



the grandparent

A newsletter with news for and by grandparents and about them and grandchildren

*The growth of tomorrow
in the hands of today*

Grandparents Australia is a network of grandparents working to ensure the current and future wellbeing of all children in Australia.

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grandparents
VICTORIA

Grandparents Victoria provides the secretariat for Grandparents Australia.



Grandparents Australia works with a wide range of organisations and is a member of Families Australia

families
australia

Supporting the ARK Foundation - caring for grandparents raising grandchildren in Africa.

The ARK
Foundation

This is a federal election issue.

Page 2 outlines a summary of how the two major political parties have responded to key issues related to family matters. This is a must read for those who want to be clear about the similarities and differences on some of the issues we canvass politicians about.

Page 3 outlines the policy proposals of Families Australia. This includes reference to grandparenting and kinship care and aligns with all that we grandparents say about child welfare.

We have engaged in this campaign through a series of letters sent to each and every federal Member of Parliament. Most of those letters were acknowledged and from some we received substantive replies which we will revisit as the new government settles in.

Some other key articles address:

- Immunisation of children with Australia performing more poorly than Rwanda
- Smacking of children – yes or no?
- Smoking rates are dropping
- Dental services for children
- The changing profile of grandparenting

NO

The last article relates to the campaign launched by grandparents Victoria to protest about the proposal to build a freeway under and over Royal Park in Melbourne,

The processes leading to the development of the proposal are not to be tolerated and neither is the outcome. Fighting this proposed freeway fits with our determination to secure more play areas for ours and future grandchildren – not fewer. No grandparent wants to see the destruction of one as impressive and well used by families as this one.

2 major political parties respond on child safety and wellbeing

With the Federal election just days away, I wanted to update you on how the major political parties have responded on the safety and wellbeing of children.



Both the ALP and Liberal/National Coalition have now responded, and we await the Greens. The full responses are available publicly on the Families Australia website. In the meantime here is a short summary of both responses, below. I've particularly highlighted the areas of new commitment. *The points below are direct quotes from the two responses.*

Australian Labor Party *(direct quotes in italics)*

Protecting children

→ The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children 2009-2020 represents the first time that all Australian governments have agreed to work together, alongside the non-government sector, to ensure that Australia's children are safe and well. It adopts a public health model... This strongly reflects the early intervention and prevention approach suggested by Families Australia.

→ Labor remains committed to supporting young people leaving care with the support and services they need.

→ Young people transitioning from out-of-home care to independent living will get more personalised and flexible support as a result of changes to strengthen the Labor Government's Transition to Independent Living Allowance.

→ Labor will continue to take national leadership in child protection and will continue to work towards better integration of services, greater investments in services and supports and a continued commitment to the objectives of the National Framework.

→ Labor will further consider the suggestions put forward by Families Australia in relation to improving the safety and wellbeing of our children.

Child care access for vulnerable families

→ Labor will invest over \$25 billion to improve access to affordable, quality early childhood education and child care over the next four years.

→ For a child at risk of serious abuse or neglect there is no limit on the total number of periods of SCCB that can be approved, but approval periods are limited up to 13 weeks for each period.

Liberal/National Parties *(direct quotes in italics)*

Protecting children

→ The Coalition believes it is important to promote approaches that enhance the safety and wellbeing of children in Australia. That is why we support the philosophical underpinnings and broad policy objectives of the National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children

→ All Australian children deserve to live in a safe, secure environment, and the National Framework seeks to advance this fundamental notion.

→ A Coalition Government will place a greater emphasis on prevention and early intervention as a means of ameliorating the negative consequences of family dysfunction and social exclusion.

*v*The Coalition believes that an increased emphasis on prevention and early intervention programmes will provide the best means of achieving these desired outcomes.

Child care access for vulnerable families

→ A Coalition Government would take some practical steps to help alleviate the pressures on [child care] centres and subsequently families. As a priority, we would work with the States and Territories, as well as the child care sector, to review the implementation of the National Quality Framework.

