



# A FAIRER FUTURE FOR GRANDCHILDREN



Understanding the Impact of the Caring Role  
on Grandparents Raising their Grandchildren







## FOREWORD

A grandparent who takes on the primary care of their grandchildren, often under complex and traumatic family circumstances, is making a selfless decision to prioritise their grandchild's safety and wellbeing.

The grandparent carers I have heard from through my work have been focused on the needs of the children in their care, rather than their own.

Many face challenges in securing the income they need to support the children in their care, to resolve legal issues and in accessing services such as counselling, health care and education.

Accessing services and supports is particularly a concern for grandparent carers in regional and remote areas of Western Australia.

For many grandparent carers, the financial costs of raising children come at a time when their incomes are fixed and do not easily allow for supporting dependents.

I would like to acknowledge the dedicated efforts of the many grandparents who are striving to provide a safe and supportive home life for their grandchildren.

The support of a loving family is one of the key factors young people tell me is important for their wellbeing. Grandparent carers deserve our admiration and need our full support to undertake this vital role.

**Colin Pettit**

Commissioner for  
Children and Young People





## INTRODUCTION

Grandparents have always played a vital role in supporting the health and development of families and communities. For many of us, memories of grandparents are of special times spent together on outings and sleepovers. A growing number of grandparents provide a significant amount of child care facilitating parents returning to the workforce. Some of us imagine what it will mean to be a grandparent one day, of loving the children of our children.

Ultimately across all these scenarios, ongoing responsibility for care and decision-making remains with parents – decisions about schooling, religion, food, discipline and values. Tonight, however, thousands of children in Western Australia will go to bed in the home they share with their grandparents: grandparents who are responsible for their full-time care.

### Grandparent carers making a difference

Grandparent care is the fastest growing form of out-of-home care for vulnerable children in Australia (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019). Children come into grandparents' care when it is unsafe for them to live with their parents, usually due to substance use, mental health issues, incarceration, or domestic violence (Kiraly, 2015). Along with this come experiences of trauma and grief for both grandparents and grandchildren.

Grandparent carers play an integral role not only in the lives of their grandchildren, but within child protection systems and our community.

Grandparent carers keep their grandchildren out of the foster care system, bringing significant social and financial savings to government and the community, now and into the future.

Emerging research evidence demonstrates children in kinship care (including grandparent care) experience better outcomes in health and education, greater placement stability and less placement breakdown than children in foster care (Wellard et al., 2017).

### Formal and informal grandparent carers

Grandparent carers can be considered 'formal' or 'informal.' Formal grandparent carers have the authorised care of their grandchildren via care and protection orders

through the Western Australian Department of Communities. 'Informal' grandparent care is a private family arrangement arising from protection and safety concerns, or the death of a parent(s). A subset of these 'informal' carers has Family Court Orders. The distinction is significant, creating differences in access to financial and other supports.

### A 'hidden population'

Despite their critical role, grandparent carers are largely hidden. There are therefore limited data on how many grandparent carers there are in WA. They are absent in research, service and government data. They are hidden within complex policy and service delivery frameworks that cross multiple jurisdictions and service sectors. As a result, both their unique needs as grandparent carers, and the impact this caring role has on them, are little understood.

### This research

In order to understand the meaning of being a grandparent carer and provide an evidence base to inform policy and service responses, Wanslea has led a three-year, cross-institutional, multi-disciplinary research project.

The aims were to:

1. better understand the impact of the caring role on the mental, physical, social and financial health of grandparent carers
2. identify the gaps and opportunities in the service and policy systems they navigate
3. examine the shared and different experiences of formal and informal grandparent carers.

What emerged was clear evidence of the significant sacrifices grandparent carers make to ensure their grandchildren's needs are met. Grandparents derive satisfaction and joy from caring for their grandchildren, but do so at great expense to many dimensions of their wellbeing. This personal cost is compounded by having to navigate complex service and policy systems: the very systems that render them invisible and within which their needs are unrecognised and unaddressed.

### Creating a fairer future for grandchildren

For grandchildren to flourish, grandparent carers need ongoing assistance and recognition to support and sustain them in their caring role. A call to action to government, service providers and the community represents an invitation; an invitation to step up, as grandparent carers do, to create a fairer future for grandchildren.

