



GRANDPARENTS PARENTING GRANDCHILDREN

because of alcohol and other drugs



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Acknowledgements

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- The grandparents who have generously supported this project and shared their experiences:
 - the grandchildren and families of grandchildren who are parenting the grandchildren
 - service providers and policy makers
 - our partners from the Youth Coalition, Alcohol & Drug Foundation ACT and Relationships Australia.

To service providers and professionals, we trust this report increases your understanding of the issues faced by grandparents raising grandchildren and supports you to support these families.

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1 Executive summary

This report is the report of the ‘Supporting Grandparents Parenting Grandchildren of Families affected by Alcohol and Other Drugs’ project funded by National Illicit Drug Strategy—Strengthening and Supporting Families Coping with Illicit Drug Use measure. The report discusses the experiences of grandparents who parent their grandchildren because of parental drug and/or alcohol use, and the issues they face. What follows is a description of the project, its implementation and outcomes.

Concept

The Canberra Mothercraft Society has conducted primary and secondary research into the needs of grandparents parenting their grandchildren and has identified a significantly under-supported segment within that population.

In November 2004, Canberra Mothercraft Society received a grant through ACT Health Alcohol and Drug Policy Unit, from the National Illicit Drug Strategy, Commonwealth Department of Family and Community Services to work with grandparents who are parenting because of alcohol and other drug issues.

Aim and objectives of the project

The project’s overall aim was to increase the visibility of grandparents who are raising their grandchildren because of the effects of alcohol and other drugs in the children’s family of origin. Specifically, the project sought to:

- strengthen family resilience through appropriate referral and service enhancement to meet the specific needs of identified group
- identify the needs and aspirations of grandparents and grandchildren in relation to family issues due to alcohol and other drugs
- enhance current services for grandparents by raising awareness, increasing understanding and providing information.

Key successes

The project has:

- raised the profile of grandparents and the grandchildren they are raising because of alcohol and other drug issues
- enhanced understanding and increased knowledge among service providers, policy makers and the community about the needs of strengthened family resilience, reduced personal isolation and social disruption experienced by grandparents and the grandchildren they are raising because of alcohol and other drug issues
- built the capacity of service providers and policy makers to identify and meet the needs of grandparents raising grandchildren because of alcohol and other drug issues.

Risks

Recently emerging evidence in drug and alcohol and mental health fields (Australian Infant, Child, Adolescent and Family Mental Health Association 2004) indicates an awareness that these are the ‘invisible children’ (ACT Health 2004) because they are unrecognised in service delivery (UK

When shifting the responsibility of raising these children to their grandparents, governments must acknowledge that these are grandparents who voluntarily accept this added and unanticipated burden of care.

Advisory Council on the Misuse of Drugs 2003). Research (National Drug Research Institute and the Centre for Adolescent Health 2004) indicates that family represents the single most important risk and protective factor for drug abuse. Of particular significance is the quality of parent/child relationship.

Families in which a parent uses alcohol or other drugs are at an increased risk of isolation, family disruption, and disorganisation. In addition they are subject to relationship conflict, increased poverty and housing problems, and poor physical, emotional and social health outcomes. These all have significant impact on the child.

“ Children exposed to the prenatal and environmental effects of parental drug use are amongst the most needy members of our community. These effects, combined with the devastation of finding their parents dead from a drug overdose or the grief associated with being abandoned arguably leaves one with one of the most ‘at risk’ group of children that our society has seen (Patton 2003a, p3)”.

Organisational summary

Canberra Mothercraft Society has a history of identifying gaps in services to young families in the ACT and region and implementing services to close those gaps. The mission of the Canberra Mothercraft Society is ‘Towards Healthy Families’ and as part of this mission, Canberra Mothercraft Society has adopted a community development approach to research, identify and analyse the needs of families of young children in the ACT.

Canberra Mothercraft Society’s provision of services through QEII Family Centre within a primary health context brings the service into contact with the effects of parental drug use on children.

Analysis

What has become evident through this project and in health, child protection and community service provision, is that an increasing number of individuals with illicit substance use are also parents. People aged between 18 and 35 are the group most likely in the population to be addicted to illicit substances and also the most likely to bear children. There has been little recognition of the needs of their children. In the ACT there is a lack of systemic identification of the parental role of many adult alcohol and other drug users and the complex needs of these families and possible risks for their children.

Effective treatment of the parent’s drug misuse can enhance parenting capacity but it is not enough. Services must see the children behind the client and recognise their responsibility to ensuring the child’s well being. Substance misuse services must become family-focussed and child friendly. By working together services can take many practical steps to engage parents in their parenting role and enhance the health and well being of affected children.

In deteriorating situations many grandparents become the carers of these children. The need for early identification and intervention to assist children affected by parental drug use and their grandparents who are raising them is apparent in the ACT and surrounding region, and mirrors the research findings (Patton 2003). This report identifies the needs, hopes and expectations of grandparents parenting grandchildren because of parental drug and alcohol use.

When shifting the responsibility of raising these children to their grandparents, governments must acknowledge that these are grandparents who voluntarily accept this added and unanticipated

burden of care. It is a burden of love—but it comes at a high price: a price these grandparents pay physically, financially and personally as they put their own lives on hold.

Therefore there are significant implications for social and emotional support, budget allocation and service delivery. This report provides grandparents, service providers, community workers, government and the general public with valuable and relevant information concerning grandparents who have primary care of their grandchildren and the associated issues.

Key findings of the project

In conclusion, recommendations are made to inform sustainable future directions for service provision and policy to support grandparents parenting grandchildren because of parental drug and alcohol use. The report and recommendations will be made widely available to federal, state and territory governments, public and private sector policy makers, service providers and community organisations and services.

Achieving substantive improvements in well being for grandparents raising grandchildren because of alcohol and other drug issues, and their families requires new legislative and policy changes framed in an intergenerational context.

2 Key recommendations

- 1** The voices of grandparents parenting grandchildren affected by alcohol and drug issues should be heard and listened to through regular consultation.
- 2** Use a collaborative intersectoral approach dealing with issues to do with grandparents parenting grandchildren, establishing a cross-sectoral reference group to inform future policy and service provision for families affected by alcohol and drug issues.
- 3** Coordinated early intervention and prevention education and counseling programs for grandparent families at risk of the impact of alcohol and drug with financial support to sustain programs that inform and educate, reduce social isolation and build family resilience and support networks.
- 4** Ameliorate the direct financial burden of the grandparents through recognition of the special needs in relation to governmental financial assistance to grandparents.
- 5** Further research to identify the needs of grandparent families' especially indigenous families using an agreed minimum consistent data about children of families presenting to alcohol and other drug services.
- 6** Coordinated services that include targeted prevention, early intervention, and recreation opportunities for children and enhance the engagement and participation of children with substance dependent parents in social, recreational and educational activities.
- 7** Strengthening family resilience through advocacy, mediation and support services, parenting and life skills education programs, responsive and flexible respite, accessible affordable childcare, and well supported out of home kinship care.
- 8** Recognise and build on the strengths of grandparents raising grandchildren by providing opportunities for training, advocacy and leadership activities, serving as spokespersons with media, policymakers, government, grandparent families and organisations.

3 Purpose

The purpose of this report is to:

- describe the implementation and evaluation of the Grandparents Parenting Grandchildren because of Alcohol and Other Drugs (A&OD) project
- highlight the project and brokerage-funding activities, key outcomes and achievements of the project, and recommendations to emerge from the project
- increase awareness of the rights and needs of grandparent parenting grandchildren because of alcohol and other drugs
- contribute to the body of knowledge about the needs of children in the care of their grandparents, giving them a greater chance in life to overcome problems caused by parental alcohol and drug use
- describe the partnerships that strengthened the project, increasing overall success of this project
- inform policy and service provision for grandparents parenting grandchildren because of alcohol and other drugs
- raise the visibility and give voice to grandparents parenting grandchildren because of alcohol and other drugs providing a way forward for greater involvement and improved service provision.

4 Background

4.1 Canberra Mothercraft Society

Canberra Mothercraft Society has a history of 77 years of identifying gaps in services to young families in the ACT and region and implementing services to close those gaps. The Society has played a unique role amongst Canberra's health and welfare organisations initiating and providing health and childcare services to families with young children. Since consolidating its primary health service through the Queen Elizabeth II (QEII) Family Centre, Canberra Mothercraft Society have looked more broadly to a community development approach to identify gaps in services for families with young children.

The mission of the Canberra Mothercraft Society is 'Towards Healthy Families' and as part of this mission, Canberra Mothercraft Society appointed a community development officer to research, identify and analyse the needs of families of young children in the ACT.

Canberra Mothercraft Society's provision of services through QEII Family Centre within a primary health context brings the service into contact with the effects of parental drug use on children. A significant and increasing source of referrals to QEII Family Centre come from Office of Child Youth and Family Support and Department of Community Services NSW and ACT Health through the Canberra Hospital Substance Use in Pregnancy Support Program (SUPPS). Canberra Mothercraft Society/QEII have demonstrated their ability to work with these families in a supportive and non-judgemental way.

QEII has been represented on the ACT Health, Canberra Hospital Substance Use in Pregnancy committee since 1997. Clients from this program usually attend QEII for parenting education and support within six weeks of discharge from The Canberra Hospital neonatal services Blue Star Clinic.

More recently QEII Family Centre has been represented on the Maternal and Child Health Positive Young Parents Program for young parents with alcohol and other drugs issues since February 2004.

4.2 National perspective

Federal and state governments in Australia recognise that grandparents raising grandchildren in Australia are struggling, and enlisted the help of Council on the Ageing (COTA) to help research the issues facing these grandparents raising grandchildren. They recognise that due to death, poor health, or drug abuse many grandparents are struggling with children with a range of issues, as well as trying to cope with their own issues. They also recognise that many of these grandparents are unaware of support they can receive (Fitzpatrick 2003).

In December 2003, the Federal Minister for Children and Youth Affairs (Hon. Larry Anthony) announced the findings of the COTA National Senior Report *Grandparents Raising Grandchildren* (Fitzpatrick 2003).

The 21 recommendations in this report included recognition and support for the following:

- grandparents to be seen as a special group requiring assistance
- grandparents to receive the same benefits and support services as foster carers
- access to centre link payments and state education subsidies and allowances
- disability allowances to extend to emotional and psychological disability
- expanding existing respite options to include grandparents

- status and rights of grandparents in the family court, children courts, etc.
- access to legal aid for family court matters
- legal status of children upon the death of a custodial grandparent
- grandchildren's access to their own Health Care Card and Medicare Card
- parent education programs for grandparents
- coordinated early intervention and prevention programs for families at risk
- community awareness campaign.

A significant and recurring issue raised with the Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) is concern for the children of a drug using parent/s. These concerns span pregnancy and infancy, through to early childhood and adolescence. Often, the central concern expressed is the perception that intergenerational drug use is becoming more common. The ANCD is of the opinion that there are opportunities for prevention, which are currently not being realised due to a lack of appropriate and coordinated interventions among problematic drug users who have children. Therefore, the ANCD is seeking to identify the opportunities and impediments for engaging and supporting families to reduce the likelihood that children of current, problematic drug users fail to receive proper care during their formative years, and possibly become drug users themselves (ANCD 2004).

A significant number of grandparents attending Grandparents ACT & Region groups and others in the region were identified as having grandchildren in their care because of alcohol and other drug issues with the children's parents.

4.3 Grandparents Parenting Grandchildren project

In 2003 the Canberra Mothercraft Society in collaboration with two other non-government organisations providing social and relationship support services (Relationships Australia, Canberra & Region and Marymead Child and Family Centre) undertook a needs analysis of grandparents who are parenting grandchildren from the ACT and surrounding region. Grandparents ACT & Region commenced and a project officer was employed and monthly support and education groups were provided.

In 2004 an information kit and website were developed with funds from the Department of Family and Community Services.

A significant number of grandparents attending Grandparents ACT & Region groups and others in the region were identified as having grandchildren in their care because of alcohol and other drug issues with the children's parents.

In September 2004, Canberra Mothercraft Society was invited to attend a forum with ACT Health, Youth Coalition and community organisations to explore the needs of grandparents parenting children because of alcohol and other drugs. Canberra Mothercraft Society were then invited to apply for funding through ACT Health Alcohol and Drug Policy Unit for funding from National Illicit Drug Strategy (NIDS).