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Families Australia: 2013 Policy Proposals



Families Australia's 2013 policy proposals put forward in the lead up to the federal election include those outlined below.

The points in the below list are selected for production in this newsletter because they align with grandparent interests.

Assisting ageing carers

✓ Greater consideration across economic, health, housing and social policy portfolios of the needs of ageing carers who provide long-term care for family members, such as adult children with disability including mental illness and those providing kinship care.

Helping families affected by mental illness

✓ Additional targeted help for children of parents with mental health and substance abuse issues.

✓ Improve understanding and awareness of the mental health needs of young carers who carry major responsibility for parents with a mental illness or substance misuse.

✓ Further strengthening of family and carer peer support networks that contribute to capacity building within the mental health sector.

✓ Provision of Family Mental Health Support Services to grandparent/kinship and foster carers as a special needs group, to assist their care of children in out-of-home care.

Greater access to child care for vulnerable families

✓ Increased priority access to early childhood care and education for children who are at risk and/or who come from disadvantage backgrounds.

✓ Greater financial support for carers of children in out-of-home care to meet the cost of child care; specifically, the Special Child Care Benefit to be automatically granted to all children in out-of-home care to improve placement stability and support for early learning.

✓ A review of child care access/affordability, including tax deductibility options

Improving the safety and wellbeing of our children

The National Framework for Protecting Australia's Children would be strengthened further by:

✓ Expanded emphasis on programs that support early intervention and prevention to tackle the underlying causes of child abuse and neglect and to respond to early warning signs.

✓ Improved integration of child, family and other social services leading to better outcomes for vulnerable families, increased program efficiency and greater value for public investment.

✓ Additional funding for Family Support Program initiatives to enhance assistance to children and families and to tackle alcohol and substance misuse, mental illness and domestic violence.

✓ A national Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander child safety workforce strategy.

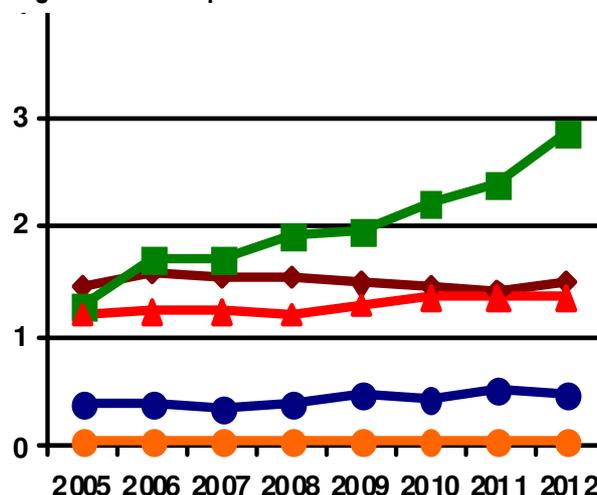
✓ A guarantee that the Transitioning to Independence Allowance, a one-off allowance of up to \$1500 per person, will be paid to all young people 15 – 25 years of age leaving care.

✓ A nationally consistent scholarship program covering all HECS and higher education expenses and consistency in fee waiver schemes for all VET and higher education contribution fees for young people in, or leaving, or who have been in, out-of-home care.

Rapid growth in kinship care

The graph below shows the comparative growth in kinship care for Victoria from 2006- 2012. The trends are the same for other states of Australia and for other countries.

Its about time governments took more decisive action in regards to kinship care.



Immunising children



Some of Centrelink's benefits such as Family Tax Benefit Part A supplement, Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate, can only be paid for children who have been immunised or have an approved immunisation exemption.

