

AOC 13/2/09



INQUIRY INTO BETTER SUPPORT FOR CARERS – PUBLIC HEARING - CANBERRA

TO: STANDING COMMITTEE ON FAMILY COMMUNITY HOUSING AND YOUTH
FROM: MS MARY KIRK MS EMMA BALDOCK, CANBERRA MOTHERCRAFT SOCIETY
SUBJECT: GRANDPARENTS PARENTING GRANDCHILDREN
DATE: 10/11/2008

Achieving substantive improvements in quality of life and well being for grandparents raising grandchildren and their families requires legislative and policy changes framed in an intergenerational context using an intersectoral approach.

KEY ISSUES FACED BY GRANPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN

GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN NEED RELEVANT, CURRENT AND ACCESSIBLE **INFORMATION** AS SOON AS THE CHILDREN ARRIVE. RESOURCES DEVELOPED BY COMMUNITY ORGANISATIONS RAPIDLY BECOME OUT OF DATE AND THERE IS NO ONGOING FUNDING TO UPDATE:

This could be improved by:

- A website with information relevant to all grandparents with links to relevant national, state and territory government departments and community organisations informing grandparents of their legal, financial, health, education resources and where to get help,
- Ensuring all state and federal government departments are aware of issues faced by grandparents raising grandchildren

GRANDPARENTS FACE SIGNIFICANT **FINANCIAL** HARDSHIP AND COMPROMISE WHEN THEY TAKE ON PARENTING OF GRANDCHILDREN. GRANDPARENTS CAN BE VERY TIRED AND HAVE LIMITED TIME TO FILL IN ENDLESS COMPLICATED FORMS

- Taxation regulations penalise grandparents who have to pay capital gains tax when selling retirement properties to extend their homes to accommodate grandchildren
- Review of tax laws which penalise grandparents
- Review of benefits grandparents are entitled to when raising grandchildren
- Clear and transparent process to assist access to entitlements

GRANDPARENTS NEED ACCESS TO AFFORDABLE **LEGAL** ADVICE AND SUPPORT

- Grandparents have been forced to spend retirement savings, mortgage property in order to pay legal fees

PARENTING OVER THE AGE OF 55 YEARS HAS SIGNIFICANT **HEALTH** IMPACTS – GRANDPARENTS FACE PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL HEALTH PROBLEMS

- Access to comprehensive physical and emotional health care programs including grief counselling
- Counselling to deal with the disruption that contact with children's parents, dealing with legal issues and 'dealing with the system' that grandparents face
- Coordinated services that include targeted prevention, early intervention and recreation opportunities for grandparents that reduce social isolation, and build family resilience

RECOGNITION OF THE SIGNIFICANT CONTRIBUTION GRANDPARENTS MAKE TO THE **SOCIAL** CAPITAL OF THEIR COMMUNITY AND OUR NATION. FUNDING SHOULD REFLECT THIS:

- Provision of opportunities for training, advocacy and leadership activities to support grandparents to be visible, speak for themselves
- Provision of education and support programs including parenting skills for grandparents who are parenting
- Counselling and mentoring programs for the grandchildren
- Information and education for grandchildren who are being raised by grandparents
- Social activities which bring grandparents and grandchildren together to reduce social isolation and exclusion both grandparents and grandchildren experience
- Respite programs for grandchildren, e.g. camps
- Document the stories of grandchildren being parented by grandparents

FURTHER **RESEARCH** TO IDENTIFY THE EXTENT OF GRANDPARENT FAMILIES, PARTICULARLY INDIGENOUS GRANDPARENT FAMILIES:

- Develop agreed minimum consistent data about children of families presenting to alcohol and other drug and mental health services