The project was funded through ACT Health and reflects part of the broad policy goals of:

- the Council of Australian Governments' NIDS *Strengthening and Supporting Families Coping with Illicit Drug Use* funding policy
- the ACT Government and ACT Health's alcohol and drug broad policy goals, specifically those of the ACT Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drugs Strategy 2004–2008

The Canberra Mothercraft Society's Grandparent Parenting Grandchildren affected by Parental Alcohol and Other Drug Use project was a 12-month project that began in December 2004.

5 Aims

The project's overall aim was to increase the visibility of grandparents who are raising their grandchildren because of the effects of alcohol and other drugs in the children's family of origin.

More specifically it aimed to:

- build capacity of grandparents who are parenting grandchildren of families affected by alcohol or other drugs
- invest in social capital of children from these families by:
 - strengthening family resilience
 - promoting physical, emotional and social health of grandchildren whose families are affected by alcohol and other drugs issues
 - supporting grandparents in their parenting roles.

In May 2005, the project team also secured brokerage funding for direct client support.

This included:

- a one-day forum to raise awareness of families who are living with alcohol and other drug issues with a specific focus on grandparents
- the Grand Jugglers—a circus skills program providing relationship skill building between grandparents and the grandchildren to build family resilience
- Stepping Stones alcohol and other drug education course.

6 Objectives

6.1 Families

In relation to families:

- strengthen family resilience through appropriate referral and service enhancement to meet the specific needs of identified group
- identify the needs and aspirations of grandparents and grandchildren in relation to family issues due to alcohol and other drugs
- enhance current services for grandparents by providing information to:
 - key stakeholders
 - services providers, government and non-government
 - grandchildren
 - grandparents.

6.2 Other services

In relation to other services:

- work collaboratively with Grandparents ACT & Region
- identify services focussed on the needs of grandchildren being raised by grandparents because their parents have alcohol and other drugs issues
- enhance existing services that provide programs to meet the needs of the specific group of grandparents because of alcohol and other drugs issues
- raise awareness of the identified needs group among alcohol and other drugs services providers
- in collaboration with alcohol and other drug government and non-government service organisations (NGOs), work with the identified group to provide referral guidelines for:
 - alcohol and drug services government and NGOs
 - family support services
 - mental health and suicide prevention services.

7 Outcomes

The desired outcomes for the project were:

- 1** Grandparents will express satisfaction about the needs analysis and reporting, thereby ensuring accurate and appropriate information to service providers.
- 2** Build a knowledge base about the needs, priorities and aspirations of the identified needs groups.
- 3** Develop referral guidelines for service providers in relation to service delivery.
- 4** Enhance service providers' understanding and capacity to meet the needs of the identified group.
- 5** Reduce the personal and social disruption and isolation experienced by grandparents and grandchildren affected by alcohol and other drug issues through support and education.
- 6** Conduct the project in the spirit of collaboration, truth, trust and transparency between the grandparents, the children and agencies involved.

8 Project methodology

8.1 Action research

Action research (Youth Coalition of the ACT 2005) underpinned the planning and implementation of the project and naturally became an integral part of the project work. Action research was both a framework for and approach towards:

- guiding project work
- being responsive to the needs of stakeholders
- change and continuous improvements in the organisation
- evaluation.

The evaluation has been undertaken by the project team, guided by the principles of action research.

8.2 Partnership model

The literature overwhelmingly states that in order to better support families affected by problematic substance use the service system needs to take an holistic approach and work in partnership.

Partnerships are an important vehicle for bringing together a diversity of skills and resources for more effective health promotion outcomes, partnerships can increase the efficiency of the health and community service system by making the best use of different but complimentary resources. Collaboration, joint advocacy and action can also potentially make a bigger impact on policy-makers and government. (VicHealth 2003)

We know that by working together, services can take many practical steps to protect and improve the health and well being of affected children and their families.

As demonstrated, the issues facing families affected by problematic substance use are complex. It is the responsibility of the entire service system to develop strategies to effectively respond to these issues. A way in which this can be achieved is through forging partnerships.

The project working with grandparents who are parenting because of alcohol and other drug issues has strengthened the society's networks within the community sector including alcohol and other drugs, family support networks, child protection, legal and government departments. Through the development of this project and Grandparents ACT & Region, Canberra Mothercraft Society have consulted widely with a range of organisations (Table 1).

Table 1—Networks and partnerships

| Alcohol and drug support networks | Mental health support networks | Child protection services and parenting support services | Peak bodies | Other services and organisations |
|---|--|--|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Ted Noffs Foundation ■ Salvation Army, Oasis Bridge Program ■ Women's Information & Referral Education Drugs of Dependency Service (WIREDDD) ■ ACT Health Drug and Alcohol Service: Comorbidity/ Dual Diagnosis and Family Support Stepping Stones, and Court Assessment Program ■ Division of General Practice—including The Opiate Program (TOP) ■ Family Drug Support NSW ■ ATSI/CALD Aboriginal Health Service Winnunga Nimmitajah ■ Australian Nation Council on Drugs ANCD ■ Corrections Health | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Children of Parents with Mental Illness (COPMI) ■ Mental Health Foundation ■ Child and Adolescent Mental Health ■ ACT Health Mental Health and Child & Adolescent Mental Health Services ■ Carers ACT: Keeping Families Together and Dual Diagnosis Programs ■ Lifeline | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ ACT Office for Child Youth and Family Support ■ Family and Children's Courts ■ ACT Health Child at Risk Assessment Unit ■ Non-government family support services Marymead, Barnardos, Queanbeyan Family Support, Smith Family, Salvation Army, Centacare and Anglicare ■ Youth Support Services: Richmond Fellowship, Youth in the City, Gungahlin Young People Support Service ■ QEII Family Centre, Victorian Parenting Centre, Child & Youth Health South Australia, National Foster Care Association ■ Parentline ■ ACT Office of the Community Advocate ■ ACT Health Women & Children's Health and Child Youth & Women's Health Program | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Families and Friends for Drug Law Reform ■ Australian Drug Law Reform Foundation ■ NAPCAN Foundation ■ Families Australia ■ Council on the Ageing and National Seniors ■ NSW Department of Community Service ■ Youth Coalition of the ACT ■ Health Care Consumers ACT ■ CREATE Foundation ■ National Council of Women | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ University of Canberra student placements—community development, counselling and psychology ■ Australian Catholic University: student placements—welfare and social work ■ Australian National University, Psychology, Canberra Medical School ■ Service organisations: Rotary, Soroptimists, View Club |

A key aim of this project was to bring a diverse group of agencies together to better identify and understand the needs of this group and to develop more cohesive ways to work together to address those needs in the ACT.

An unanticipated valuable outcome of the network and partnership formed during the process of Alcohol and other drug project was the 'Trifecta' (triumvirate) a partnership formed with Canberra Mothercraft Society, Youth Coalition and the Alcohol and Drug Foundation ACT.

The 'trifecta' developed a cross sector partnership to explore the issues of drug use and families; a three part summit series from July to October 2005 (Attachment C):

- the Drugs in the Family Summit, 12 July, which focuses on young people and children,
- the Parents and Drug Use: Issues of Care Symposium, 9 September, which focuses on parents and children
- the Grandparents Parenting Grandchildren, Drug and Alcohol Issues Forum 20 October, focusing on the effect of parental drug use on the extended family.

Establishment of a reference group comprising broad representation from government and non-government agencies was established to achieve these aims from:

- alcohol and drug services
- child protection
- family support services
- Grandparents ACT & Region
- ACT Community Health, Child Youth & Women's Health
- The Canberra Hospital Women's & Children's Health
- Peak bodies representing alcohol and drug interests.

9 Project activity

9.1 Identifying the issues—literature review

9.1.1 Why are grandparents parenting grandchildren?

Historically grandparents have always stepped in to raise grandchildren in times of crisis but over the last 25 years there has been a dramatic increase in the number of grandparents raising their grandchildren.

Currently over 31 100 children, aged 0–17 years old (ABS 2005) in Australia are being raised by their grandparents. This occurs for a variety of reasons, including:

- the inability of their parents to care for them because of factors such as drug addiction, mental or physical ill-health
- their parent's imprisonment
- the death of a parent
- placement with their grandparents by the Family Court
- placement with their grandparents under state child protection legislation, or informally, (as kinship carers) because the children have been deemed 'at risk'.

Parental drug abuse is a significant factor in the way children come into the care of their grandparents. There is a significant body of research that highlights both the immediate and long-term effects of parental drug use on children including the depth of research on the prenatal effects and the now more recently known environmental factors (Patton 2003).

Evident in research is the suggestion that Australia's child protection services and the Children's Court have a propensity for focusing on the needs of the adult instead of the best needs of the children (Patton 2003).

Many grandparents would prefer that their grandchildren live with caring parents and that they could be 'normal' grandparents again. In the meantime 'grandparents parenting grandchildren are determined to give their grandchildren every opportunity to have healthy, happy and well-rounded lives (COTA NSW 2005).

As noted by Greunert (2004), around 20 per cent of children across Odyssey's programs in Victoria are being raised by grandparents. Many grandparents share the care of other children. Most grandparents experience great conflict, stress, self-doubt, expense and fatigue. Most grandparents receive little support.

According to Patton (2003), a number of underlying factors impact on the transfer of the care of children from parent to grandparent, amongst the most significant of which are:

- 1 Exposure to parental drug abuse, which may damage the psychosocial development of children more than any other developmental area. It affects the way these children interact, think and feel about themselves, others and society (Patton 2003 p7). The literature indicates children may develop anti-social behaviour, hostility, depression, and a wide range of other stress related difficulties.
- 2 Children may be wrongly diagnosed with attention deficit hyperactivity disorder after exposure to a drug-using lifestyle when increasing evidence suggests that the children may actually be suffering from post-traumatic stress disorder.

In essence, the children are emotionally and sometimes intellectually and physically damaged from their experiences of abuse and neglect, and exposure to their parents drug using. Many children have experienced prolonged family violence, including an alarming number whose mothers have been killed by their partners (Fitzpatrick 2003).

9.1.2 The issues for grandparents and their grandchildren

The contemporary grandparent is a significant source of assistance to families through childcare, financial and moral support (Backhouse and Lucas 2003). There are many issues that come with these increased responsibilities towards grandchildren. There is also a range of issues for custodial grandparents.

Kinship care is on the rise and in Australia there is very little information on grandparents raising their grandchildren. Council on the Aging and other researchers (Backhouse and Lucas 2003) have identified this.

Some of the issues for grandparents include physical capabilities associated with aging, emotional and social pressures such as isolation and stress, and financial issues related to raising a child.

Despite the increase in the number of grandparents caring for their grandchildren, and the many issues they have, there are few services in Australia directed to assist them. The ACT, prior to the grandparents' project had no services directly aimed at assisting this group.

9.1.3 The grandchildren

Grandchildren come to live with their grandparents because there has been a breakdown in parental care. Grandparents may have been concerned for some time about what was happening as a result of the parents' drug or alcohol addiction, family violence (an alarming number of grandparents are raising their grandchildren because the mothers were killed by their partners (Fitzpatrick 2003)), or poor nutrition or lack of cleanliness or abuse. Or there may have been parental mental or physical illness. The parent, usually the mother of the grandchildren, may have died and the father was not available or unable to take care of them.

Alternatively, the grandparents may not have known that anything was wrong until contacted by the authorities, often late at night or over the weekend.

Case study: A grandchild aged seven phoned the grandparents from a local phone box asking them to come and pick her up, the child's mother wouldn't wake up, so the grandparents called an ambulance.

Within hours the grandparents had four small children to care for.

Children also come to live with their grandparents because formal arrangements have been put in place by the legal system. There are broadly three arrangements:

- family court parenting orders
- childrens' court care and protection orders on application from state or territory child protection authorities
- informal arrangements that may or may not involve the child protection authorities.

Where there are such informal arrangements, the grandparents can go to the Family Court to obtain an order to formalise them. However, they are often reluctant to do this because it may antagonise the parents, or because they can't afford the cost of the action, even when uncontested.

We feared the court would judge us unsuitable to raise our grandchildren (grandparent, 2005).

Key findings of Australian, Victorian research (Greunert 2004) identified:

“ Children with substance dependent parents receive little support and are often nobody’s client’s”.