Australian Childhood Immunisation Register

The Australian Childhood Immunisation Register (Immunisation Register) is a national register that records vaccinations given to children under seven years old. It also provides immunisation history statements to parents or guardians. The Immunisation Register can help you when you need proof of immunisation. For example:

- you can get an immunisation history statement to use as proof of immunisation for school enrolment. We'll send you a statement when your child turns 18 months old and five years old, or you can request one at any time
- Centrelink can check the Immunisation Register to see if your child meets the immunisation requirements for family assistance payments, such as the Family Tax Benefit Part A supplement, Child Care Benefit and Child Care Rebate

Immunisation requirements for Family Tax Benefit Part A

To meet the immunisation requirements for the Family Tax Benefit Part A supplement, you now need to have your children immunised during the financial years that each child turns one, two and five years old.

The list of diseases a child must be immunised against is below.

Children born before 1 July 2012

Age	Disease immunised against
2 months	Diphtheria Tetanus Pertussis Polio Hib Hepatitis B
4 months	Diphtheria Tetanus Pertussis Polio Hib Hepatitis B
6 months	Diphtheria Tetanus Pertussis Polio Hib Hepatitis B
12 months	Measles Mumps Rubella Hib Hepatitis B (or at 6 months)
4 years	Diphtheria Tetanus Pertussis Polio Measles Mumps

Children born after 1 July 2012 - all of the above plus extra below

Age	Disease immunised against
2 months	Pneumococcal
4 months	Pneumococcal
6 months	Pneumococcal
12 months	Meninococcal C
18 months



Centrelink will check with the [Australian Childhood Immunisation Register](#) to see whether a child is fully immunised, or has an approved exemption, after the end of the financial year when your family's payments are balanced. This happens after you lodge your tax return. The immunisation requirements affect eligibility for Family Tax Benefit Part A supplement from the 2012/2013 financial year onwards.

If your supplement is not paid because immunisation requirements haven't been met, you have a timeframe of two years from the end of the financial year that your child turned one, two or five, to meet the requirements.

Additional vaccines are provided to children free of charge under the National Immunisation Program. View the National Immunisation Program Schedule to find out more.

Immunisation exemptions

If there is an approved reason why your child is not fully immunised you need to provide Centrelink with one of the following from your immunisation provider or doctor:

- an Immunisation exemption for medical reasons form
- an Immunisation exemption by conscientious objection form,
- a letter explaining why the exemption is necessary

Rwanda trounces Australia at immunisation

May 30, 2013 Rachel Browne and Vince Chadwick

A global report into the health and welfare of the world's children has found Australian immunisation rates are lower than those of many developing countries, including Rwanda, Eritrea and Bangladesh.

Disability is the focus of UNICEF's State of the World's Children 2013 report, which examines a broad range of areas such as health, education and child protection in almost 200 countries.

Australia compares unfavourably to many countries on immunisation.

Immunisation coverage in Australia is 94 per cent for measles and 92 per cent for diphtheria, tetanus, whooping cough, polio and Hib, which causes infant meningitis.

This puts it behind countries such as Bangladesh, which has comparable coverage rates of between 96-99 per cent, Eritrea with 99 per cent and Rwanda, which has rates between 93-98 per cent.

While Australia's vaccination rate for measles is higher than the global average of 85 per cent, it is below the east Asia-Pacific average of 95 per cent.

David Durrheim, professor of public health medicine at the University of Newcastle, said Australians were taking widespread immunity for granted.

"Because we are rarely confronted with the horror of these diseases, our community may be becoming complacent," he said. "This is dangerous as unless high levels of

vaccination are continually maintained, susceptible children will be placed at the risk of preventable disease and deaths."

Developing countries are using vaccination as a widespread means of controlling disease outbreaks.

"Some developing countries with weaker primary healthcare systems make very effective use of mass-immunisation campaigns to vaccinate hard-to-reach children, and if these campaigns are well planned then high coverage is achieved," Dr Durrheim said.

GRANDPARENTS' ANSWERING MACHINE

Good morning . . . At present we are not at home, please leave a message after the beep.

Beeeeppp If you are one of our children, dial 1 and then select the option from 1 to 5 in order of "birth arrival" so we know who it is.

