Victorian state election campaign – (Grandparents Log of Claims)
- May* **4th** Testimony to government enquiry – East-West link hearings
DHS Western Region forum Ballarat
KCV carers group Shepparton – 10th Anniversary
- 7th international Study Tour** – International Play Association Conference, Istanbul
- 11th celebration** – Families' Week Luncheon #8 Oakley Bowls Club
- June* **10th** – Testimony to Senate Re Grandparents Raising Grandchildren- Melbourne
- 21st campaign** – A call for the retention of the Schoolkids Bonus
- July* **10th Survey** – longitudinal study survey
11th Survey – Grandparents speak about play
- August*
- September* **22nd campaign** – A call for amendments to the Federal budget – letter to all Politicians
- October* **12th Survey** – KCV transition out of out of home care
13th Survey – the Value of support group
- November* **12th** – Meeting – senator Smith- Melbourne
23rd campaign – A call for support for the Senate report into Grandparents raising Grandchildren
- December*