- 1.5 per cent of children under the age of 15 have a parent attending drug treatment with many more likely to be affected by problematic parental drug use who don’t access treatment for their alcohol and other drugs problems.
- Parental alcohol and other drugs problems account for approximately 50 per cent of all substantiated cases of child abuse or neglect. This represents only a small proportion of children with substance dependant parents.
- The drive to be a better parent is a key reason for parent’s to seek drug treatment.
- Only a percentage of children in the research project were living with both biological parents.
- During periods of active drug use or withdrawal, parents reported being more irritable and intolerant toward their children (61 per cent), lacking quality interactions with the children (44 per cent) and having no or inconsistent routines (39 per cent).

Recommendations from this research suggested:

- drug treatment and family support agencies need much stronger incentives to identify needs of children of drug dependent parents
- increased support is needed to enhance the engagement and participation of children with substance dependent parents in social, recreational and educational activities
- service responses should include targeted prevention, early intervention, and recreation opportunities for children
- parents need family strengthening, mediation and support services, parenting and life skills education programs, responsive and flexible respite, accessible affordable child care, and well supported out of home kinship care.

Findings from the Nobody’s Clients project, (2004) identified that more than 50 per cent of parents reported that their children were exposed to:

- one or more drugs in utero (other than tobacco)
- their active drug use
- family violence
- abandonment or separation
- police interactions or raids on their homes.

More than 30 per cent of parents reported that their children had:

- found drug use equipment (needles, bongs)
- been verbally abused
- been unable to wake their parents at times and been scared
- been placed in dangerous or unsupervised situations.

More than 15 per cent of parents reported that their children had:

- witnessed their parent’s death or an overdose
- accompanied parents during crime or drug dealing.

Children are greater risk of:

- miscarriage, birth defects, withdrawal, delays, SIDS, neglect and abuse (alcohol and other drugs in more than 50 per cent of child protection cases)
- developing their own drug and alcohol problems

- developing other psychological and behavioural problems
- many of the chemical effects of drug use during pregnancy disappear in early years of child's life
- the family environment and parenting become critical to outcomes for the child.

Children's ability to thrive limited by:

- lack of routine and disrupted lives stress and anxiety
- reactive parenting and poor supervision inappropriate expectations
- poor school and community engagement
- exposure to traumatic events and abuse
- few material resources.

Many children with a substance-using parent do not develop serious problems and are resilient.

The 'nobody's client' research identified resilient kids especially when:

- only one parent has problematic drug use
- they are attached to at least one other adult
- they have good communication and social skills
- consistent routines and family rituals (control)
- more resources and mental stimulation.

Outcomes are better for children when extended family members provide support. Research also shows that child outcomes are typically worse the longer a child lives with an actively drug abusing parent.

9.1.4 Statistics

While there is no complete statistical data on the number of grandparents who are primary carers for their grandchildren in Australia (due to the informal nature of many families' living arrangements) COTA believes that about 52 per cent of children in out-of-home care are living with grandparents (Scott 2004). Centrelink records show that 7000 people over the age of 60 in Australia receive a family tax benefit. COTA suggests that this would include some grandparent carers; however, a large number of grandparent carers would be excluded from this group due to ineligibility to receive the benefit (Scott 2004). COTA has also been active in promoting the collection of reliable data that will persuade governments that there is a case for assisting grandparent carers (Fitzpatrick 2003).

Limited Australian research has shown that 60 per cent of grandparents raising their grandchildren are raising at least two (Scott 2004). This research has also shown that 38 per cent of this group are raising grandchildren alone, the majority of these being grandmothers.

The role of grandparents in today's society is very different from that of previous decades. Grandparents are now often expected to take a more active role in the lives of their grandchildren. This may be through childcare responsibilities, parenting responsibilities, or just more physical activities (Backhouse and Lucas 2003). In contrast many grandparents are finding that they have no responsibilities toward their grandchild because they are not granted access to them. Some of the issues that have been identified as contributing to the changing roles for grandparents have been the feminist movement, changes in family structure advances in medicine and the increase of drug abuse (Backhouse and Lucas 2003).

In 1997, the US Census Bureau (1997) conducted a survey, which found that there were more than one million families headed by grandparents. If we translate this figure to Australia, the equivalent number would be 40 000.

The recent data, published by the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2005), found that there were 22 500 grandparent families caring for more than 31 100 grandchildren aged 17 years and under. In most of these families the youngest child was between five and eleven years old and grandparents were caring for more than one child. Of particular concern is the unknown number of indigenous kinship carers who are also in this situation. Where children in grandparent families have parents living elsewhere they may remain in contact with these parents. In 2003, 28 7600 children in grandparent families had a natural parent living elsewhere, 26 per cent of these children had little or no face to face contact with a parent.

The difference between Australia and the USA is largely accounted for by poverty in the African-American population, as well as large-scale drug use (COTA NSW 2005). One American study puts special emphasis on the 'crack cocaine epidemic'.

Drug use is also important in Australia as a cause of family breakdown, although not on the same scale as the USA. Altogether, according to the ABS survey, 31 100 children were living in families where the grandparents were the primary carers.

9.1.5 Drug related issues

Parental drug abuse is the most common reason that grandparents take over the parenting responsibilities of grandchildren. This drug abuse however, is likely to have a far more serious effect on the children than a change in family roles. The Mirabel Foundation recently undertook literature reviews into parental drug use (Patton 2003). This literature identified many risk areas for children of drug-addicted parents.

Patton (2003) identifies three areas of the child's development that can be affected by prenatal exposure to drugs. These are physical, cognitive and psychosocial development.

The issues related to physical development (Patton 2003) can include poor reflexes, underdeveloped muscle tone and delays in gross and fine motor skill development.

Cognitive development (Patton 2003) issues caused by prenatal drug exposure may include learning disabilities, difficulties with processing information, poor concentration and poor hand-eye coordination.

Psychosocial issues caused by prenatal drug exposure can include antisocial behaviour, impulsivity and severe emotional swings. It has also been found that these children often have an inability to control their behaviour when there are changes to environment or routine and have difficulty initiating independent play (Sluder et al 1996 cited in Patton 2003a). These are just a few of the problems that grandparents may have to deal with if they are parenting grandchildren who have had prenatal exposure to drugs.

While Patton (2003a), recognises there are difficulties in identifying which problems are the result of environment and which are the result of prenatal drug exposure, it is believed that environmental factors can also cause a range of physical, cognitive and psychosocial developmental issues for the grandchild. When a child has been living with parents who are involved in a drug centred environment often there has been little stimulation or appropriate play for the child, which can inhibit the child physically with delayed motor development. This delay can lead to poor self esteem and low self confidence (Greenberg 1999 cited in Patton 2003a).

In terms of cognitive development, environmental factors surrounding drug abuse often lead to speech development issues. Children of drug users are often concerned that they too will become drug abusers and their self concept is often affected to the detriment of the rest of their lives. Conflict may arise between the love they have for their parents and their concern about becoming drug addicted themselves. Children also become aware of society's negative view of children of substance abusers as soon-to-be substance abusers (Campbell 1997 cited in Patton 2003a).

The psychosocial development of a child of drug addicted parents is the most affected area when children are raised in that environment.

“ it affects the way these children interact, think and feel about themselves, others and society. Left unaddressed, such thoughts and feelings can escalate into obstacles preventing the development of healthy adults. (Patton 2003a, p7)”

Many children in drug using environments will often take on the role of parent. As a result of this, these children develop distorted relationships with family members and society (Jurkovic 1997 cited in Patton 2003a)

All these risk factors are issues that grandparents parenting may have to deal with as a result of drug addicted parents doing an inadequate job while the children were in their care.

Early intervention has a chance of improving many of the issues that children of drug abusers may have (Patton 2003a). The grandparent who is parenting therefore often has a big job ahead of them to bring up healthy, properly developed children in these circumstances. Those who are parenting their grandchildren due to parental drug abuse have a whole range of added issues. Prenatal drug exposure and environmental exposure to the drug community can create a child with many physical, cognitive and psychosocial developmental problems. All these issues need to be considered when looking at developing services for the target group.

9.2 Mapping the services and sector

9.2.1 Focus groups

In March to May 2005 focus groups /discussion were held with the following organisations to ascertain services understanding of grandparents who parent their grandchildren issues and available services in the ACT. In some instances where it was difficult to meet face to face the project officer organised phone interviews or provided questionnaires for the organisations to complete. The following organisations provided face-to-face discussions/phone discussions:

- ACT Alcohol and drug service
- NSW Family Drug Support
- Drug in the family ACT
- ACT Drug Law reform
- Positive Parenting Program, ACT Community Health
- Carers ACT
- Parent Support ACT.

Key responses were:

- services were very keen to support grandparents
- lack of knowledge of the issues grandparents/grandchildren faced and a willingness to become informed and to be able to provide support
- lack of knowledge of any specific services for grandparents parenting grandchildren
- early intervention programs for example, parenting programs for pregnant drug and alcohol
- while there was recognition that and a desire to take a harm minimisation approach to alcohol and drug use there was a lack of awareness of the visibility of the needs of the children
- lack of knowledge and information and resources about support services
- fragmented approach
- need emotional support and opportunity to meet with others

- need for guidelines and written information
- need for financial support
- education, research and resources
- need for family inclusion in alcohol and drug services
- need to raise awareness of issues faced by grandparents raising grandchildren because of alcohol and drug issues for service providers.

9.2.2 Key informant interviews

In March 2005, key informant questionnaires (see Attachment A) were sent out to a range of alcohol and drug and mental health and family support services.

The questionnaire asked the following questions:

- In your organisation do you see any grandparents/families who are parenting grandchildren? If yes, please describe some of the issues that the family has.
- Does your organisation provide a service/program/support (please circle) for grandparents who are parenting grandchildren of families affected by alcohol and other drugs? If yes, can you please describe.
- Are you aware of any services that support grandparents in the ACT?
- Can you suggest how services to grandparents and grandchildren can be increased / improved? How can our services support and benefit grandparents?
- What are the gaps?
- Can you suggest any other key organisations/groups we need to contact?
- Please provide any other additional comments/suggestions.

The responses to this questionnaire are provided in Attachment B. Eighteen services responded to the key informants questionnaire.

In summary the key issues identified in the responses were:

- Only two services were aware of the grandparents support group held at Marymead and one service was aware of Grandparents ACT & Region, one service identified Carers ACT and two services suggested Family Drug Support telephone line and the Drugs in the Family Support Group as services for grandparents parenting grandchildren. Nine services indicated they were not aware of any services that supported grandparents in the ACT and five services did not answer the question.

Responses to the questionnaire provided the following suggestions to increase/improve services to grandparents and grandchildren:

- Adapt family drug support's guide for coping specifically for grandparents.
- Focus on enhancing strategies, particularly promoting substitution programs that are known to enable drug dependant parents to regain stability in their lives while still dependent.
- Financial and emotional support to allow grandparents provide safe and supportive care to grandchildren.
- Having more educational groups—therapeutic groups, more research, literature.
- Written info
- Opportunities to meet with others in similar situation.

Gaps identified from the key informants included:

- Publicise resources that are available including support groups.
- Educate services.

- Target bodies e.g. Council for the Aging and churches that are likely to have contact with grandparents with drug using children before a crisis develops requiring the grandparents to assume full time parenting.
- Financial assistance e.g. grandparents able to draw carer's pension.
- Involvement in support arrangements for grandparents with adult dependent children who are coping with parenting.
- We query the accessibility of internet sites.
- For families receiving support is difficult because most of the resources are used for AOD users themselves.
- Issues of privacy and confidentiality make it extremely difficult sometimes for families, including grandparents, to be helped. Services that are family friendly assume that confidentiality is not an obstacle to helping families.

9.2.3 ACT and region services

Grandparents ACT & Region provide services specifically targeted at grandparent families.

There are other organisations in the ACT providing indirect services for grandparents who are parenting grandchildren. These include:

- Carers ACT
- ParentLine (telephone counselling service)
- alcohol and other drug services

The key informant interviews and focus groups identified other service providers that might be available or useful to grandparents parenting grandchildren however they did not specifically target grandparent families and typically knew very little about them.

There is currently no cross-sectoral coordination for grandparent family service provision in the ACT.