If you need us to stay with the children, press 2

- If you want to borrow the car, press 3
- If you want us to wash and do ironing, press 4
- If you want the grandchildren to sleep here, press 5
- If you want us to pick up the kids at school, press 6
- If you want us to prepare a meal for you, press 7
- If you want to come to eat here, press 8
- If you need money, press 9
- If you are going to invite us to dinner, or, taking us to the theatre, start talking: we are listening!

Financial support finally allocated for New Zealand grandparents

Second-time parents lobbying for financial support for more than a decade have finally been heard.

The NZ Government will allocate \$10 million to grandparents who are caring for grandchildren at risk and other carers in similar circumstances.

A ministerial reference group has also been established. Grandparents Raising Grandchildren has been asked to be part of the group. Members of the organisation were surveyed about how additional financial support would help, with many saying it could cover doctor's fee, school uniforms and help put food on the table.

The group will report back to Social Development Minister Paula Bennett in August on how best to distribute the funds.

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren has more than 5300 members around New Zealand.

Hands off: doctors take debate over smacking to legal lengths

July 26, 2013(1) Rachel Browne Social Affairs Reporter



A group of doctors from Australia and New Zealand is pushing to make it a criminal offence for parents to smack their children.

The Royal Australasian College of Physicians calls for a legal amendment to give children the same protection from assault as others in the community.

The president of the college's paediatrics and child health division, Susan Moloney, said physical punishment could escalate to abuse. "We know that a significant number of child homicides are a result of physical punishment which went wrong," she said.

Research shows it can lead to depression, anxiety, aggression, antisocial behaviour and substance abuse. In Australia it is legal for parents to use corporal punishment on children as long as it is "reasonable".

Associate Professor Moloney said: "If you hit your dog you could be arrested - but it's legal to hit your child."

"We protect children with legislation around pool fences and not smoking in cars, for example. This is legislation which would protect children from physical punishment."

Child psychologist Michael Carr-Gregg does not advocate smacking but believes legislation would be unworkable. "How could you reasonably monitor and enforce such a law? What are we going to do? Have the smacking police?" he said.

Family therapist Michael Hawton said many good parents smacked simply because they did not know the alternatives. "The problem is many parents simply don't know what to do or what the alternatives are so they become frustrated and they smack or they yell," he said.

"I am in favour of legislation but I don't think it's enforceable ... I would rather see resources going into education," he said. Dr Coulson's research shows a high degree of acceptance for smacking in Australia, though bans in 33 countries have lowered child abuse rates and crime in general.

Roslyn Phillips, research officer with the Christian group Family Voice Australia, rejected claims that smacking was harmful, saying it was instructive for small children.

"Reasonable discipline teaches very young children who have no understanding of logic where the boundaries are," she said. "A short physical action indicates 'no'. An abusive action by parents is a crime but a smack ... I think most people know the difference."

Poll: Is there ever a reason to smack children?

Yes 82% No 18%

Total votes: 6785. Poll closed 27 Jul, 2013

Victorian smoking rates down to 13%



Summarised from an article in the Age - August 5, 2013 by
Kate Hagan

Smoking rates in Victoria continue to fall with just 13 per cent of Victorians now smoking regularly and young people turning their back on the habit, new figures show.

Cancer Council Victoria research to be released on Tuesday shows 13.3 per cent of Victorians were regular smokers who inhaled weekly or more often last year, down from 14.4 per cent in 2011.

We still have about 4000 Victorians every year dying from tobacco-related illnesses so we can't afford to be complacent.

The smoking rates are the lowest since the Cancer Council started collecting the data in 1998, when 21.2 per cent were regular smokers, and the 58.2 per cent of Victorians who had never smoked was the highest. More than 70 per cent of young people aged 18 to 29 had never smoked, a much higher rate than for older Victorians.

The research showed that men (16 per cent) were more likely to be smokers than women (11.2 per cent). Also more likely to be smokers were older Victorians, those with lower levels of education and in lower socioeconomic groups.

