

Grandcarers WA Position Paper

Subject

Requirement for a regular fortnightly payment to support grandchildren being raised by grandparents

Background

Many grandchildren find themselves in the care of their grandparents due to challenging circumstances such as parental illness, addiction, or other unforeseen events. These children rely on their grandparents to provide a stable and loving home, often during a vulnerable period in their lives. However, the financial resources available to many grandcarers, who may be pensioners or on fixed incomes, are insufficient to meet the added costs of caregiving.

This financial strain can make it difficult for grandcarers to fully provide for the needs of their grandchildren, which may include education, healthcare, and general well-being. It is crucial to ensure that these grandchildren have the necessary financial support through a regular fortnightly payment, ensuring they grow up in a secure and nurturing environment.

The United Nations General Assembly adopted the “Convention on the Rights of the Child” in 1989, with it coming into force in 1990. Australia has endorsed this Convention, which mandates that federal and state governments shall respect and ensure the rights set forth in the present Convention to each child within their jurisdiction **without discrimination of any kind**, irrespective of the child's or his or her parent's or legal guardian's race, colour, sex, language, religion, political or other opinion, national, ethnic or social origin, property, disability, birth or **other status**¹.

Position

Grandchildren raised by grandcarers gain crucial stability and security, often keeping them out of the foster care system. Coming from challenging backgrounds, these children rely on grandcarers for a safe, nurturing environment. While the dedication of these grandcarers is commendable, the priority must be ensuring the grandchildren receive the care they need. Recognising and supporting the grandcarers' commitment is vital to the children's well-being and future but grandcarers must be supported financially to be able to support their grandchildren.

Recognising the financial costs associated with raising a child, the WA state government provides support payments to foster parents raising to foster children, amounting to around \$500 per fortnight per child or approximately \$13,000 per child per year. This acknowledgment of the significant expenses involved in ensuring a child's well-being and development should extend to grandparents raising their grandchildren, who face similar financial challenges. Grandcarers in a similar position receive \$1,000 per child per year which is markedly different to the foster payment.

Implementing regular fortnightly payments for grandcarers raising their grandchildren would align with the **no discrimination** principles of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and reflect the WA state government's understanding of the costs involved in providing adequate care. By extending this financial assistance, we can ensure that all children, regardless of their living arrangements and/or status, can thrive in a stable and supportive environment.

Supporting grandchildren being raised by grandcarers is not only a matter of social justice but also makes economic sense. Research shows that children raised by grandcarers tend to have better physical, emotional, and cognitive development outcomes compared to those in foster care or other arrangements. Financial support for these grandcarers would ensure that more children can grow up in stable and loving homes, leading to better long-term outcomes and ensure they are afforded the same rights and opportunities as foster children.

Conclusion

There is an immediate need for a regular fortnightly payment to support grandchildren being raised by grandparents. This policy would ensure that these children receive the best opportunity possible to develop and thrive by providing much-needed assistance to those selflessly caring for them. Recognising the invaluable contribution of these grandcarers to our communities is essential for the children's well-being and future.

This is an urgent issue requiring attention, and we urge the WA state government to take immediate steps to support grandchildren in our community, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of the Child.

¹Ref: <https://humanrights.gov.au/our-work/childrens-rights/convention-rights-child>