9.2.4 National

COTA (Scott 2004) identify a number of support agencies across the country that provide local information. These agencies seem to provide general information for the ageing community, and are of little assistance to the specific issue of grandparents as parents. There are however, a few links to Internet sites and contact details for a number of self help groups that do deal specifically with the issues.

The Mirabel foundation was established in 1998 to assist children who have been orphaned or abandoned due to parental illicit drug use.

Mirabel provides advocacy, referral, and emotional and practical support for these children and their carers. Mirabel has a resource booklet 'When the children arrive...' (Mirabel Foundation 2004) specifically to assist kinship carers address and identify some of the issues and concerns that may arise in the situation of taking on the care of children.

9.3 Develop referral guidelines

Key informants identified the need for written resources for grandparents parenting grandchildren because of parental drug and/or alcohol issues. The project has developed a brochure to provide information for service providers and grandparent families. This brochure will be included in the Grandparents ACT & Region resource kit.

10 Brokerage

In May 2005, Canberra Mothercraft Society, Youth Coalition and ACT Health CYWH program were invited to apply for additional brokerage funding.

Brokerage funds were made available within the broader context of the National Drug Strategy 2004–2009 and the ACT Alcohol Tobacco and Other Drug Strategy 2004–2008. Using criteria including harm minimisation, value for money and strengthening family resilience. Funding was made available to support projects to achieve systemic change and to provide appropriate client services.

Canberra Mothercraft Society and Youth Coalition agreed on and prioritised seven brokerage funded initiatives.

Canberra Mothercraft Society were successful in gaining funds for:

- forum
- Grand Jugglers
- alcohol and other drug education and family support—Stepping Stones program

10.1 Forum

A medium of discussion conducted out of doors where public business is transacted (Energy Research, Clearing House pp.21)

Key informant interviews with peak bodies identified a need to raise awareness about issues and needs of grandparents who are parenting because of alcohol and other drugs. A public forum was considered an appropriate and effective way to raise awareness of issues faced by grandparents who are parenting children because of alcohol and other drug issues among:

- service providers within government and non-government services
- community
- policy makers
- state and federal government
- peak bodies representing drug, mental health and family support.

The one-day open public forum at the National Museum of Australia was promoted widely through service organisations and the ACT and surrounding community. The forum provided the opportunity to explore some of the issues that exist for grandchildren and grandparents from both professional and personal viewpoints (Refer to Attachment D: Forum program).

Speakers at the forum represented professional service provider and researcher views and the lived experience of grandparents (see Attachment E: Presenters' details)

A diverse range of 96 people attended the forum including: grandparents, service providers, researchers and policy makers from Australian Capital Territory, New South Wales, Victoria, Tasmania and Queensland. In addition there were expressions of interest and requests for Forum papers and outcomes from South Australia and nationally.

10.1.1 Outcomes

The intended outcomes and supporting activity for the forum were:

- The Forum report will reflect other government strategies that relate to the ACT Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Strategy 2004–2008.

Table 2: Intended outcomes of the public forum

| Intended outcome | Supporting activity |
|--|--|
| Outcome 1: Increase the visibility of grandparents who are raising their grandchildren because of the effects of alcohol and other drugs in the children's family of origin | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ 96 people registered ■ 30 grandparents and family ■ 22 policy/research ■ 44 service providers ■ + 6 grandchildren |
| Outcome 2: Improve knowledge of services to families affected by alcohol and drug use | Service providers from government, non-government and community sectors were able to present or distribute information |
| Outcome 3: Increase the links between alcohol and drug services, family support services, and mental health services | Strong representation across the health, child protection, legal and welfare sectors |
| Outcome 4: Increase consistency and cooperation between these agencies | Agencies appreciated the opportunity to network and exchange information |
| Outcome 5: Open dialogue between support services, current and potential service users | Speakers, breakout sessions and 'graffiti board' methodologies, and meal breaks facilitated dialogue, information sharing and opportunities to share visions for the future, gaps in services and how things could be improved |
| Outcome 6: Support partnerships between families, friends and service providers | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ From the evaluations: I attended the Forum: "To hear views of grandparents and service providers and look at ways we might better provide support" (SP) ■ I have gained a greater understanding of the amazing contribution grandparents make to the community" (PM) ■ From a grandparent: "To know we are not alone and that the service providers and policy makers envisage much better future—I hope they can make it happen". |
| Outcome 7: Support intersectoral collaboration | Strong representation across service and policy sectors and peak bodies |
| Outcome 8: Place grandparents who are parenting grandchildren because of alcohol and other drug issues squarely on the agendas of state/territory and federal governments | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ "It was a fantastic summit—I feel especially privileged to hear the grandparents' voices". (SP) ■ "Great day, good info, I hope today has a good result for the future. I have 6 grandchildren, I'm 55 and the ages of the kids are 12, 10, 9, 8, 6, and 5". <p>The Forum gained media coverage:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ WIN TV ■ ABC national and regional ■ Canberra Times |
| Outcome 9: A report that will be published in a media and format that is accessible to service providers, policy makers and community | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ There have been requests for the Report from national interests. ■ The report will be published in early 2006, and available in print/CD-ROM, and Canberra Mothercraft Society website www.cmsinc.org.au and links. |

10.1.2 Issues

The key issues from the forum are listed in Attachment F—Feedback from breakout groups. The following issues were identified:

Financial issues

Having finances to raise grandchildren is a real issue for grandparents. When grandparents go to Centrelink they are means tested and do not necessarily qualify for benefits to help them raise their grandchildren.

Many grandparents struggle with the cost of raising their grandchildren. Apart from the normal day to day costs that families usually have, these grandchildren often involve greater expense than other children because of their psychological, emotional and physical health care needs.

Grandparents find that they are spending their retirement savings and superannuation on raising their grandchildren. Any hope of being self-funded retirees is lost. Many grandparents find their employment and retirement plans thrown into chaos by the cost of raising the grandchildren. Depending on the age and needs of the grandchildren and difficulties with child care, they may be forced to give up work in order to care for them full time, a serious loss of income for those grandparents.

Others find that because of a lack of financial assistance from government and/or the parents, they need to continue working well beyond their planned retirement date.

The Commonwealth Centrelink system is also confusing to grandparents with an array of payments and eligibility requirements. Means tests apply to most Centrelink payments, so that any financial support for the grandchildren such as child support payments impact on the grandparents' own Centrelink entitlements. If the grandparents are self-funded retirees or still in the workforce, their income and assets are taken into consideration in the means test for family tax benefits for the grandchildren, and therefore couples especially may not be eligible for any payment.

Grandparents experience the injustice of governments that ask them to take in their grandchildren who, if grandparents were not available, would end up in the states' foster care systems as the responsibility of the child protection authorities, and at considerable expense to taxpayers.

Case study: Grandmother aged 62

I have to work fulltime to pay off a \$100,000.00 tax bill incurred by the tax office charging 12.7 per cent interest on unpaid tax—the money was used to pay \$59,000 legal fees.

Grandparents felt strongly that they should be treated equally with foster carers who assume the care of other people's children. They state most firmly that they are saving governments an enormous amount of money and therefore they must be supported.

Relationship challenges

Grandparents experience changes to their relationships including conflict of loyalties with their own children and changes to their relationships with their other grandchildren outside of the home.

They identify feelings of shame and guilt about issues in their families, about how their family has turned out or about parenting grandchildren rather than being able to enjoy being a grandparent.

Grandparents frequently have to deal with behavioural problems as some grandchildren exhibit behavioural changes as they experience periodic and temporary access to their parents.

Grandparents speak of being too old to be doing the things young children want to do. They often feel very tired and worry about their ability to keep going. Many say that the hardest thing is the discipline. They do not know what is acceptable. Some grandparents still have their own younger children living at home.

Most grandparents identify the need for specialist therapeutic services, for example, counsellors and psychologists to assist with their grandchildren's behavioural problems. Most of their grandchildren have experienced trauma and abuse, abandonment and/or rejection. They all have to live with the grief and anger of not being with their parents.

Grandparents feel that community services have a lack of knowledge and understanding and that there is a failure of community support systems in regard to grandparents raising grandchildren.

Grandparents stated they need respite care. They hardly ever get a break from the responsibilities of caring for their grandchildren.

Legal

Grandparents speak of the injustice of a legal system including:

- The parents often qualify for legal aid and continue to receive it even in circumstances where grandparents feel the action is aimed at forcing them to spend their savings.
- Grandparents are rarely eligible for legal aid as owning even a modest home disqualifies them so they must pay for their own legal representation each time even if the hearing is adjourned.
- They cannot obtain information about the legal process from Legal Aid staff but the parents receive extensive assistance.

Grandparents and their grandchildren can be caught in a confusing legal system in which Commonwealth and state laws and responsibilities determine the extent of ongoing assistance and security they will have.

Grandparents find the Family Court system and its rulings particularly difficult. For example:

- parents may contest decisions for the care of the grandchildren
- a parent in jail may still have legal custody
- parents may be erratic in exercising access rights leaving the grandparents to cope with hurt and disappointed children
- many grandparents say that they have been given the children but not the authority to make decisions for those children. This can have major effects on the children's health and education.

The positive side

Grandparents' take on responsibilities with love and knowledge the child is safe and determined the child will now have the best opportunities for healthy and happy lives.

Grandparents forum 2005 feedback breakout group response to the question what is working well?

"The children are now safe"

What is your vision for the future?

Forum attendees (grandparents, service providers and policy makers) were asked to identify what the vision for the future was for grandparents raising grandchildren. These included:

- cross border collaborations
- raise awareness of grandparenting issues within the care and protection system

- build in the work that has already been done
- understand, respect and appreciate we are all aiming for similar goals
- implementation of the recommendations from the COTA grandparenting report
- national policy and coordinated approach
- grandparents receive allowance for parenting grandchildren—not means tested, there will be setting up allowances, tax concessions and 'gold card' health care card, respite, holidays
- intensive support and so all issues can be thought through—huge repercussions
- workers meetings rather than 'silos'—agencies will share info and support each other
- we are able to change society's perspective of what families are
- agencies will share info and support each other.

The forum evaluation survey (see Attachment G) identified significant issues grandparents face when dealing with child protection, financial and legal institutions. The forum provided opportunities for grandparents, service providers and policy makers to hear each other and be heard.

Media coverage of the forum, in response to a media release (see Attachment H), resulted in coverage by:

- ABC Radio National, *Life Matters* (2005) (see Attachment I)
- *The Canberra Times* article 'Grandparenthood' (Murray 2005) (see Attachment J)
- ABC Regional interview with grandparent Joy Lauer on 19 October 2005
- WIN TV News on 20 October 2005.

10.2 Grand Jugglers Circus

In July 2005, Canberra Mothercraft Society received brokerage funding from the National Illicit Drug Strategy—Strengthening and Supporting Families Coping with Illicit Drug Use, to provide a circus program for a period of six weeks, Canberra Mothercraft Society was able to extend this program to include an additional 10 weeks. The program was for grandparents parenting grandchildren because of parental drug and alcohol use. This is the first program in the ACT that provides activities to enhance relationships between grandparents and grandchildren. In our initial program with Grandparents ACT, responses from key informants to our questionnaires have indicated the need for fun, relationship building activities in which grandparents and their grandchildren can be involved. These types of activities were identified as a high priority need as a mechanism to enhance relationships between grandparents and grandchildren. Canberra Mothercraft Society met and identified a group of grandparents who would benefit from the program, however the current barriers which prevented or made these activities difficult included the cost of attendance and availability of such a program. The Grand Jugglers' activities operated to reduce isolation by developing networks and social pathways among grandparents and grandchildren and as a result strengthen family resilience through understanding and support, build relationships, provided for time-out fun, allow for relationships to be maintained and appreciate each others challenges and strengths.