Quit Victoria executive director Fiona Sharkie said particularly pleasing was a "narrowing of the gap" between smoking rates in Victorians of low and high socioeconomic status.

"We've seen declines across all age groups and socioeconomic groups in recent years but the acceleration in the decline in smoking rates among Victoria's most disadvantaged communities and young people is very encouraging," she said.

"Highly emotive anti-smoking advertising campaigns have been shown to have the greatest impact on low socioeconomic groups.

Quit policy manager Kylie Lindorff said tax hikes were another measure proven to impact smoking rates, particularly among lower income earners.

She welcomed the federal government's move last week to increase the tobacco excise by 12.5 per cent a year from December and expected plain packaging would also deliver dividends in coming years, but said there was plenty more work to do.

"It's often thought that we've done so well on tobacco control, we've won the battle, but we still have about 4000 Victorians every year dying from tobacco-related illnesses so we can't afford to be complacent," Ms Lindorff said.

✓ An increase from six to ten in the number of Grandparent Liaison Officers in metropolitan Department of Human Services' offices to improve access for grandparent and kinship carers.

Grow up smiling The National Dental Health Care Program for children

On 29 August 2012 the Government announced a landmark \$4.1 billion Dental Reform package. This package will build a fairer dental system. The package includes:

- \$2.7 billion for *Grow Up Smiling*, a children's dental scheme that will start on 1 January 2014;
- \$1.3 billion for states and territories from 1 July 2014 to expand services for adults in the public system; and
- a \$225 million Flexible Grants Program beginning in 2014 to provide dental infrastructure (both capital and workforce) in outer metropolitan, rural and regional areas.

Information about dental services in each state or territory is available from:

- Victoria - 1800 833 039
- Tasmania - 1300 135 513
- Queensland - 07 3131 6822
- Northern Territory - 08 8999 2400
- New South Wales - 02 9391 9000
- Australian Capital Territory - 132 281
- South Australia - 08 8222 8222
- Western Australia - 08 9313 0555

The 2012-13 Budget also included increased oral health promotion activities, a boost to the dental workforce and improved dental facilities in rural and remote areas. These initiatives improve access to dental care for those who need it most and build a better dental health system

Grandparents set to become a thing of the past as older parents lead to 'grand orphans'

Petra Starke News Limited Network - April 29, 2013



keep up.

Parents who begin a family much later in life may limit the interaction their children have with aging grandparents who may struggle to

AUSTRALIA could be heading toward a generation of "grand-orphans" as societal trends turn grandparenting into an endangered institution.

With an increasing number of women delaying childbirth until their late 30s and 40s more people are becoming grandparents at an older age, limiting their capacity to care for grandchildren.

In 2011, the Australian Bureau of Statistics reported a record 12,800 babies born to women over 40, up from just 7100 in 2001, with the median age for Australian mothers sitting at 30.6.

A 40-year-old mother who has to wait the average 30.6 or 40 years for her child to become a parent will be 70 or 80 by the time she herself becomes a grandparent, something Queensland University of Technology social psychologist Associate Professor Evonne Miller says is undoubtedly changing the face of traditional grandparenting.

"The reality is that the trend towards late motherhood is likely to change the role of grandparents and how they interact with their grandchildren," she said.

Cate and her husband Gerold adopted surrogate grandparent Irene Sills (centre) who has now become part of the family.

"Caring and interacting with a baby or toddler is typically much more physically taxing for someone in their late 70s, 80s and 90s than at age 50 or 60."

Ms Miller said other societal factors such as marriage breakdowns and geographical separation were also helping to redefine the role of the grandparent.

"Rather than frequent face-to-face visits, contemporary grandparents - especially those who live overseas or

interstate - will use technology such as Skype and Facebook to interact with their grandchildren," she said.

"Instead of daily or weekly visits, grandparents may instead visit for extended times or take holidays together - it is about redefining our expectations about the role of grandparents in families."