*It is so much harder to do the fun stuff that I used to be able to do with my grandchildren. We still do fun stuff, but it is now in the role of parent/child...*

*The least enjoyable thing is knowing I am getting older and worrying about their future if my health deteriorates or that I may pass away before they are all able to care for themselves... The day to day care of young children can take its toll.*

**Grandparent Carer, Survey Participant**

## RESEARCH METHODS

To understand the impact of the caring role on grandparent carers, and their relationships with the service and policy systems they are navigating, the following activities were undertaken:

**A SURVEY OF GRANDPARENT CARERS IN WA**

**622** Participants

**584** Using ECU's Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Survey

- ▶ **23.6%** Aboriginal grandparent carers
- ▶ **Katie Bennell**, Aboriginal Research Assistant (**Wanslea**) contributed significantly to engaging Aboriginal grandparent carers to participate in the survey
- ▶ **Multigenerational Family Matrices (for Grandcarers)** was incorporated into the survey data to increase the diversity of grandparent voices heard, accessing the experiences of **38 grandparent carers from remote Aboriginal communities** in the Kimberley, WA

**Domains covered included:**

- ▶ family structure
- ▶ service barriers
- ▶ health status
- ▶ culture
- ▶ grandparenting issues
- ▶ food security
- ▶ family conflict

## SERVICE AND POLICY MAPPING

**Interviewed** **29** Representatives

**Conducted** **9** Focus groups

**Mapped** **10** WA

**9** Primary acts

**24** Key stakeholders' organisations

**40** Front line service providers

**18** Federal government social policy documents

**46** Subsidiary acts of legislation State and Federal

**Curtin University**

**CAMPS**

Leadership camps for grandchildren were developed and evaluated

**49** Children attended camps across **3** sites

The children completed **surveys and focus groups** and...

**34** Grandparents were interviewed to **identity outcomes** from the camp

**Wanslea**  
with families, for children since 1943

## DEVELOPMENT AND IMPLEMENTATION

- ▶ The **Grandcare Research Advisory and Working Groups** guided research development, design, recruitment, dissemination and knowledge translation
- ▶ **Wanslea** has been providing services to grandparent carers since 2002 and is using the research results to advocate for a fairer future for grandchildren
- ▶ **Lotterywest** funded the research

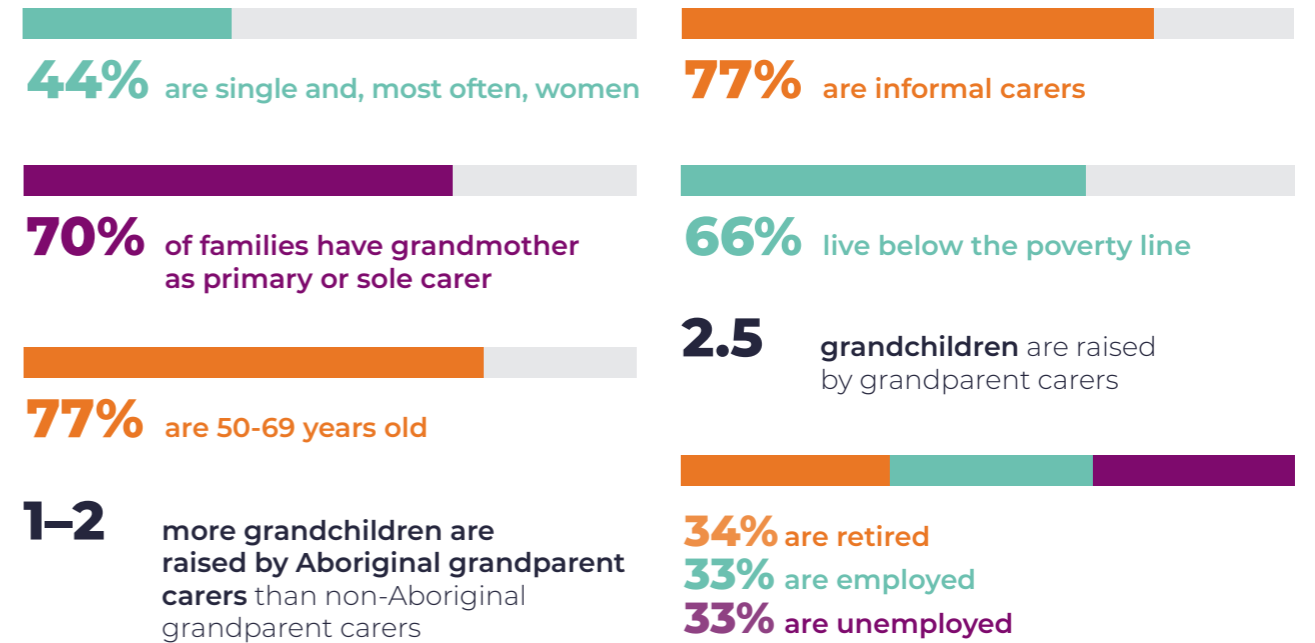
- ▶ **Grandparents Rearing Grandchildren WA** is a peer-led organisation supporting grandparent carers. They are key partners in the advocacy campaign