Activities included:

- advertise program and invite grandchildren and grandparents to attend
- provide grandparents and grandchildren with circus equipment to keep and practice circus skills with at home

- arrange a preview of circus program for interested families
- provide a holiday circus workshop
- commence circus program—program commenced 12 August 2005 and continued every Friday during school terms
- evaluation/feedback from families who attended the Grand Jugglers
- investigating funding options to continue program in 2006
- thirty grand jugglers attended a social outing as a group to The Street Theatre to see 'BAM' warehouse circus performance on 28 September 2005
- the Grand Jugglers performed at the Australian National Museum Grandparent Forum to an audience of over 70 which further raised the profile of the Grand Jugglers
- the Grand Jugglers circus performance at Grandparents ACT & Region christmas party

*From the kids...
the circus is cool
and fun, I think its
great, best thing
I have ever done
and I can ride
a unicycle.
The Grand Jugglers 2005*

Grandparents and grandchildren attending the Grand Jugglers in evaluations said:

- The jugglers are excellent and Canberra Mothercraft Society need to be congratulated.
- Grand Jugglers is a great project.
- Please continue the Grand Jugglers we have time to chat, while our kids have fun.
- We just love it and our kids do.
- Thank you, fantastic.
- Given the kids great skills .
- Our pleasure for us is when people tell us how clever our kids are.
- The circus is wonderful and gives us so much support for our grandchildren, it encourages and widens and improves social life.
- Great satisfaction to see children and a sense of pride in what they can do.
- Taken us from isolation to extremely supportive network through Canberra Mothercraft and QE2 thank you.

From the kids...
the circus is cool and fun, I think its great, best thing I have ever done and I can ride
a unicycle. The Grand Jugglers 2005

The evaluation identified the following:

- Improved support network of grandparents and this program is a pilot program which can be used to develop further supportive program to enhance the relationships skills for grandparents and grandchildren families.
- Over 13 Grandparent families participated in the circus program and at the holiday workshop 20 grandchildren and 14 grandparents attended.
- The Grand Jugglers performed at the Australian National Museum Grandparent Forum, this was an additional outcome that further raised the profile of the Grand Jugglers. Attendance and participation in the Grand Jugglers has exceeded expectations. There was audience of 70, which included 40 service providers and 30 grandparent families.
- The grandparents have bonded and shared their stories. The group have grown as individuals and as a strong cohesive group offering each other support. Examples of this include developing a phone list to contact each other, bringing a shared afternoon tea to the circus program, giving each other pre-loved clothes and supporting each other in times of sadness and need.

10.3 Stepping Stones drug and alcohol education

10.3.1 Alcohol and drug education—grandparents

The Canberra Mothercraft Society project team collated information received from project stakeholders/participants. Early indicators identified and supported the need for further education programs that can improve better communication with children and grandchildren, improve the well-being of the family, improve problem management skills and have the ability to use processes that effect and sustain change. Family Drug Support NSW and ACT Community Drug and Alcohol Service also identified this need.

Brokerage funding was made available for grandparent families to attend Stepping Stones program. Funding also included childcare. In May 2005 a promotional flyer regarding the Stepping Stones program was sent out to a range of government and non-government organisations/agencies and to over 80 families in which grandparents are parenting grandchildren.

A morning tea was held at the Canberra Mothercraft Society with guest speaker Bruce Munroe, Family Counsellor, Alcohol and Drug program who spoke with grandparents about the Stepping Stones course. Eighteen grandparent families attended.

Two families registered for the Stepping Stones program. On discussions with grandparents as to why they didn't wish to attend the main reason given was the length of time of the course and that they could not see the long term benefit of attending. A variation to brokerage funding for the project was requested and approved by the Alcohol and Drug Policy Unit.

The variation included:

- 1 providing funding for the grandparents interested in attending the Stepping Stones program to do the program available through ACT Health. Funding would include the course attendance, any childcare and transport costs. Funding for the two families to attend a program approved
- 2 a narrative workshop for grandparents to share their rich stories of resilience and strength. The grandparents expressed a desire for their stories to be heard. The program leaders thought that using a narrative approach would best facilitate the telling of the grandparents stories

“ Narrative therapy seeks to be a respectful, non-blaming approach to counselling and community work, which centres people as the experts in their own lives. It views problems as separate from people and assumes people have many skills, competencies, beliefs, values, commitments and abilities that will assist them to reduce the influence of problems in their lives (Morgan 2000).”

Narrative approaches explore the stories people have about their lives and relationships, their effects, their meanings and the context in which they have been formed and authored. Initially people's stories, are heard as being about the problems in their lives and the meanings that have been reached about them. These meanings, reached in the face of adversity, often consist of what narrative therapists call 'thin description'. Narrative approaches are interested in conversations that seek out alternative stories—not just any alternative stories, but stories that can reduce the influence of problems and create new possibilities for living assisting people to break from the influence of the problems they are facing.

Eight grandparent families including a great-grandparent family have attended these workshops. The program leaders organised for a listening team skilled in using narrative therapy to join them in facilitating a gathering process. A gathering process has been used in many communities to share and document stories of unique experiences, stories, hopes and commitments. Gathering processes can assist people from a community that otherwise would be silenced, invisible or not heard.

A gathering process is a staged process that occurs over a period of time, and a listening team (a small group of narrative practitioners), facilitates the process. Prior to the gathering process two members of the team consulted with the grandparents, listened to them about their particular concerns and drew out themes from the grandparent's stories. On the day of the gathering the listening team worked with the grandparents to draw out their stories, guided by the themes that emerged in the prior consultation—the telling of the stories. After the grandparent's stories were told, the listening team responded to the stories they had heard. They focus on the special knowledges and skills they had heard, and what had been evoked for them by listening to the stories of the participants—a re-telling of the stories.

The final stage of the gathering process was for the grandparents to offer their reflections on what had resonated for them in the listening—a re-telling of the re-telling.

After the gathering the stories are documented by the listening team and given back to the grandparent community. They decide with whom they want to share the stories, and another gathering with other communities may be co-coordinated. The grandparents' stories will be launched in 2006

3 counselling/family therapy sessions for grandparents who are parenting as a result of drug or alcohol issues. A memorandum of agreement was developed between Canberra Mothercraft Society and Relationships Australia, Canberra & Region to provide counselling/family therapy funded through the brokerage funding

4 drug and alcohol education program series for grandparents with invited speakers.

The program series assisted families to:

- develop effective family relationship, communication, stress, and self-management skills
- develop effective family relationship skills to reduce stress and isolation
- provide opportunities to explore attitudes to drug use and drug user
- learn about drug use and how to support their grandchildren
- improve support networks for families dealing with illicit drug use by a young family member.

11 Project evaluation

11.1 Evaluation framework/principles (action research)

From the onset, the project was guided by key principles of action research (Youth Coalition of the ACT, 2005) such as:

- a dynamic process following the cycle of action, reflection, questioning, drawing conclusions, evaluating options and planning further action
- involvement of key stakeholders throughout the project
- allowing for different perspectives in data interpretation
- use of a variety of methods for collecting and analysing data (triangulation)
- developing an environment for mutual learning.

It was important in this capacity building project that there was a focus on the ongoing change, being responsive to the needs of stakeholders and on continuous project development. The use of an action research approach for this project was clearly indicated.

11.2 Project achievements

Table 3: Overview of key project achievements in relation to the key outcome indicators

| Key outcome indicators | Focus groups | Needs analysis/ key informant questionnaire | Map existing services | Develop referral guidelines | Forum | Grand Jugglers circus | D&A education (Stepping Stones) |
|--|--------------|---|-----------------------------|-----------------------------------|-------|-----------------------------|------------------------------------|
| Grandparents express satisfaction about needs analysis and reporting, ensuring accurate and appropriate information to service providers. | ✓ | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Build a knowledge base about the needs, priorities and aspirations of the identified needs groups. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Develop referral guidelines for service providers in relation to service delivery. | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ | | |
| Enhance service providers understanding and capacity to meet the needs of the identified group. | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ | ✓ | | ✓ |
| Reduce the personal and social disruption and isolation experienced by grandparents and grandchildren affected by alcohol and other drug issues. | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |
| Conduct the project through support and education. The project will be conducted in the spirit of collaboration, truth, trust and transparency between the grandparents, the children and the agencies involved. | | | | ✓ | | | ✓ |
| Support and education offered will reduce the personal and social disruption and isolation experienced by grandparents who are parenting grandchildren | | | | | ✓ | ✓ | ✓ |

12 Discussion and recommendations

After hearing the voices of grandparents, service providers, policy makers, peak bodies and the community sector we make the following recommendations.

- 1 The voices of grandparents parenting grandchildren affected by alcohol and drug issues should be heard and listened to through regular consultation.

“ I gained a greater understanding of the amazing contribution grandparents take to the community”. *Service Provider Feedback Forum 2005*

- 2 Use a collaborative intersectoral approach dealing with issues to do with grandparents parenting grandchildren, establishing a cross-sectoral reference group to inform future policy and service provision for families affected by alcohol and drug issues.

Service providers and policy makers expressed appreciation about the opportunity to hear the views of grandparents. Some child protection workers voiced disappointment that their perspectives were missing.

Feelings towards statutory agencies by grandparents show how little they know about our restrictions and workload and service that we can provide.

Child protection policy views were represented and made a valuable contribution to the Trifecta partnership. Several representatives from Child Protection were invited but declined to speak at the forum.

A collaborative inter-sectoral approach could address some of the anxieties expressed by service providers:

- The forum was the first opportunity service providers, policy makers, peak bodies and grandparents had the opportunity to come together to develop a shared understanding of the issues faced by grandparents parenting grandchildren.
- An intersectoral approach recognises that families and communities have differing needs and strengths that can be built on. Effective support for grandparents families requires partnerships and governance arrangements that involve all levels of government, the community sector and non-government organisations.

- 3 Coordinated early intervention and prevention education and counseling program for grandparent families at risk of the impact of alcohol and drug with financial support to sustain programs that reduce social isolation and build family resilience and support networks
- Forum participants concurred with findings in the literature and perspectives raised by forum speakers about the need for early intervention to heal lives impacted by parental drug use.

I would like free access to be able to talk to a child psychologist about issues that are arising from grandchildren's traumatic pre-school years, before they came to us. Adolescents are a challenge in 'normal' circumstances—how do I help these traumatised ones through these years?

- 4 Ameliorate the direct financial burden of the grandparents through recognition of the special needs in relation to governmental financial assistance to grandparents.

As identified in the literature most grandparents parenting grandchildren face financial challenges, articulated by one participant thus:

Huge financial costs that should never have occurred—grandparents need allowances regardless of custody orders—if you look after the children full time you get the allowance.

Problem drug use can and often does compromise physical and emotional health and development with typically multiple and cumulative consequences. It is important financial support extends to emotional and psychological disability.

A significant and recurring issue raised with the Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) is concern for the children of drug using parent/s. These concerns span pregnancy and infancy, through to early childhood and adolescence. Often, the central concern expressed is the perception that intergenerational drug use is becoming more common. The ANCD is of the opinion that there are opportunities for prevention, which are currently not being realised due to a lack of appropriate and coordinated interventions among problematic drug users who have children. Therefore, the ANCD is seeking to identify the opportunities and impediments for engaging and supporting families to reduce the likelihood that children of current, problematic drug users fail to receive proper care during their formative years, and possibly become drug users themselves.

- 5 Further research to identify the needs of grandparent families' especially indigenous families using an agreed minimum consistent data about children of families presenting to alcohol and other drug services.
- 6 Coordinated services that include targeted prevention, early intervention, and recreation opportunities for children and enhance the engagement and participation of children with substance dependent parents in social, recreational and educational activities.

This project highlights the issues of social isolation and family disruption and distress faced by grandparents parenting grandchildren because of alcohol and other drugs issues, discussed in national and international literature.

This project, Grandparents ACT & Region, and COTA have touched the 'tip of the iceberg' in terms of the issues faced by, and needs of grandparents and their grandchildren affected by parental alcohol and other drugs use. The project has provided information and ideas for ways forward that will need to be sustained through further research, service provision and policy direction if real changes are to be made. All of the research points to the need for support that focuses on increasing family resilience a need to support our most vulnerable and valuable members of our future society—children.

- 7 Strengthening family resilience through mediation and support services, parenting and life skills education programs, responsive and flexible respite, accessible affordable child care, and well supported out of home kinship care.
- 8 Recognise and build on the strengths of grandparents raising grandchildren by providing opportunities for training, advocacy and leadership activities, to serve as spokespersons with media, public and private sector policy makers, grandparent families and organisations. Achieving substantive improvements in well being for grandparents raising grandchildren because of alcohol and other drug issues, and their families requires new legislative and policy changes framed in an intergenerational context.

