

grandparents
V I C T O R I A



 Kinship
Carers
V I C T O R I A

ANNUAL REPORT
2023–24



GPV/KCV acknowledges the peoples of the Kulin nation as the traditional owners of our great land and offers respect to Elders, past and present.

GPV/KCV acknowledges that the Aboriginal culture existed in Australia before European settlement and consisted of many community groups. Further, we acknowledge the Indigenous peoples of this land as the oldest continuing cultures in human history.

GPV/KCV acknowledges that laws and policies of the past have inflicted grief and suffering on our fellow Australians and regrets the removal of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children from their families.

GPV/KCV believes that a society that is inclusive of all is crucial to individual and community wellbeing and will behave with respect towards all, irrespective of their race, religion, sexuality, gender, or socio-economic background.

GPV/KCV acknowledges 13th of February as National Apology Day, the anniversary of then Prime Minister, Kevin Rudd, delivering the National Apology to Australia's Indigenous Peoples in 2008. GPV/KCV will take steps that promote a happier and healthier future for Indigenous Australians, particularly the children and young people.

Key words which influence GPV/KCV approaches are: Truthfulness
Confidentiality Inclusiveness Integrity Constancy Gratitude Commitment Compassion
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Kinship Carers Victoria acknowledges the support of the
Victorian Government

About GPV/KCV

In April 2001, Grandparents Victoria (GPV) was formed as an organisation based on the belief that grandparents can play a valuable role in supporting and advocating for families and the wider community and promoting the value of the public sector.

At this early stage, with only four members at the first meeting, it was not clear what action the group would take, or how its activities were to be funded, but enthusiasm was high.

For the first two years, GPV focused on consultation with grandparents to learn what challenges they and their families were facing. A series of forums were also held across Victoria to collect different many opinions. Since then, regular forums and surveys have been conducted to verify these early views.

In March 2002, the issues faced by grandparents raising their grandchildren were noted, with the GPV Board deciding that the role of grandparents within child protection would be a priority area of work.

Another landmark was reached in 2004 when GPV staff attended the organisation's first local grandparents support group. This was the first of many visits to support groups across the state. In 2010 the Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) awarded GPV the contract to establish Kinship Carers Victoria (KCV) as the peak group representing the views of kinship carers.

GPV/KCV addresses a wide range of issues. Some issues, aside from support for kinship carers, appear on its work program year in and year out, with family poverty being the most urgent of all the issues addressed over the years.

GPV/KCV is committed to an ethical approach to its work, undertaking to:

- maintain a commitment to its beliefs and aims, prioritising the wellbeing of families
- always maintain confidentiality, protecting the privacy of all who associate with GPV/KCV
- uphold individual rights and advocate for the rights of disadvantaged groups
- foster a culture of fairness

GPV/KCV believes that:

- all children must be protected and given every opportunity and support to fulfil their potential
- the needs of families are becoming more complex and the support grandparents can offer to families in general is significant
- grandparents and kinship carers have unique understandings and attitudes that should influence decisions about child wellbeing
- grandparents and kinship carers have a responsibility to engage in public discussions and to act to ensure the wellbeing of children

Privacy Guarantee

GPV/KCV securely stores and manages personal information shared through all forms of communications with the organisation. No personal information is ever shared with any other agency, including DFFH or any other government agency. When survey reports are completed the personal data of participants is destroyed.

Governance and Management

Board members

There were 12 Board members for the 2023-24 financial year. Foundation members, who are members of the Board since its first meeting, and shorter-term members have the same rights and responsibilities.