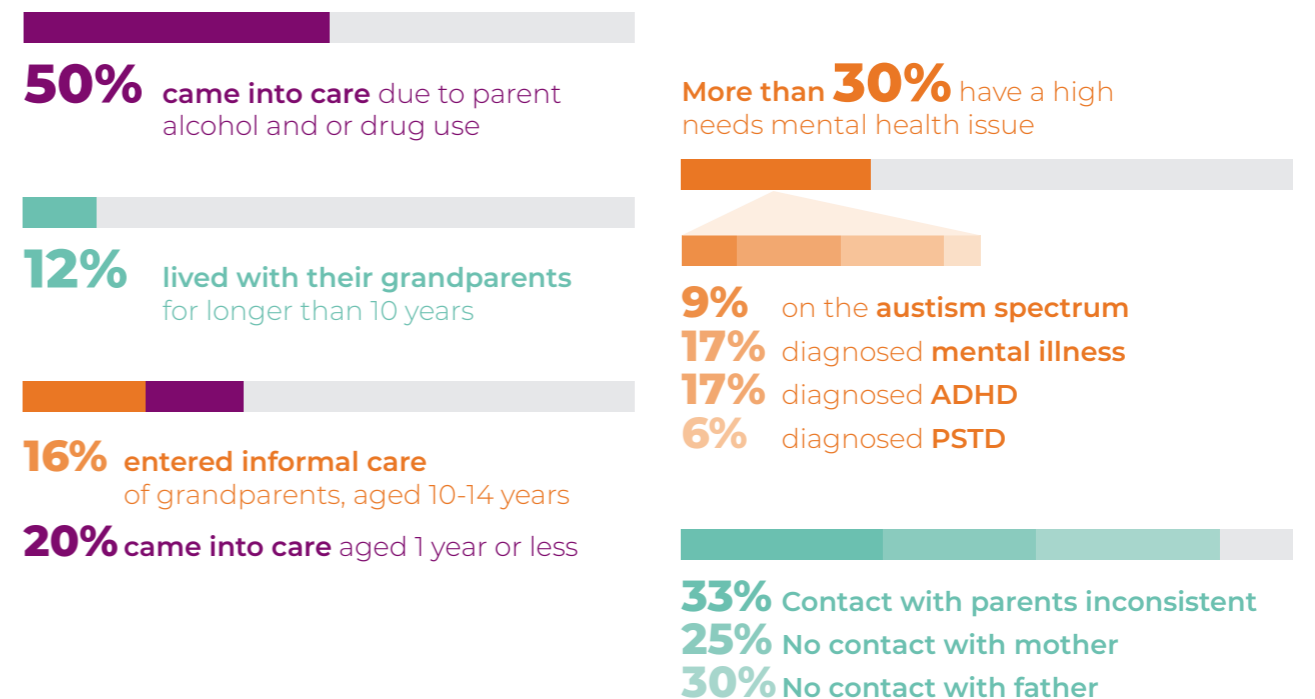
The research had ethics approval from the Edith Cowan Human Research Ethics Committee (#20010) and Curtin University Human Research Ethics Committee (HRE2018-003).

## WHO ARE GRANDPARENT CARERS AND THE CHILDREN THEY CARE FOR?

### GRANDPARENT CARERS



### GRANDCHILDREN





1

## KEY RESEARCH FINDINGS

**POVERTY** is entered into or exacerbated for grandparent carers when they take responsibility for the care of their grandchildren. Grandparents make changes to their employment, finances and housing to become carers. Poverty has day-to-day meaning for grandparent carers and their grandchildren.

2

**NAVIGATING SYSTEMS** is complex and inequitable. Service and legal systems neither recognise nor respond to their unique needs. Access to universal services (health, education, income support) is inequitable for informal grandparent carers due to their lack of legal recognition.

3

**ABORIGINAL GRANDPARENT CARERS** experience specific challenges related to poverty and service exclusion, while also enjoying a higher degree of satisfaction and support from their social network.

4

**HEALTH IMPACTS** occur across all aspects of grandparents' health – their social, physical, mental, emotional and financial health. They are worse off compared to their age cohort.

5

**TRAUMA, LOVE AND JOY** intersect. Grandchildren come into a grandparents' care for reasons that create trauma. Grandparents derive satisfaction and joy in providing their grandchildren safety, security and love.





## CHILDREN IN POVERTY AND FINANCIAL STRESS

Children in the care of their grandparents are living in households marked by poverty, regardless of whether their grandparents are formal or informal carers. Grandparent carers identified financial distress as one of their most important issues.

*I enjoy being a grandparent but it's really hard for me to pay my bills and living expenses. I need to have repairs to my car but because of the difficulties in my house I am not able to do it.*

Grandparent Carer, Survey Participant

### Living below the poverty line

The majority of grandparent carers surveyed (67%) live below the poverty line (under \$50,000 per annum), with a subset of 16.6% existing on less than \$19,000 per annum. Despite formal grandparent carers receiving a foster care subsidy, there is little difference in formal (65%) and informal carers (66%) living below the poverty line. Aboriginal people were over-represented in the group on less than \$19,000 per year.

This financial pressure is compounded by the fact that grandparent carers are raising a larger family (2.5 children) than the Australian average (1.9). Often the children have specialised needs due to their experiences of trauma, and poverty can compound this impact by impeding access to specialised health and educational support.

