

Senate Community Affairs Committee
ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE
FAMILIES, HOUSING, COMMUNITY SERVICES AND
INDIGENOUS AFFAIRS PORTFOLIO
2012-13 Additional Estimates Hearings

Outcome Number: 1

Question No: 100

Topic: Government Support for Grandparent Carers

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Senator Smith asked:

In 2006, the Community and Disability Services Ministers' Conference reached agreement that all jurisdictions would work towards the provision of government support for grandparent carers raising children outside of the foster care system. Could you provide details of what the outcomes were and what work, or recommendations, might have resulted from those particular outcomes?

Answer:

In 2007, an update was provided to the Community and Disability Services Ministers' Conference on this action. It was found that a significant barrier for many grandparents caring for a child in an informal arrangement is having a consistent and recognised method to prove their care-giving status in order to access relevant government and other services.

To address this issue, Ministers agreed in principle to support the Informal Relative Caregiver's Statutory Declaration at a national level, agreeing to individual jurisdictions considering their particular legislative and policy requirements for implementing a version of the Declaration.

The Declaration was implemented in South Australia on 9 May 2007, and similar statutory declarations have since been implemented in the Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, and Victoria.

Within the Commonwealth, a Statutory Declaration may be accepted by Centrelink and Medicare as one piece of evidence of an informal carer's (including grandparent carers') care-giving status.

The Australian Government supports formal and informal grandparent carers by ensuring they are eligible for the full range of government family payments including Family Tax Benefit, Parenting Payment and Child Care Benefit, on the same basis as other families.

The Government has also established specialist Grandparent Advisers to help grandparent carers access Centrelink payments and services and provide referrals to other community service providers. Grandparent Advisers can be accessed in selected Centrelink Customer Service Offices across Australia or via telephone.