Chairperson Helen Brown, founding member

Deputy Chairperson, Carole Cheng

General grandparent positions

- Kerry Doquile, foundation member
- Angela Hogan, member for 22 years
- Helen Corcoran, member for 14 years
- Sandy Harbison, member for two years

Kinship carer positions

- Jennifer Sullivan, kinship carer member for seven years
- Jenny Cheshire, kinship carer member for seven years
- Bruce Murchie, kinship carer member for one year
- Adine Neill, kinship carer member for six years
- Kerrie Mannix, kinship carer member for four years
- Cecilia Clark, kinship carer member for one year

Overall attendance at Board meetings was higher than required by the GPV/KCV Standing Orders. However, one Board member (K Mannix) resigned when she found that her increased hours of paid work conflicted with her Board duties. The Board rates of attendance to Board meetings within 23-24 FY (4) were:

- Cheng 100%
- Sullivan 100%
- Cheshire 100%
- Harbison 90%
- Neill 90%
- Corcoran 80%
- Mannix 30% resigned part way through the year
- Murchie 75%
- Brown 75%
- Doquile 55%
- Hogan 55%
- Clark 45%

Board members, who set the direction of the agency, contributed at least 190 hours attending decision making meetings.

Issues addressed by the Board

The Board addressed, and made decisions in relation to, the following issues in the 23-24 Financial Year. 44 decisions on substantive issues were taken with some issues discussed on multiple occasions:

- The national disability insurance scheme
- Incision of OOHC carers in the Australian carers recognition act
- The need for increased programs supporting family preservation
- The national kinship, foster and permanent carers conference 2024
- Education of children in OOHC
- A management and governance review of GPV/KCV
- The review of the Client Incident Management Scheme CIMS
- Homelessness
- A study tour to New Zealand (abandoned)
- The Yoorrook Commission
- Vaping and alcohol abuse amongst young people
- The Voice referendum follow up actions
- Increases in loneliness across the community
- Royal Childrens Hospital survey on childrens play, particularly outdoor play
- A potential visit to the Mallee to connect with kinship carers
- The GPV/KCV reconciliation plan to include research on Aboriginal history
- Support for informal carers at national level
- A visiting fellow program

A highlight for the Board

Board members enjoyed a far-ranging discussion with the Minister Blandthorn. The discussion focused on the needs of children in the early years and explored ways to improve support for family preservation. There was much talk about the influential power of grandparents within families and the underdeveloped role they play in family preservation before children are removed from parents' care. Also, discussed was the widespread incidence of mental ill health amongst young people.

Staff members

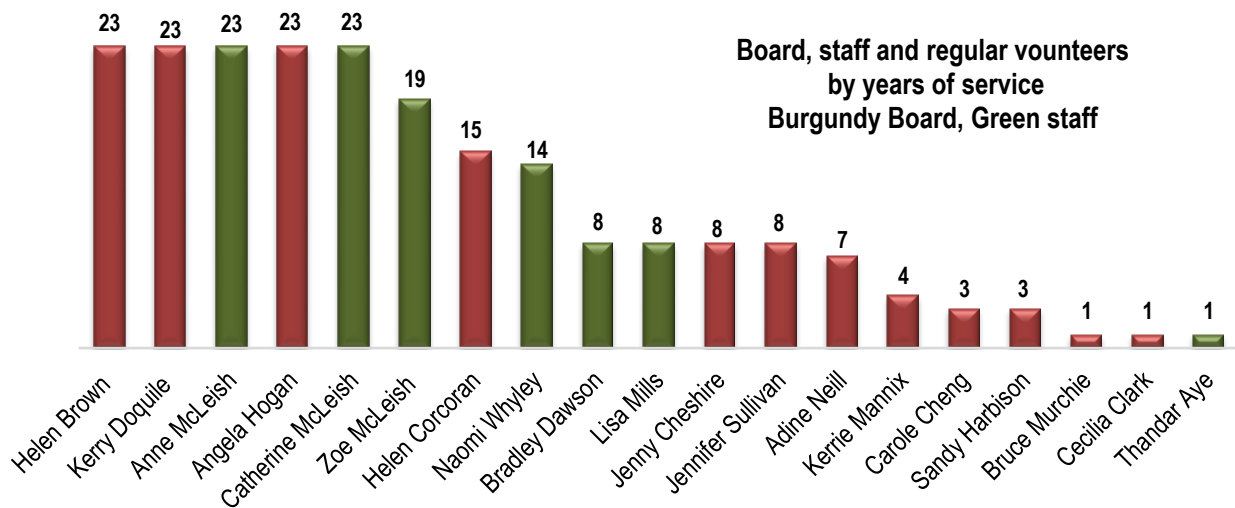
Members of the core paid and unpaid staff who delivered the outcomes defined in the work program were:

- Anne McLeish, Director
- Naomi Whyley, Administration Manager
- Bradley Dawson, Communications Officer
- Thandar Aye, Administration Assistance
- Lisa Mills, Podcast Development
- Zoe McLeish, Project Assistant, mostly as a volunteer
- Catherine McLeish, BAS lodgment, mostly as a volunteer

Megan Crowle, who had been a project assistant for 11 years left GPV/KCV employment during this financial year.

At the close of the financial year a total of 5,708 hours were contributed by 22 people towards the achievement of the GPV/KCV Work Program.

The Board and staff continue to provide stable service as indicated in the table below.



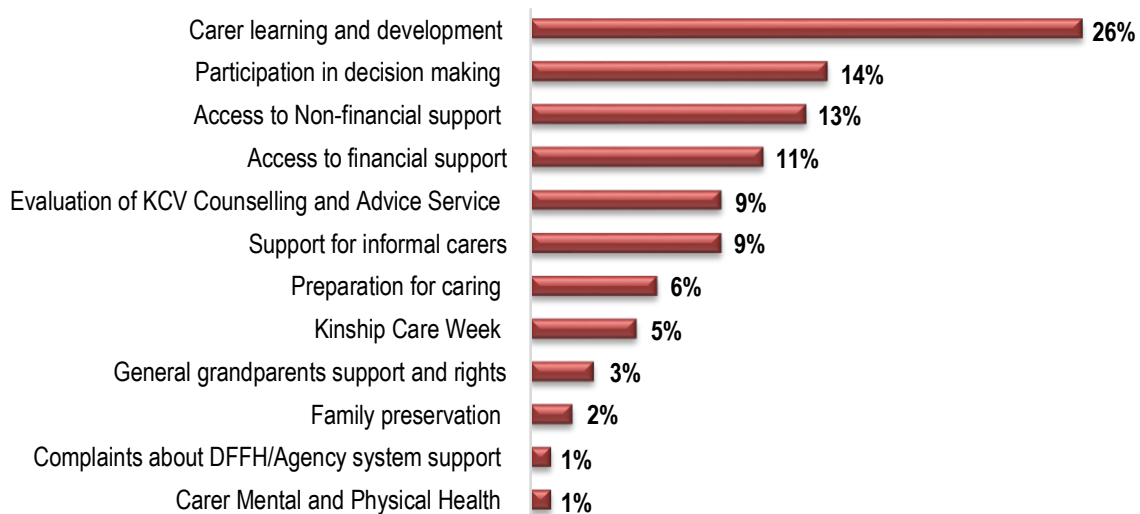
The Support and Advice Service

KCV provides a counselling and advice service to kinship carers. The issues raised through this program are referred to the Board, and discussed with DFFH and other agencies. In 23-24 the service was characterized by an increase in the number of agencies that made contact on behalf of carers. Sometimes the agency wanted to know about the support KCV offered but at others the agency was calling for information about levels of carer payments and wanting KCV to process carers claims. There was an increase in confusion about the role of DFFH, funded agencies and KCV. Some callers were new to their role with no previous experience in child protection.