### Changes in employment

Nearly half of grandparent carers (48%) made changes in their employment to care for their grandchildren: decreasing work hours (32% of those who made changes), becoming unemployed (33%) and entering retirement (27%). Metropolitan-based Aboriginal people reported the highest unemployment rate (67%) while a larger proportion of informal carers were retired (35%) compared to formal grandparent carers (23%).

### Changes to housing

Just over one-quarter (26%) of grandparent carers made changes to their housing when their grandchildren came to live with them. Of those who made changes, 59% moved to a larger home or extended, 22% moved to preserve their grandchildren's anonymity, while 19% moved to a rental or a smaller home for financial reasons. Some commented they took on extra debt or withdrew from their superannuation to meet housing costs. More female grandparent carers (20%) than males (8%) were in public rentals, while the majority of metropolitan-based Aboriginal people were in public rentals (62%). Social housing carries with it different experiences of choice and flexibility in terms of how many people can reside in a dwelling, or options surrounding moving or extending premises.

### Poverty has meaning every day

Of those surveyed:



### Income support and financial assistance

20% of grandparent carers receive NO financial support from family or government in raising their grandchildren. The Commonwealth's Family Tax Benefit was the most common source of financial support (74%), although only 67% of informal carers accessed this compared to 87% of formal carers.

Less than 25% of grandparent carers received formal state-based financial support, namely the General Foster Carer Subsidy or Special Guardianship Order payment. Informal grandparent carers are ineligible for these subsidies. In 18% of surveyed families, the parents of the children provided financial support to the grandparent carer, with Aboriginal grandparent carers in regional areas the most likely to receive this kind of assistance.

### Summary

Access to Federal and State income support is inequitable and inadequate. Family Tax Benefit is clearly an important payment for grandparent carers, however is not an income as such. A safe and regular income would lift children and older people out of poverty, sustain care arrangements and allow children access to specialist services to respond to their experiences of trauma. A payment provides recognition and visibility, embedding grandparent carers in the service system.





## NAVIGATING SYSTEMS

The sheer complexity of the service system grandparent carers navigate creates challenges and exacerbates inequities between formal and informal grandparent carers.

### **An absent service system**

There are very limited services targeted specifically to grandparent carers (one Federal and four State-based services). Eligibility criteria and geographical coverage mean services are not available to all grandparent carers across the State. Both service providers and grandparent carers indicate they highly value targeted services. There are services for which grandparent carers might be eligible, but a lack of information for grandparent carers, referral barriers and eligibility criteria reduces service accessibility.

### **Hidden in the service system**

Many of the services that participated in the study do not collect data on grandparent carers – identifying them as such, how many they provide a service to, or what services are provided. As a result, they are not recognised as a unique group and service responses are not evidence-informed.

### **Complexity and confusion**

Once grandparent carers get to services they consistently experience confusion in navigating systems (76% of survey participants). Service providers also report on complex and exclusionary referral pathways resulting in poor access to services. Informal grandparent carers often attempt to access services for their grandchildren without any proof of care while there is little to no access to public legal services to ensure legal security (or recognition) of care arrangements.

### **Safety and shame**

Experiences of shame and fear adversely impact grandparent carers' attempts to access support. This is particularly relevant in seeking Family Tax Benefit (FTB). One service provider articulated that grandparent carers are concerned that if they try to access FTB it may mean parents remove the child so as not to lose access to this money, putting the child's safety at risk. Shame compounds this: "You know it's not easy to have to ring somebody to say, 'look I'm caring for my grandchild because my adult child isn't doing it or can't do it. Or was doing it poorly.'" (Service Provider). Therefore, a FTB system where the payment follows the child would alleviate some of these risks.

*I think because of their age, they don't know where to go, because they never had to contact a service provider for any assistance while they were bringing up their own children. Suddenly having to look after their grandchild, it's where do I go, who do I contact, where do I start looking for assistance, some support?*

**Service Provider,  
Interview Participant**



*I think (what) gets a little bit forgotten, is grandparents actually know what they need; they just don't know how to access it. They know... what they need to do to do okay and well with these kids, they just don't know how to access supports, whether that's money, whether that's... whatever, but they don't know really...*

Service Provider

### Are services helpful?

Grandparents were asked to evaluate their experience of their service and social networks across six domains: financial, social, emotional, education, practice and legal issues. At least one-third of survey participants received no help with any of these issues. For those who did access support, one-fifth found it unhelpful or neutral. Social networks were helpful for emotional support (48% of respondents) and social help (45%), while agencies were most helpful in providing educational support (41%) and financial help (42%). The most useful services were identified as support groups, school personnel and psychologists/counsellors. The least helpful support came from major government departments and the parents of the children.

### Policy responses

Grandparent carers are largely invisible within the current policy and strategy of Australian governments. They are not identified in the policy systems that directly impact them: child protection, health, education, income support, child care and housing. Therefore, their intersecting issues of inequity between formal and informal carers, intergenerational poverty, gender equity and ageing, are not addressed in these policy spaces either.