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ATTACHMENT A

Key informants questionnaire

Grandparents parenting grandchildren of families
affected by alcohol and other drugs

Questionnaire

We would be grateful if you would please take a few minutes to complete this form.
Please also feel free to provide any comments or suggestions that you may have.

Name

Organisation/Service

Address

Phone **Email**

In your organisation do you see any grandparents/families who are parenting grandchildren?
If yes, please describe some of the issues that the family has.

Does your organisation provide a service/program/support (please circle) for grandparents
who are parenting grandchildren of families affected by alcohol and other drugs?
If yes, can you please describe.

Are you aware of any services that support grandparents in the ACT?

Can you suggest how services to grandparents and grandchildren can be increased/improved? How can our
services support and benefit grandparents?

What are the gaps?

Can you suggest any other key organisations/groups we need to contact?

Please provide any other additional comments/suggestions

I would like to be involved with reference group for this project (this will involve attendance
at 2–3 meetings). (YES/NO)

Please provide a response to these questions by 18 March in the SAE

Thank you for taking the time to complete this questionnaire for Canberra Mothercraft Society

Carolyn Pettit, Project Officer, Canberra Mothercraft Society, PO Box 126, Curtin ACT 2605

email carolyn.pettit@act.gov.au **phone** 6205 2333 **fax** 6205 2344

ATTACHMENT B

Key informant responses

Grandparents parenting grandchildren of families affected by alcohol and other drugs

Responses to grandparents questionnaire

The following organisations were sent a questionnaire:

- WIREDDD
- Parent Support Service
- Directions ACT
- Drugs in the Family Support Group
- ADP
- Ted Noffs
- Family and Friends of Drug Law Reform
- Carers program—Keeping Families Connected
- Barnardo's Australia
- Lifeline
- The Opiate Program
- Belconnen Community Service
- Diversion Services ADP (CADAS)
- Canberra Recovery Service, Mancare
- Co-morbidity/Dual Diagnosis
- Corrections Health
- Oasis Bridge Salvation Army
- Smith Family
- Office of Community Advocate
- Keeping Families Connected, Carers ACT
- ADFACT
- Family Support Queanbeyan
- COTA National Seniors
- Relationships Australia
- Mental Health
- Salvation Army
- Family Support program Woden
- Gungahilin Community Service
- Winnunga Nimmityja
- ACTCOSS
- Self-help groups
- Drugs in the Family
- Family Drug Support Hotline
- Grandparents ACT
- Alcohol and Drug Council Australia
- Marymead
- Family centres
- Suicide Prevention
- Aboriginal Services

Responses to grandparents questionnaire:

In your organisation do you see any grandparents/families who are parenting grandchildren?

If yes, please describe some of the issues that the family has.

- Occasionally we have contact with grandparents who are parenting grandchildren. We have much more contact with families with adult children a number of whom have children being parented by those adult children. Most members have children who are or were illicit drug users
- Not just full time parenting but caring at short notice and for longer than normal periods
- Want information regarding drug use by adult child including available drug treatment services
- Stress of providing support for drug using adult children as well as caring for children
- Raising 'difficult' children
- Isolation
- Shame
- Fiancé not prepared for the expenses of bringing up further children, expenses involved in support of drug using adult child who will generally be short of money.
- Sometimes includes instances of grandparents funding illicit drug purchases out of concern to remove incentive to commit crime
- Depletion of resources set aside for retirement
- We have some counselling clients in this category; dilemmas between what parents and grandparents want for the children, safety issues, drug and alcohol issues, carer stress, personal safety, own issues re aging and depression, uncertain of what community support is available (Carer's ACT)
- Family conflict, mental health issues, drug and alcohol issues, family court issues, children court issues
- No (Lifeline, Canberra)
- We work with women who have been affected by dysfunction—we can do counselling and referral to 12 steps meetings
- Sometimes, and this would be if the parents have drug and alcohol issues and the grandparents have become involved
- A fair percentage of children in our programs that are matched with volunteers reside with grandparents or extended family member
- Grandmother (primary carer) dealing with adolescent emotional, difficult in meeting requirements to stay on the program, issues include transport issues, generational issues e.g. technology/school systems/adolescents issues e.g. pregnancy
- In cases where parents look after their grandchildren issues are not dissimilar to other carers i.e. violence from alcohol and other drugs user, need for referrals, communication issues, information about alcohol and other drugs and related issues such as services, need for support, need for advocacy, etc Also sometimes need to understand what is happening for problematic alcohol and other drugs user. In these cases we refer them to Carers Association and to other support groups/Stepping Stones
- Yes access, supporting the parents so grandchildren do not suffer.

Does your organisation provide a service/program/support (please circle) for grandparents who are parenting grandchildren of families affected by alcohol and other drugs?

If yes, can you please describe.

- Supports grandparents indirectly through dissemination of information about drugs and providing an understanding circle
- Only generically with counselling or group psycho education/support group situation; mostly targeted at grandparents.

- No, not directly, we provide advocacy on behalf of children under 18 years, some of who may be in the care of grandparents
- We could, but I would not be able to tell you for sure, as we do not keep the kind of information about the caller
- We provide support programs to grandmothers who are parenting grandchildren of families affected by dependency. We offer groups counselling and literature
- We have drug and alcohol workers, counsellors, drop in, detoxification unit (Arcardia House).
- We have volunteer based mentoring programs in which we match vulnerable children aged 6–16 with a volunteer mentor (friend or tutor) to spend time each week in friendship or tutoring activities
- Grandparents are included in our client group but we do not offer any additional formalised support. We provide additional support to individuals when we become aware of their needs
- Family and carers meeting (Ted Noffs)
- Stepping Stones workshop
- Family work where appropriate e.g. when a residential client is being cared for by grandparents (Ted Noffs).

Are you aware of any services that support grandparents in the ACT?

- Family Drug Support: telephone line, support meetings, periodical Stepping Stones courses
- Drugs in the Family
- Carer's ACT
- Marymead support group for grandparents
- Not specifically
- No
- Specific grandparents no
- None
- No
- Grandparents ACT & Region
- Individual organisations offer special interest groups e.g. Marymead
- Not specific to grandparents
- No
- No
- None

Can you suggest how services to grandparents and grandchildren can be increased/improved?

How can our services support and benefit grandparents?

- Adapt family drug support's guide for coping specifically for grandparents.
- Focus on enhancing strategies, particularly promoting substitution programs that are known to enable drug dependant parents to regain stability in their lives while still dependent.
- Financial and emotional support to allow grandparents provide safe and supportive care to grandchildren.
- No (Lifeline, Canberra)
- Having more educational groups—therapeutic groups, more research, literature.
- Not sure
- We do not discriminate due to family make up, as long as those children in the family requiring support/mentoring and they fit our assessment criteria of the kid's friends program.

- Written information
- Opportunities to meet with others in similar situation
- Support for family is not great at the best of times.

What are the gaps?

- Promote understanding of addiction — relapsing condition and the consequences of insistence as a first priority, that dependant users become drug free rather than stabilising their life
- Publicise resources that are available including support groups
- Target bodies e.g. Council for the Ageing and churches that are likely to have contact with grandparents with drug using children before a crisis develops requiring the grandparents to assume full time parenting
- Financial assistance e.g. grandparents able to draw a carer's pension
- Involvement in support arrangements for grandparents with adult dependent children who are coping with parenting
- Don't know (Lifeline, Canberra)
- The don't talk rule, it is too long that sometimes workers feel they don't talk or be aware of the impact of dependencies in other peoples lives
- Not sure at this time
- We query the accessibility of internet sites
- For families receiving support is difficult because most of the resources are used for alcohol and other drug users themselves
- Issues of privacy and confidentiality make it extremely difficult sometimes for families, including grandparents, to be helped. Services that are family friendly assume that confidentiality is not an obstacle to helping families
- It is not unusual for our clients (12–18) to have strong bonds with their grandparents and not unusually the grandparents are one of their main supports. Agencies can hide behind legislation so they don't have to deal with families because it is more complex to deal with a system and it requires skills mediating as well as family therapy expertise. Also agencies that are not aware of the ethical implications of maintaining support to the whole system find the process problematic and challenging
- Additionally, alcohol and drug users themselves can resist or behave in ways that do not support honest communication or maintain healthy relationships with other family members. Paradoxically, it is often families, that are the ones that support and assist the alcohol and drug user in survival and subsistence.

Can you suggest any other key organisations/groups we need to contact?

- Council for the Ageing
- churches
- No
- read literature in 12 steps (ACA, ALanon)
- Anglicare
- Ted Noffs Foundation
- Directions
- WIREDD
- Alcohol and Drug program

ATTACHMENT C

Trifecta

Drug use and families: a cross sector approach to exploring the issues

This initiative is proudly brought to you in partnership by Youth Coalition of the ACT, aDFact, Canberra Mothercraft Society, ACT Health and the Stronger Families and Communities Strategy (an Australian Government Initiative).

A three-part summit series

Focus: Young people and children

Drugs in the family summit
Tuesday, July 12th
Heritage Hotel, Narrabundah

The Drugs in the Family Summit 2005 is an exciting cross sector opportunity to engage in debate and discussion around the issues facing young people who have problematic substance use issues in their families. Topics to be covered include:

- What about children and young people affected by parental substance abuse? Findings from the Nobody's Client project, Mental Illness and Substance Abuse—issues for families
- Child protection and substance abuse in families
- Young carers— impacts of substance abuse and mental illness in families
- Supporting families affected by substance abuse issues

Please contact Bianca before 7 July 2005 on 6247 3540 or bianca@youthcoalition.net

Focus: Parents and children

Parents and drug use: Issues of care
Friday, September 9th
CIT School of Hospitality, Reid Campus

In 1989, the Alcohol and Drug Foundation ACT (ADFACT) opened a unique program in substance dependency treatment. Since the establishment of the Karralika Family program, many women and families who would otherwise have hidden their drug use, have sought help—and succeeded.

Parents seeking help are usually driven by the desire to be a better parent. They want their children to have a good life, mostly they want them to have a better life than they themselves had. But they need help and support, and they need to build trust with the organisations they have often seen as 'the enemy'.

This symposium brings together voices from drug treatment, health, the judicial system and child protection in seeking a common goal.

Please contact Christina Sanchez on 6292 2733 or christina.s@adfact.org for more details.

Focus: Grandparents and grandchildren

Grandparents parenting grandchildren, drug and alcohol issues forum
Thursday, October 20th
National Museum of Australia

Many grandparents take on the role of raising grandchildren as they have throughout the ages. The difference now is the effect of parental drug use, which has resulted in a recent and rapid increase in the number of children being raised by grandparents.

This forum will present issues from a national and ACT and region perspective.

This is an opportunity for services, policy makers and grandparents to provide input into informing effective support for these families. Topics include:

- Findings from the National Grandparents Raising Grandchildren report
- Alcohol and other drug use and mental health issues for grandparent families

Please contact Carolyn on 6205 2333 or carolyn.pettit@act.gov.au for more details.

Drug use and families—a cross sector approach to exploring the issues:

- The Youth Coalition of the ACT, the Alcohol and Drug Foundation ACT (ADFACT) and the Canberra Mothercraft Society
- A cross sector partnership to explore the issues of drug use and families: a three-part summit series from July to October 2005
 - Drugs in the Family Summit , July 12th, which focuses on young people and children
 - Parents and Drug Use: Issues of Care Symposium, September 9th, which focuses on parents and children
 - Grandparents parenting Grandchildren Drug and Alcohol Issues Forum, October 20th, focusing on the effect of parental drug use on the extended family.
- Some information about drug use and families:
 - The United Kingdom estimates that for every problem drug user, there may be up to one child affected. There are no figures from Australia.
 - Parental problem drug use can and does cause serious harm to children at every age from conception to adulthood.
 - Reducing the harm to children from parental problem drug use should become a main objective of policy and practice.
 - Effective treatment of the parent can have major benefits for the child.
 - By working together, services can take many practical steps to protect and improve the health and well-being of affected children.
 - The number of affected children is only likely to decrease when the number of problem drug users decreases.
 - Children with substance dependent parents are at high risk of developing their own drug, alcohol, and other problems. These problems are largely due to compromised parenting, lack of resources and a chaotic lifestyle. Children with substance dependent parents receive little support and are often nobody's client.
 - There is a clear relationship between parental substance abuse and child abuse in a significant subsection of drug-using families (although research does not rule out the possibility, or likelihood, that substance abuse and adequate parenting may co-exist in a large percentage of families with substance-abusing parents).
 - Broad-based interventions are required pre-natally and throughout infancy, as post-natal environmental conditions (for example, parental conflict, continued substance abuse) may intensify effects related to pre-natal substance exposure. An initial step would be to trial existing well evaluated behavioural family interventions with this group. High-risk families—those with five or more risk factors (for example, maternal depression, domestic violence, non-domestic violence, large family size, homelessness, incarceration, mental health impairment, absent male partner)—could be targeted for more intensive early intervention.
 - Interventions may need to be tailored according to the type and nature of substance abuse, as substance-abusing parents differ in their behavioural and personality characteristics and treatment needs.