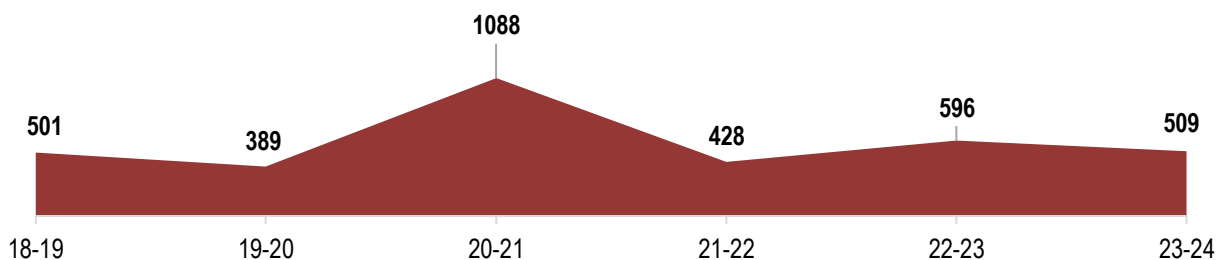


3 Growing issues	8 Consistent issues across the years	4 Declining issues
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Carer learning and development ▪ Participation in decision making ▪ Preparation for caring 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Access to non-financial support ▪ Access to financial support ▪ Support for informal carers ▪ Kinship Care Week ▪ Family preservation ▪ Evaluation of the Support /Advice Service ▪ General grandparents support and rights ▪ DFFH /agency complaints about system support 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Carer Mental and Physical Health ▪ Post Covid Wellbeing checks ▪ Child Mental/Physical Health ▪ DFFH /agency complaints about system support

The issues raised in by percentage of all contacts



Total number of individual contacts per Financial Year



Publications

The GPV/KCV publications program continues to rely on both printed and electronic distribution of resources to carers. However, prohibitive cost of printing prevents mass printing runs of resources.

Websites updates and visits (99,664 total visits across 3 websites)

The websites were updated weekly and continued to increase in popularity with the number of people visiting each site being:

- GPA...15,810 visits
- GPV...21,229 visits
- KCV...62,625 visits

The resources were viewed and/or downloaded 687 times throughout the year with those most often downloaded being:

- Financial supports for kinship carers
- KCV Interactive Guide to resources on the KCV website
- Emergency and useful contacts
- Orange Door Services
- Carer Wellbeing

Podcasts and transcripts (15)

Ten new podcasts were produced. There were 1,509 listens across all podcasts for the financial year - 25% above the targets. Some were part funded by Carer Kafe and others from within GPV/KCV funds. Issues addressed were chosen to match carer needs and interests, emerging policy direction or issues about which GPV/KCV was campaigning:

#24...The Value of Learning/Development

#25...Nutrition

#26...The Benefits of Play

#27...Preparing for Access Visits

#28... Grief and Loss

#29...Let us Learn – Education in out-of-home care

#30...Diet/nutrition for neurodiverse children

#31...Cyber safety for children and young people

#32...Podcast/video on Family reunification & the law

#33...Govt schools need our support

Some podcasts proved popular, warranting the contents being converted into transcripts. They were:

- Preparing for access visits,
- Importance of quality sleep,
- Diet and Nutrition,
- Relaxation techniques,
- Cyber Safety

Welcome Packages (33)

Packages of written information sent to kinship carers who have connected with KCV for the first time. Thirty-three were distributed this FY. Written resources were developed in greater numbers this financial year. This work was undertaken to renew and update the Kinship Care Manual for Victoria which was somewhat out of date and never likely to be reproduced.

Newsletters/fact sheets (21)

Twelve newsletters and nine fact sheets addressing issues highlighted by DFFH were produced:

- Financial support for k/carers
- Court orders
- How to make a complaint
- Grief and loss
- Support for Informal carers
- CIMS and Victoria Police
- The Orange Door
- How to be an effective support group advocate
- How to report a concern to the Commissioner

The 7th Kinship Carer Wellbeing Magazine (1)

The 7th edition of the Kinship Care Week magazine was produced and distributed via website postings, handouts at face-to-face gatherings and mailouts to isolated kinship carers.