### What does it mean to be a formal or informal carer?

While experiences of poverty are no different, formal grandparent carers report services are significantly more helpful for financial, social, education and practical support than do informal carers. Formal carers also report higher scores for the helpfulness of their social network. Their formal status appears to bring greater recognition within both service and social systems, inviting a different response from those systems. The financial support received may also mean enhanced opportunities for accessing their social network.

### Service priority areas

Grandparents expressed a need for assistance with financial support, respite, counselling, legal guidance and assistance, practical hands-on help and case coordination within a system of easily accessible information and low barriers to entry. Their top priority was receiving the same financial support as foster carers as well as Centrelink assistance. The lowest-ranked service priority was engagement with the (WA) Department of Communities. Reconciling these priorities represents a challenge: how best to implement a state-based subsidy system in a way that is accessible and amenable to grandparent carers? Recognition as a carer and access to Legal Aid were also ranked highly. Service providers, in turn, identified a need for early intervention, crisis responses and case coordination approaches that are culturally responsive.

### Summary

The distinction between formal and informal carers is significant, creating differences in access to financial support and also to universal and specialist services. Establishing ALL grandparent carers as a specific demographic with unique needs within child protection, health, education and housing sectors will ultimately ensure services are readily located and responsive.

In order to ensure the intersecting needs of grandparent carers are met, specific issues need to be addressed:

- 1 a state-based **subsidy payment**
- 2 reforms to how **FTB** is paid
- 3 access to **legal services**
- 4 robust **service data**
- 5 coordinated **policy responses**
- 6 an **evidence of care system**







## THE UNIQUE EXPERIENCES OF ABORIGINAL GRANDPARENT CARERS

Aboriginal grandparent carers are over-represented in the total number of grandparent-headed families but under-represented in service delivery. Aboriginal grandparent carers experience greater financial hardship, yet higher levels of social and emotional wellbeing than non-Aboriginal carers. The need for culturally safe services is evident.

### Poverty and housing

Aboriginal grandparent carers experience higher levels of poverty: of those grandparent carers living on less than \$19,000 a year 80% identified as Aboriginal. Aboriginal grandparent carers are also more likely to be single and more likely to be living in social housing than non-Aboriginal grandparent carers. Aboriginal families experienced greater food insecurity, with almost 1 in 5 metropolitan and 13% of regional Aboriginal grandparent carers reporting there had not been enough to eat in the last twelve months. This compared to just three percent of non-Aboriginal grandparent carers.

### Family arrangements

Aboriginal grandparent carers care for 1-2 more grandchildren than their non-Aboriginal peers (an average of 3.5 children compared to 2.19). Aboriginal grandparent carers also tended to be younger. They were more likely to be formal rather than informal carers, perhaps reflecting the over-representation of Aboriginal children in Western Australia's child protection system. Aboriginal grandparent carers report more help from their social and family networks.

### Service barriers and exclusion

Aboriginal grandparent carers are less likely to be service seeking. This has historical and contemporary roots in fear and distrust of child welfare authorities (Gair & Zuchowski, 2019). Aboriginal grandparent carers frequently fall through service gaps because their kinship naming system is not compatible with the Western paradigm.

Recent research on the traditional Nyoongar family system (moort) shows Nyoongar families in and around Perth WA, still operate with an extended family system with high levels of involvement and cooperation with uncles, aunts and grandparents providing a broad social support network (Robertson et al, in press).

Aboriginal grandparents rated cultural needs as a much higher priority than non-Aboriginal grandparent carers. Regional Aboriginal grandparent carers reported experiencing cultural issues in engaging with services, such as distrust, cultural differences and stigma, more frequently than metropolitan Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal groups. Together, these findings highlight the need for services that are culturally safe and place-based.

### Satisfaction and care

Aboriginal grandparent carers were more likely to report being extremely satisfied with their caring role (for metropolitan Aboriginal people this was 53%, regional Aboriginal people 43% and non-Aboriginal people 29%). The percentage of Aboriginal people reporting satisfaction as a non-issue due to lack of choice was lower (16% metropolitan, 14% regional Aboriginal grandparents compared to 24% of non-Aboriginal people). Collectivist understandings may mean people expect, and are prepared, to grandparent and are therefore able to better cope with the additional demands of the caregiving role.

### Health

Aboriginal grandparent carers reported better general health, and had higher mean scores for emotional wellbeing and social functioning than non-Aboriginal grandparent carers. However, they experienced a decrease in role functioning due to physical health.

### Summary

In Western Australia an Aboriginal child is 18.1 times more likely to be in out of home care than a non-Aboriginal child (Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2019). Culturally safe services and access to income support are essential for sustaining Aboriginal kinship placements to keep children safe in culture. The need for service providers to be culturally responsive and flexible enough to be able to work with multiple approaches in cultural, family and parenting practices is essential.