Director of Grandparents Australia Anne McLeish said while women shouldn't feel pressured to have children earlier, they should realise the limitations delaying childbirth might place on their own parents.

"Parents need to continue to make the decision that's best for them but they have to understand at the same time that if they delay having children too late then it does limit the help that they can expect from the grandparents," she said.

"There are going to be a lot of children who miss out on the traditional grandparenting role as a result of marriage breakdown, relocation and losing contact with grandparents altogether."

That trend is being reflected in the skyrocketing popularity of Find-A-Grandparent, an online service that matches Australian families in need with "surrogate grandparents".

Director Cate Kloos, who launched the service last year to find a surrogate for her own two children, said she is desperate to recruit more grandparents to meet the demand from families.

"We have heaps of families registered but we could have heaps more if there were more grandparents to go around," she said.

"We get emails from interested families almost every day, but we have to turn them away. There's definitely a huge demand from families."

With Ms Kloos' and her husband Gerold's own parents living in Germany, their children Amelie, 5, and Luca, 3, now have a surrogate grandparent in Irene Sills, 75.

"It's really good because she only lives a couple of houses away from us so we can pop in and see her regularly, she's become part of the family," Ms Kloos said.

Grandparents Victoria says...

NO

to tunnels at Royal Park and to governments that shortcut democracy

Grandparents Victoria (GPV) is a state-wide movement of grandparents who work to safeguard the wellbeing of all children.

We meet with decision makers in the political and community sectors, conduct campaigns, and undertake research: all with the purpose of shining a light on the needs of families and our grandchildren. GPV takes action to address immediate issues and on issues that will impact on the sort of future we are leaving for our grandchildren to inherit.

No to the Royal Park Proposal ...

This long term view leads us to campaign against the proposal to build tunnels under and car passes over Royal Park. GPV does not take a stand against freeways in general – we too are keen to see a solution to the traffic congestions experienced in the area. However, we are not prepared to accept this particular solution.

Public consultation...

If we accept the erosion of full public disclosure and public consultation on public projects for this project the precedent will be set for all future public projects. No community will be able to rest assured that it has a future free of developers and governments taking deals that do not suit community aspirations. This objection and has relevance for each and every community across the state and across the generations into the future.

Stop the legislation...

GPV calls on all grandparents to familiarise themselves with the governments planned changes to legislation to allow minimal community consultation.

Call your local M.P. and ask them to explain and justify this most worrying legislative "slight of hand".

More play areas, not fewer...

Further, the freeway/tunnel structure, once completed, will mean our grandchildren, including our great grandchildren, will be robbed of a community resource the value of which is increasing over time. One of the constantly recurring issues grandparents talk about is the changing nature of play our grandchildren enjoy.

We are concerned that 21st century children do not have enough open play space where they can roam and go on adventures. This freeway proposal is being advanced at the same time as GPV has joined the international action spearheaded the United Nations to improve the play experience for children around the world. Royal Park features in the vision GPV has for more public play spaces that include adventure play areas where children can wonder in the wild, so to speak, and enjoy the tactile experiences of the environment.

Rather than destroy Royal Park we were set to argue for increased funding to further develop it as a park of national play significance for children.

Public transport first, then freeways ...

Thirdly, there is the question about whether or not this proposal will solve the traffic problems. Any proposal needs to include better public transport options. We cannot go on building more roads and encouraging people to use cars. **Our grandchildren will not thank us for being so short sighted.**

Many GPV members have travelled overseas and have seen first hand how other cities manage to move millions of people in a day on reasonably priced efficient public transport systems. Achieving this for Melbourne should be the starting point to any discussions. Once we embark on the conversation from this point better road solution will emerge.

Be a grandparent who acts for all grandchildren....

GPV urges each and every grandparent across the state to reflect on the heritage we will leave future generations and to view each and every park as state treasures that need to be conserved. We urge each and every grandparent to take action, no matter where they live – the Royal Park proposal has implications for us all.



This is an eleven year old girl's impression of GPV. We are committed to living up to this perception.

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