Resource Booklets (15)

- Financial support for kinship carers
- Court orders - The role of child protection and the courts
- How to make a complaint and get heard
- Support for Informal carers
- Grief and loss
- The Orange door
- Working with children’s clearances for kinship carers and household members
- Case planning, case management roles and responsibilities
- Emergency and useful contact
- Charter for children in out of home care /Charter supporting people in a care relationship
- Non-physical discipline for children and young people
- Assistance for those coping with suicide
- Children and young people with emotional and physical with disabilities
- Rights for Carers and Children
- How to run an effective support group and be effective carer advocate representative

Communiques (250)

Over 250 communiques on topical issues were distributed. They alerted readers to new resources or newsworthy items related to their role as a carer or a grandparent. Greater use was made in this financial year of SMS and mailchimp. There were a further 50 communiques distributed nationally to promote the national kinship, permanent and foster care conference 2024.

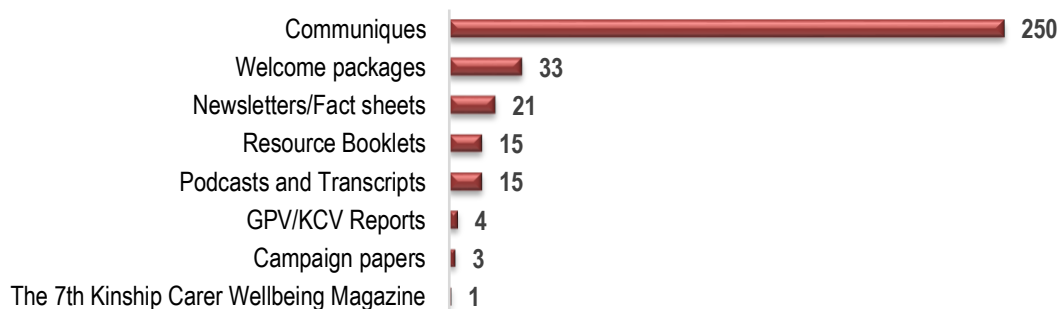
GPV/KCV Reports (4)

- GPV/KCV Annual Report 2022-23
- KCV Counselling Service Report 2022-23
- A response to the Victorian Auditor General’s Office report on DFFH support for kinship
- Response to the Australian Government discussion paper ‘Measuring What Matters’ on the issues that contribute to the wellbeing of the nation and all its citizens

Campaign Papers (3)

- Arguments against corporal punishment of children
- The facts about school funding in Victoria
- Three of Australia’s wealthiest private schools got double the federal funding they were entitled to last year

The balances of activities for each main element of the publication program



Campaigns (5)

Activities in support of campaigns included letters to member of parliament and other decision maker, distribution of information designed to raise community awareness, supporting action taken by other agencies. The campaigns enacted related to:

- Education
- Corporal Punishment (2022)
- Carer funding (2011) public sector support (since 2004)
- The Voice to Parliament (2023)
- Family Preservation

Face to face seminars (13)

Thirteen seminars on topical issues were delivered, they included seminars on:

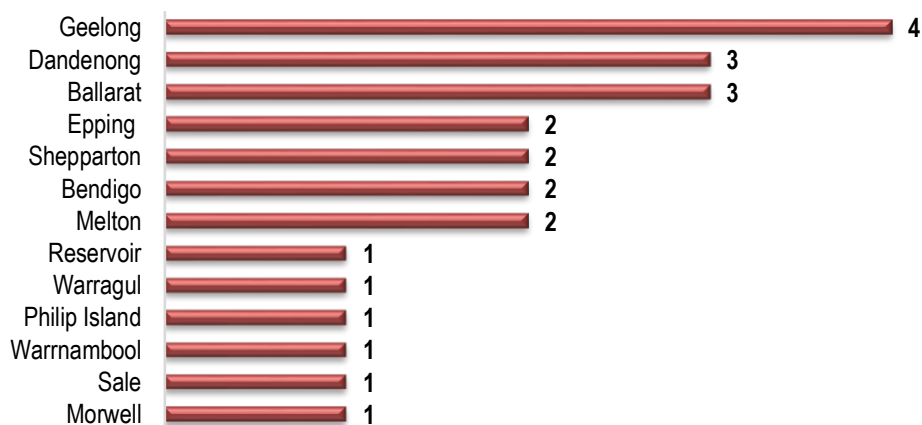
- Education - 4 seminars on held in Dandenong, Geelong, Ballarat, and Reservoir
- Carer wellbeing - 4 seminars on held in Geelong, Ballarat, Shepparton and Bendigo
- Nutrition - 5 seminars on held in Geelong, Warragul, Epping, Melton, Dandenong