*I adore my grandies. I thoroughly enjoy my time with them. I teach them about our Aboriginal culture and the importance of knowing who they are and where they fit within our families. To know culture is to accept identity.*

**Grandparent Carer, Survey Participant**



*I no longer have a life that matches my age.*

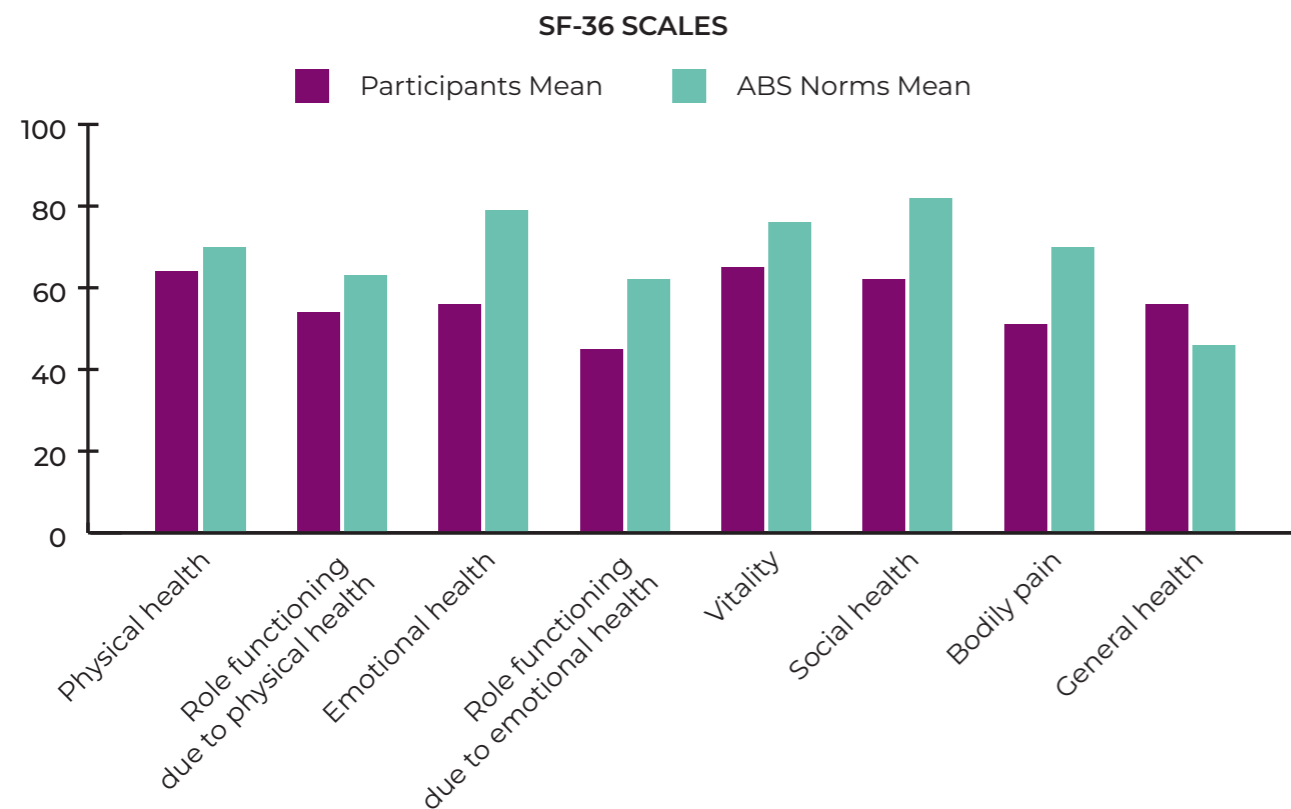
**Grandparent Carer, Survey Participant**

## HEALTH IMPACT ON GRANDPARENT CARERS

There are multiple dimensions to health: social, financial, physical, emotional, vitality and pain that contribute to general health. Grandparent carers experience a detrimental impact on all aspects of their health. Not only is the care role demanding, but poverty impacts negatively on health.

### Poor health

Included in the survey was a standardised health assessment (SF-36 Health Assessment) a self-reporting tool measuring health status. A lower score reflects poorer health. The results of grandparent carers were compared to the general Australian population in the same age ranges.



Across all grandparent carer groups, formal and informal, Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal, grandparent carers score lower across all dimensions of health than their peers (see below). Their physical and emotional health puts limits on their role functioning, their performance and participation in activities. On three key health dimensions, emotional, social and bodily pain, grandparent carers scored approximately 25% lower than community norms.

Two-thirds of all grandparent carers reported having existing medical conditions. The most common conditions were mobility (24%), cardiovascular health (24%), mental illness (16%) and diabetes (14%). Nearly half indicated their medical condition interfered with their ability to care for their grandchildren. Aboriginal grandparent carers were more likely to have a diagnosed medical condition, though only a third indicated this impacted their care abilities.