ATTACHMENT D

Forum programDrug use and families: a cross sector approach
to exploring issues

Grandparents parenting grandchildren because of alcohol and other drugs

| Time | Theme/topic | Presenter | Chair | Length |
|----------|--|---|---|---------|
| 8.30am | Registration and coffee (Museum foyer) | | | 30 mins |
| 9.00am | Welcome and introductions (Visions theatre) | | | 20 mins |
| | Housekeeping /process | Mary Kirk | | |
| | Welcome to country | Matilda House | | |
| | Forum open | Simon Corbell | Wendy Saclier, President, Canberra Mothercraft Society | |
| 9.20 am | Overview of forum | | | 15 mins |
| | Setting the scene: introducing the partners. Background research and information. | Emma Baldock, Community Development Officer, Canberra Mothercraft Society | | |
| 9.35 am | The grandparent's perspective | | Emma Baldock | 85 mins |
| | Grandparents raising grandchildren | Margaret Fitzpatrick | | |
| | A policeman's wife's lot | Joy and Tony Lauer | | |
| | The importance of grandparents | Marjorie Hayes | | |
| 11.00 am | Morning tea | | | 30 mins |
| 11.30 am | The children's perspective | | Emma Baldock | 30 mins |
| | Nobody's client | Dr Stefan Gruenert | | |
| 12.00 am | Breakout groups | | | 30 mins |
| | Grandparents (Visions theatre) | Carolyn Pettit | | |
| | Policy makers (Yowie room) | Mary Kirk | | |
| | Service providers (Studio theatre) | Lynne Magor-Blatch | | |
| | Summary of issues from groups | | Emma Baldock | |
| 1.00 pm | Lunch Served in the Museum foyer | | | 50 mins |
| 1.50 pm | The Grand Jugglers: performance | Carolyn Pettit | | 20 mins |
| 2.10 pm | Partnerships (Visions theatre) | | | 60 mins |
| | Fractured Families: Building resources for recovery | Lynne Magor-Blatch | Emma Baldock | |
| | Future directions of the Alcohol and Drug program | Karen Lenihan | | |
| | Partnerships: a model of good practice | Carrie Fowlie | | |
| 3.15 pm | Panel | | | |
| | Questions and discussion of issues raised in groups | Mary Kirk | Margaret Fitzpatrick | 60 mins |
| 4.15 pm | Reflection Summing up, where to from here | | Carrie Fowlie Stefan Gruenert Marjorie Hayes Karen Lenihan Lynne Magor-Blatch | 15 mins |
| 4.30pm | Close | | | |

ATTACHMENT E

Presenters' details

Brief biographies

Dr. Stefan Gruenert

Stefan is a psychologist and the Executive Manager of Research and Program Evaluation at Odyssey House Victoria. He manages a number of training, research and clinical intervention programs and provides clinical supervision to several Odyssey staff. Over the past three years, Stefan has researched and worked with children and their substance dependent parents.

Stefan has worked as a senior counsellor in a range of settings including Odyssey's Therapeutic Community. He has conducted research on men's issues, intimacy, family work and fathers. Stefan has also taught courses in counselling, statistics, drug and alcohol work, family work, personality disorders and communication.

Joy and Tony Lauer

Joy and Tony Lauer have four children and twelve grandchildren. Joy and Tony have the full time responsibility of raising of three children. They are the children of the Lauer's daughter, surrendered into the care of her parents because of her ongoing heroin addiction problems.

Joy raised her four children and has been supporting Tony in his career as a police officer in NSW Police for forty-one years.

As a career police officer, Tony served with the New South Wales Police. Tony held the appointments of:

- Chief Superintendent in charge, Criminal Investigation Branch
- Assistant Commissioner, Professional Responsibility
- Deputy Commissioner, State Commander
- Appointed Commissioner of Police of the New South Wales Police in March, 1991 and retired from this position in 1996
- A life member and past President of the Police Association of NSW

He has served as a member of the Police Board of NSW, the Operation Review Committee of the Independent Commission Against Corruption, the Management Committee of the State Crime Commission and a Councillor of the Royal Humane Society of NSW.

Currently a Director and Chairman of the Police Department Employee's Credit Union Limited. He also serves as a Legator with Police Legacy and as a member of the RSL's 'Anzac of the Year' Award Committee.

Mr Lauer was named a Paul Harris Fellow by the Rotary Foundation of Rotary International in 1994 and has been awarded the National Service Medal Police Long Service and Good Conduct Medal, the National Medal, the Queens Silver Jubilee Medal and the Australian Police Medal.

His recreational interests are gardening and motorcycle touring, both of which he shares with his wife Joy. In 2003, Tony and Joy appeared on the ABC Australian story, 'A Policeman's lot' which tells the remarkable story of the Lauer family.

Karen Lenihan

Karen Lenihan started as the Director of the Alcohol and Drug program and the Corrections Health program with ACT Health in April this year.

She has a background in health and has worked in a variety of fields including general health services, mental health and women's health.

Over the last five years Karen has worked predominantly in a change management role. This has involved doing things like developing and implementing a comprehensive consumer participation system into a NSW Area Health Service and on another occasion, implementing policy for domestic violence into a group of emergency departments.

Karen is really enjoying the challenges of her new position.

Margaret Fitzpatrick

Most of Margaret's working life has been as a community development worker and manager of community and health agencies in both country Victoria and metropolitan Melbourne.

Margaret has had stints in both federal and state government department.

She previously worked for Council on the Ageing Victoria on a project for the International year of the older person.

Patricia Reeve, then Executive Director of COTA National Seniors, invited Margaret to take on the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren project. It was a life changing experience.

Since the project ended Margaret has become a grandparent herself to a grandson who she minds on a regular basis and now more than ever I understand the sacrifices, the tiredness, the sapping of energy that full time custodial grandparents face. And the enormous love for their grandchildren that keeps them going.

Marjorie Hayes

Marjorie Hayes is a grandparent who has the experience of raising her own grandchild. With a grassroots knowledge of the considerable issues involved for both the grandparents and the grandchildren. Marjorie has developed a proactive passion to increase overall awareness of these issues and make a difference. She is currently involved in a working party in the Blue Mountains and Penrith areas in New South Wales and has been instrumental in putting together a support group in the Blue Mountains. She has negotiated a partnership with Lifeline in Penrith to provide a telephone hotline for grandparents. In 2003 she flew to Melbourne to take part in the planning of the 'Grandparents Raising Grandchildren' report commissioned by the Minister for Family Services.

In 2004, she spoke at 'Face to Face', an extended Family and Kinship Care forum in Melbourne.

In May 2005 with Cota NSW, Marjorie organised a Forum in Penrith NSW for grandparents to give them an opportunity to have their say. The Forum was attended by local members of Parliament, professionals in the field and many grandparents. The forum has been a major step in moving forward raising the profile for grandparents raising their grandchildren.

Lynne Magor-Blatch

Lynne is the Clinical Director of Client Services with the Alcohol & Drug Foundation ACT and a registered psychologist in the ACT and NSW. Lynne trained initially as an art teacher, before moving into the alcohol and other drugs field, where she has more than 25 years experience in areas from primary prevention to tertiary treatment. Although she has worked within government as both Interim and Assistant Manager of ACT Health, Alcohol and other Drug Policy Unit; as Secretariat Manager to the National Mental Health Working Group and Secretariat of the National Co-morbidity taskforce; as a tertiary teacher, policy officer and consultant, her prime experience is within the non-government sector.

From 1988 to 1994, Lynne was the Director of Karralika, a therapeutic community program managed by the Alcohol and Drug Foundation ACT. In 1989 the Karralika Family program was established, and since that time more than 250 children and their families have received help. Lynne returned to ADFACT in 2003 after working in other non-government and government roles and completing her studies to become a qualified psychologist, to take up the role of Clinical Director of Client Services.

Lynne's talk today is entitled, *Fractured families: building a resource for recovery*.

ATTACHMENT F

Feedback: Forum breakout groups

| WHAT IS WORKING WELL? | WHAT COULD BE BETTER? | WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE? |
|--|--|---|
| Breakout group: Blue | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Other jurisdictions are making headway, especially Victoria ■ Grandparents are getting on the agenda ■ Support groups are working for grandparents ■ Shared experience of grandparents ■ Grandparents are doing a great job ■ Where it is happening it is working well, but... ■ Children's needs are not being met ■ Different information from different sources ■ Greater sharing between sectors (i.e. youth attending a forum on grandparenting) ■ Funding bodies are starting to support cross-sector work ■ Starting to broaden to look at the family | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Communication needs to be better (state, commonwealth, sectors, services, workers, families) ■ Impact of new legislation ■ Look at the needs of the family at the time ■ Stigma and prejudice needs to lessen ■ Need to recognise that family circumstances change—the service system needs to change and be flexible ■ Establish foundations of support for the family ■ Cross border issues (family services, family members, schools, etc.) ■ Support grandparents as advocates ■ State/federal lack of action ■ How do we support grandparents well? Do we need new models? ■ More regional grandparent projects/groups ■ Support for group facilitators ■ Need to be a strategic umbrella ■ Need long term funding commitments ■ Value judgements | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Cross border collaborations ■ Raise awareness of grandparenting issues within the care and protection system ■ Build in the work that has already been done ■ Balance in services and funding for the whole: prevention, intervention, post-vention, etc. ■ Understand, respect and appreciate we are all aiming for similar goals ■ Implementation of the recommendations from the grandparenting report |
| Breakout group: Red | | |
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Substance use, TCH, antenatal <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Who is using substances in pregnancy support, follow-up • Safety net ■ Partnerships: positive parenting (YCACT, ADTACT, ACT Health) ■ Carers ACT <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Support for grandparent • Support is out there • Grandparent info folder ■ Come from grandparents ■ Folder being updated (website) ■ Support meetings (really good response) | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Broader definition of 'client' — not just one person, but look at whole family ■ Sharing of info (cross agency) ■ Info to general practitioners from government and grandparent website ■ QEII, Marymead, RA (continuing advertising) ■ Advertising for youth and volunteer involvement <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Some issues (insurance, confidentiality) ■ \$\$ continual ■ More opportunities for respite | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Grandparents receive allowance for parenting grandchildren (not means tested), there will be setting up allowances, tax concessions and 'gold card' health care card, respite, holidays ■ Intensive support and so all issues can be thought through (huge repercussions) ■ Workers meetings rather than 'silos'. Agencies will share info and support each other ■ We are able to change society's perspective of what families are |

| WHAT IS WORKING WELL? | WHAT COULD BE BETTER? | WHAT IS YOUR VISION FOR THE FUTURE? |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|
|-----------------------|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|

| | | |
|------------------------------|--|--|
| Breakout group: Green | | |
|------------------------------|--|--|

- | | | |
|---|---|---|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ The children are now safe ■ Then the parental issues can be separated ■ Separate head and heart | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ Court (inconsistencies, discrepancies, inside out) ■ DoCS court information (coordinated approach) ■ Income where it goes ■ Policy and procedure drives practice ■ Supervision ■ Accountability ■ Education for Family Services ■ Ask us ■ Sustainability (resources) ■ Mandatory reporting ■ Cautioning documentation ■ Departments: remember it's somebody's story in the way things are recorded (new story not the old) ■ Confidentiality ■ Early intervention (help families early) ■ Appropriate support for siblings | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ■ National c/w action responsibility ■ National policy ■ Coordinated approach ■ Professionalism ■ Non means tested ■ Procedures for solicitors to follow before the court process begins (and the changes start) <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Refer to counsellor • Documentation to be read • Who to contact (Family Services etc.) |
|---|---|---|

- Counselling for children
- Grandchildren able to meet
- Interest ('normalising')
- Better early intervention for alcohol and other drugs
- Intensive support (understanding)
- Increased support in antenatal and moving through to parenting role
- Appropriate rehabilitation services
- Mediation to reduce law costs
- Alcohol and other drug services funded to provide family services and after care.