Kinship Care Week Activities (13)

This week of acknowledgment of the work of kinship carers features local celebrations with twelve regional locations covered, as listed below. Further, in order to reach carers who do not attend local support groups, or who do not have email access, a statewide mailout of information which included the Kinship Care Wellbeing Magazine was completed. A message of greeting and acknowledgment was recorded by Minister Blandthorn was posted in the KCV website with carers notified by email to view it

- Epping
- Phillip Island
- Dandenong
- Warrnambool
- Geelong
- Sale
- Shepparton
- Ballarat
- Bendigo
- Morwell
- Melton

Locations of face to face activities in Kinship Care Week & Seminars



Finance Report



The statements below are provided by CSS Partners, GPV/KCV Auditors. A full financial report is available upon request.

Assets and Liabilities Statement As at 30 June 2024

Account	30 June 24	30 June 23
Assets		
Current Assets		
Cash and Cash Equivalents	474,283	342,895
GST Receivable	20,507	0
Total Current Assets	494,790	342,895
Non-Current Assets		
Plant, Equipment and Vehicles	1,346	1,346
Total Non-Current Assets	1,346	1,346
Total Assets	496,136	344,241
Liabilities		
Current Liabilities		
GST Payable	0	5,756
Total Current Liabilities	0	5,756
Other Current Liabilities		
Rounding	(0)	(0)
Total Other Current Liabilities	(0)	(0)
Total Liabilities	(0)	5,756
Net Assets	496,136	338,485
Member's Funds		
Capital Reserve	496,136	338,485
Total Member's Funds	496,136	338,485

**Income and Expenditure Statement
For the year ended 30 June 2024**

Account	2024	2023
Income		
Grant Operating		
Grants	598,365	326,381
Grants - Other	148,415	23,100
Total Grant Operating	746,781	349,481
Membership Fees	1,585	425
Total Income	748,366	349,906
Gross Surplus	748,366	349,906
Other Income		
Other Revenue	0	3,000
Total Other Income	0	3,000
Expenditure		
Accounting Fees	992	942
Bank Fees	108	119
Board and Governance Expenses	1,221	1,376
Cleaning	1,890	0
Client Support Services	7,783	6,136
Computer Expenses	5,330	4,115
Conference & Seminar Costs	248,810	0
Consultancy Fees	279,064	185,400
Donations paid	0	1,030
Fees & Permits	0	185
Hire of Plant & Equipment	4,807	1,464
Meeting Expenses	10,639	7,664
Membership Fees Paid	0	188
Office Expenses	454	0
Postage, Freight & Courier	907	3,116
Printing & Stationery	8,464	12,080
Property Management Fees	0	22,875
Repairs & Maintenance	2,368	1,264
Sundry Expenses	91	0
Training & Development	7,669	0
Travelling Expenses	3,603	3,798
Utilities	6,513	5,258
Total Expenditure	590,714	257,011
Current Year Surplus/ (Deficit) Before Income Tax Adjustments	157,651	95,895
Current Year Surplus/(Deficit) Before Income Tax	157,651	95,895
Net Current Year Surplus After Income Tax	157,651	95,895