### Grandchildren's health

All the grandchildren in the care of the study participants have at least one adverse health condition, with a range of 1-10 conditions, posing additional stressors for grandparent carers.

### Summary

Taking on the role of grandparent carer impacts all dimensions of a person's health and wellbeing. Changes to living arrangements (housing and employment) as well as the demands of the caring role are likely to contribute to this. However, the link between health and poverty is well-known. It is vital therefore that grandparent carers have the financial and material resources they need to maintain their age-specific health.

*That it is relentless – there is never, NEVER, EVER, EVER a break. That I am worn down, I cannot recuperate. That I cannot rest if I am tired or ill.*

*That there is no backup, no support. That the kids have problems. That I feel I am on my own and the marriage has suffered. That I cannot be a normal retired person. I cannot go out to places, have interests, hobbies or sport of my own.*

*There is no break, there is not time. I no longer can talk to others the same age. I have nothing but kids to talk about.*

**Grandparent Carer, Survey Participant**



*The least enjoyable thing is knowing I am getting older and worrying about their future if my health deteriorates or that I may pass away before they are all able to care for themselves...*

**Grandparent Carer, Survey Participant**

## SATISFACTION AND SAFETY

A demonstrable commitment by grandparent carers to the grandchildren they are raising is evident throughout the research; their key concerns focus not on themselves but their grandchildren and their needs.

### Satisfaction

Grandparents were asked how satisfied they were with their role. Just over one-fifth (21%) said satisfaction was not an issue as they did not have a choice, while 4% were dissatisfied with their role. The great majority of grandparent carers (76%) experienced satisfaction with their carer role. Dissatisfaction was more likely to be reported by non-Aboriginal grandparents while those who were extremely satisfied were more likely to be legally recognised formal carers (39% compared to 30%).

### Joy in being a grandparent carer

Grandparents were asked what they enjoyed most about being a grandparent carer (see below). Perhaps related to the reasons children were in their care the most common source of joy was providing their grandchildren safety and security (29%). Mutual love and joy (21%) and the close relationship and company (15%) were the other most common responses.

- Giving them safety and security
- Mutual love and joy
- Close relationship and company
- Watching them grow up
- Knowing they are safe and happy
- I can make a difference
- Growth, development and stable education
- Being involved with their lives
- Keeps me young and feeling useful
- Everything
- Keeping the family together (out of foster care)



Their greatest worry was the future of their grandchildren (17%) due to a grandparent carer's health and/or death. Day-to-day demands of caring left grandparents tired and exhausted (13%), in a role they found stressful (12%), with a lack of support from those around them (9%).

### Priority issues for grandparent carers

Based on a set of priorities identified in earlier research, survey participants were asked to rank their key concerns for both themselves as grandparent carers and for their grandchildren.



### Summary

Grandparent carers show a keen focus on the needs of their grandchildren to address their trauma, as well as participate in normal developmental pathways such as school and recreation. Grandparent carers, despite the challenges and hardships, experience joy and satisfaction in providing their grandchildren with love and safety. Children deserve love, safety and living arrangements to allow them to grow, thrive and achieve positive life outcomes. Children being raised by their grandparents deserve this regardless of their care arrangements.

*He [grandson] has shown me a new world full of unconditional love and unending joy. What a joy to see him grow healthy and happy... I don't feel that I have done anything special for my wee man but love him...*

*He thrives on hugs and kisses and so do I, we love each other, and I think that is the key. Without wanting to sound melodramatic, he is the reason I get up in the morning and I thank God for entrusting him to my care.*

**Grandparent Carer, Survey Participant**



## A CALL TO ACTION

For grandchildren to continue to flourish in the consistency, security and love grandparent care affords them, an effort across State and Commonwealth governments, service providers and the West Australian community are required.

### How can the WA community help?

- ▶ Lobby your state and Federal Member of Parliament to meet the calls to action for government. Visit [www.wanslea.asn.au](http://www.wanslea.asn.au) to access a letter or email-writing kit
- ▶ Include grandchildren and their grandparents in your school, social and community life
- ▶ Have financial, legal or education expertise? Expert volunteers are highly valued – contact Wanslea or Grandparents Rearing Grandchildren WA Inc to offer your specialist skills

### How can service providers help?

- ▶ Access research evidence to understand the impact of the caring role on this group
- ▶ Within your service, recognise grandparent carers as an unique group with particular needs
- ▶ Record grandparent-headed families in service data to track and respond to service need
- ▶ Ensure referral processes and the entry into your service are clear and available in multiple formats (ie by phone, online and face-to-face referrals)
- ▶ Promote a public education strategy to help the community understand the role and needs of grandparent carer

### How can the WA State Government help?

- ▶ Introduce a Grandparent Carers' Subsidy - a regular, accessible and equitable means of financial support
- ▶ Create an evidence of care system to facilitate access to universal and specialist State and Commonwealth government services and income support
- ▶ Institute Grandparent Carer Advisors in key services, namely the Department of Communities, Health and Education
- ▶ Fund a specialist legal resource within Community Legal Centres with expertise in the Family Court, Children's Court (care and protection orders), wills and superannuation

### How can the Commonwealth Government help?

- ▶ Reform Centrelink procedures so Family Tax Benefit follows the child
- ▶ Introduce minimum required turnaround times for grandparent carer's Centrelink claims
- ▶ Remove all activity requirements from income support payments for all grandparent carers
- ▶ Create an evidence of care system (compatible with State Government systems)
- ▶ Introduce a Census question to track changes in the number of grandparent headed families over time

## REFERENCES

This report is based on the following full academic reports available on request from Wanslea.

Blundell, B., Gilbert, J., Fernandes, T., Chugani, S., & Carter, K. (2019). *Social delivery and social policy gaps, barriers and enablers for Western Australian grandparent carers*. Perth, WA: Curtin University

Coall, D.A., Wenden, E., Karthigesu, S. P., Robertson, F., Dare, J., & Marquis, R. (2020). *The hidden voices of grandparents raising grandchildren: A state-wide survey*. Perth, WA: Edith Cowan University

### Other References

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2019). Child Protection Australia 2017–18. Child Welfare Series no. 70. Cat. no. CWS 65. Canberra: AIHW <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/childprotection/child-protection-australia-2017-18/data>

Gair, S., & Zuchowski, I. (2019). Grandparents battle to be key stakeholders in protecting grandchildren. *Aotearoa New Zealand Social Work*, 31(1), 101-113. <https://doi.org/10.11157/anzswj-vol31iss1id543>

Kiraly, M. (2015). *A review of kinship carer surveys: The "Cinderella" of the care system?* Australian Institute of Family Studies. <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/sites/default/files/publication-documents/cfca-paper31.pdf>

Robertson, F., Nannup, N., Coall, D.A., McAullay, D., & Nannup, A. (in press). *Moort: A Celebration of a Traditional and Contemporary Aboriginal Family System*. Batchelor Press.

Wellard, S., Meakings, S., Farmer, E., & Hunt, J. (2017). *Growing up in kinship care: Experiences as adolescents and outcomes in young adulthood*. Grandparents Plus.

[https://www.grandparentsplus.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2020/02/GUIKC\\_Full\\_Report\\_FINAL.pdf](https://www.grandparentsplus.org.uk/wpcontent/uploads/2020/02/GUIKC_Full_Report_FINAL.pdf)

Western Australian Department of Communities. (2019). 2018-2019 Annual Report. <https://www.communities.wa.gov.au/media/2030/department-of-communities-annual-report-2018-19.pdf>





## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Wanslea wishes to thank research partners:

### Lotterywest

**Grandparents Rearing  
Grandchildren WA**

**Edith Cowan University**

**Curtin University**



**Curtin University**

Wanslea pays thanks to members of the Grandparent Carer Research Advisory and Working Groups for their active participation in shaping the research.

### **Wendy Ayres**

Wanslea

### **Michelle Jenkins**

Community Vision

### **Jo-Anne Abbott**

Department of Communities

### **Clara Kirika**

Department of Communities

### **Katie Bennell**

Wanslea

### **Robin McMillan**

Grandparent Carer

### **Barbara Blundell**

Curtin University

### **Lois May**

Cultural Expert

### **Ann Cicchini**

Grandparent Carer

### **Karen Poole**

Centrelink

### **Robyn Clarke** MLA

West Australian Parliament

### **Jodie Reynolds**

Department of Communities

### **David Coall**

Edith Cowan University

### **Kate Riddell**

Department of Communities

### **Robyn Collard**

Wanslea

### Senator **Dean Smith**

West Australian Senator  
Commonwealth Parliament

### **Jo Collins**

Wanslea

### **Jan Standen** President

Grandparents Rearing  
Grandchildren

### **Kati Francis**

Wanslea

### **Mark Teale**

Council of the Ageing WA

### **Dianne Franklyn**

Grandparent Carer

### *Special thanks to*

### **Laura Gray**

Grandparent Carer

### **Debbie Henderson**

Family Inclusion Network WA

### **Denise Gray** Project Officer

Grandcare Research

### **Chrissie Easton**

Communications Officer  
Grandcare Research

Our deepest thanks to the grandparent carers and service providers who participated in the research and provided their valuable insights into the experience and impact of being a grandparent carer. Thank you particularly to grandparent carers for trusting us with your stories and experiences, and your faith the research will be used to create a fairer future for your grandchildren.

### **Scarborough Office**

110 Scarborough Beach Rd  
Scarborough  
WA 6019

### **Postal Address**

PO Box 211  
Scarborough  
WA 6922

**Telephone** (08) 9245 2441

**Fax** (08) 9245 2481