Grandparents

- Functions (e.g. offering day at zoo) huge costs involved in raising grandchildren
- Grand Jugglers (great project)
- Broader definition of what 'family' is
- QEII (info sheets etc. on parenting) unbiased view
- Importance of mandatory reporting to protect child
- Where grandparents can access support works well. Downside: waiting lists
- FDS (24 hour hotline)
- Stepping Stones
- More cross agency involvement (still issues of confidentiality etc.).

ATTACHMENT G

Forum evaluation survey

Issues of care forum

Grandparents parenting because of alcohol and other drugs

Forum evaluation survey results**1 My main interest in attending today's forum was?**

- as grandparents raising grandchildren and to see what others in our position have to endure from bureaucrats
- work related interest—to try and provide some contacts that grandparents parenting may need
- hear views of grandparents and service providers—look at ways we might better work together and provide support
- an information gathering and networking opportunity and to see where our service can work with grandparents
- work related issue
- increase knowledge in the area of family support (awareness etc.). Network with other services and hear of research, programs and other services
- learn more about services for grandparents and the progress of other organisations in supporting grandparents
- I work with grandparents in a support role and hear of their story and how hard it is for them
- gain greater understanding of issues for grandparents
- to learn about resources available in ACT and wider region available for carers and grandparents (and for young people and children)
- developing a coordinated approach to providing quality service to grandparents caring for grandchildren
- learning more about issues for grandparents parenting grandchildren
- learn more about grandparents perspective and sector liaison
- to increase my knowledge and understanding about the drug and alcohol issues relating to grandparents parenting their grandchildren. To improve my professional practices to provide best practice care with and for families
- having supported grandparents parenting previously
- raise awareness about issues for grandparents as parents
- helping grandparents guide their grandchildren's behaviour—understanding the issues
- to consider the supports that grandparents can be provided not only through professional/ community support, government, but also through the wider extended family network
- to learn about the issues confronting grandparents parenting grandchildren due to alcohol and other drugs and identify potential partners for conducting drug and alcohol research in this area
- to collect information as to what is happening in the ACT for grandparents parenting
- as a speaker, as a person very concerned about the issues and wanting to see action by governments and service providers
- to lend support to the carers and to those running the day. But mainly to honour and respect the huge job being undertaken. Also to experience the presentations and content

- getting drug use and families on the agenda and learning more
- working across the age groups to work together against drugs
- what are the needs for grandparents and what is being provided. In what way do laws and policies work against the needs and the provision
- because I am interested in all aspects of the effects of drugs especially so far as laws and policies impact
- getting more support for grandparents raising children and also carers allowance
- to see changes in policies and procedures of service providers. Have change in the culture of grandparents
- direction in my parenting role. Availability of resources
- to further the cause of understanding of the problem of grandparents raising children
- gain knowledge/share knowledge
- as a committee member for a Wyong group on the Central Coast to gather information (shared)
- to learn something helpful that I didn't already know
- to learn
- to meet other people in the same position as my family and to discuss what needs to be done to help people in our situation
- contribute comments to people who hopefully can make things better.

2 Please circle the response that best describes your primary role:

| grandparent | service provision | policy |
|--------------|-------------------|----------------|
| 11 (1 uncle) | 17 | 8 (1 research) |

3 Which description best applies to you?

| grandparent | health | A&OD | mental health | MACH |
|----------------|-----------|-------|---------------|-------|
| 10 | 1 | 5 | 2 | 7 |
| family support | community | youth | education | legal |
| 9 | 5 | 3 | 2 | 1 |

Other? Please specify:

child protection (3); government; family group conference facilitator and social worker; peak body (COTA); grandparenting support and groups; carer; uncle

4 How do you rate the usefulness of this forum?

| not useful | somewhat useful | generally useful | very useful |
|------------|-----------------|------------------|-------------|
| 0 | 2 | 11 | 24 |

5 What is something you learned today that was useful?

- The intensity and numbers of grandparents who are full time for their grandchildren.
- Hearing from grandparents—learning about what is important.
- Need for support in transition in the legal sector.
- How grandparents need recognition and support for the important valued job they have undertaken.
- Specifically, to consider aspect of 'tangible support' to 'belonging support'.
- Grandparents are very special people who out of the love of their own child are willing to care for their grandchildren no matter what the situation is.

- That there are many varied issues that are being faced. There is much more needed to assist these families.
- The huge plight that grandparents face.
- Feeling towards statutory agencies held by grandparents and how little they know about our restrictions and workloads and service that we can provide. Resources available in the ACT and region for children, young people and those who care for them.
- Perspectives of grandparents although not from the ACT apparently-all child protection comments at the end referred to DoCS/resources available.
- Different perspectives e.g. from grandparents, children. About different supports and services available.
- Hearing stories of grandparents.
- Greater need for early education and early intervention. I learned to listen to grandparents stories and the need for collaboration between services.
- Further empathy for the feelings of grandparents and their challenging role.
- New partnership arrangements and potential directions. Barriers for grandparents.
- Understanding the hardships facing grandparents looking after grandchildren through alcohol and other drugs.
- I particularly enjoyed Stefan and Lyn's contribution and the stories from grandparents.
- Grandparents are totally submersed in problems so much so that they could not look up to take a wider view as a means of dealing with their issues.
- Grandparents have it hard and that they need support/information/to tell their story.
- I gained a greater understanding of the amazing contribution grandparents make to the community.
- Reminded of the extraordinary heroism of grandparents who are raising their grandchildren.
- That not a great deal has changed in terms of grandparent support over the last few years, however there is still a consciousness raising approach—the voice is getting louder.
- I found the cross-sectoral approach really helpful. I found the courage of the grandparents who presented particularly inspiring.
- That the service providers and policy makers envision a much better future (I hope they can make it happen).
- We/I am not alone.
- Agencies are starting to work together.
- Everything that was discussed was all very interesting.
- Keep going.
- All in the same boat.
- That all our efforts are acknowledged. Dr Stefan—most useful. Carrie gives hope for our grandkiddies.
- There are people who are dedicated professionals and who care.
- There is support out there.
- That there is many grandparents out there with similar problems—I don't feel like an alien.
- That there are so many grandparents parenting their grandchildren and worse off than me.
- That we are not alone and the problem is bigger than we thought.

6 Are there any remaining issues you would like to see addressed?

- Yes, foster parents receive payment and grandparents should receive a similar payment on a weekly/fortnightly basis.
- We need to maintain the momentum. Change adversarial court processes. Provide financial support and remove barriers for grandparents.
- Continuing advocacy for the grandparent.
- Pursue a 'clearing house' website where there are links to services for families or to relevant websites arranged around topics of interest.
- Continued progress for support for grandparents.
- There were a lot of issues needing to be addressed. I hope this will be the start of more information and assistance to come.
- Education to grandparents about statutory agency roles, what we can and can't do, our restrictions. Allowance for us to respond to the seemingly hatred people have to child protection agencies—mostly due to lack of education.
- The idea that care and protection services can provide a full solution was implied several times. Not true! A coordinated multi-agency approach is the only way ahead.
- May be we need judges to come too.
- Rhetoric into practice.
- Money for grandparents to parent their grandchildren (no means test). We need well-educated case workers (government funding) that treat grandparents with respect. That changes and recommendations are made from the reports.
- Yes, reconnecting grandchildren to live with grandparents as parents.
- Perhaps to hear the voices of grandchildren.
- Stigma and prejudice works against dealing with issues.
- Families affected by drug use to continue to be on the agenda.
- More partnerships; greater collaborations; a holistic perspective.
- Implement the 2003 report recommendations.
- The bringing together of all the various reports/research/knowledge out there so that recommendations are followed through.
- I would like to see regular annual or bi-annual forums held in this area given the huge amount of work still to be done.
- Plan to support parents who eventually 'get their acts together' so they can gain custody of their children and support us when we lose the kids.
- Something about support for siblings.
- Allowances for grandparents regardless of custody orders etc. If you look after the children full time—you get the allowance.
- To see all we talked about come to fruition.
- I would like free access to be able to talk to a child psychologist about issues that are arising from grandchildren's traumatic pre-school years, before they came to us. Adolescents are a challenge in 'normal' circumstances—how do I help these traumatized ones through these years?
- Yes, numerous.
- Sometimes panel were not always able to understand.
- The dual systems of courts (Children's Court and Family Law) and legal costs.

- Taxation issues. Having to work full time at the age of 62 years to pay off a \$100,000.00 tax bill incurred by tax office charging 12.7% interest on unpaid tax—the money was used to pay \$59,000 legal fees.
- Changes in service delivery. More understanding empathy.
- Yes, getting some allowance for grandparents.
- For people in our position to be give a fair go instead of trying to run our lives.

7 What did you find most interesting or helpful in todays:

Presentations?

- Impact on families of drug abuse. Impact on children of drug abuse
- Holistic approach
- Yes, Stefan/grandparents
- Dr Stefan and real life situations
- Excellent presentations. Excellent speakers
- Grandparent stories (Matilda House and Joy and Tony Lauer) and presentation by Lynne Magor-Blatch
- Viewpoints of children and grandparents
- Stefan
- Stories of what triumphs and tribulations grandparents have faced
- Personal stories
- Excellent wealth of information
- All very interesting. Hearing stories very empowering
- Carrie's use of the 'trifecta' as a model for partnership
- Grandparents stories; Lynne Magor-Blatch—fractured families
- All
- Stefan's presentation—what kids think? Hearing from Tony and Joy Lauer
- Hearing the stories of grandparents especially the guest speakers Joy and Tony Lauer and Margaret Hayes
- Personal stories/service providers
- I think all the presentations were excellent and inspiring
- Grandparents and grandchildren
- Both and all
- The presentations were all insightful and stimulating
- The importance of grandparents
- The personal stories
- Everything and social outing
- Would not like to single one out. The sessions before morning tea were useful and laid a foundation
- Clarity, structure. Thank you for the efforts
- Almost all that was spoken on
- Karen's presentation
- That there is a lot of help out there
- Joy and Tony Lauer, Margaret Fitzpatrick
- Well presented but having been there done that with alcohol there was nothing new.

Discussions?

- Grandparents views
- Yes, problem solving based
- Panel
- We need to let the grandparents know that we really care about them as the service providers
- It was good focusing on what is working as well as what needs to be improved
- Breakout groups
- Clarification of resources available was good
- The complexity from all perspectives
- Would have liked more discussion (more questions needed rather than statements)
- Breaking into groups help to bring out specific direction for the future
- Breakout groups—making opportunity to get input
- Panel discussion a good opportunity to ask questions. When, what and how to tell a child about their parents drug use
- Panels
- Useful looking at strategies and hopes for future
- Personal stories; discussion in breaks
- It was great to have the grandparents input
- Joy and Tony Lauer
- Finding out that there are changes
- The willingness of people to contribute
- The panel
- How many families are just like mine
- Breakout group
- Not everyone knew what was happening to grandparents but I feel they are more aware now and hopefully more can be done.

8 Are there any remaining concerns and issues which relate to your own circumstances which you feel need to be addressed?

- I receive referrals from Child Protection care makers; my preference would be to have a wider referral basis and prior to entry into the CP system. I believe the philosophy behind family group conferencing has a lot of potential.
- Development of children. Impact on grandparents.
- I felt that the grandparents need to have their voices heard.
- Putting rhetoric into practice.
- I find that at many multi-agency forums (and I've been to plenty) there are always people prepared to point out how care and protection services fail. An occasional acknowledgement of the achievements of our service wouldn't hurt or include a rep on your panel.
- As above—seemed as though most were against and only had bad things to say about child protection agencies. Child Protection should be able to contribute to presentation, discuss our restrictions, implications, stories we have faced etc.
- Respite is desperately needed. More support and information needed. Grandparents need to be heard.
- Creation of a 'steering committee' or 'intersectional group' to foster cooperation in preparation for partnership across sectors to support families with substance issues.

*This has been
a brilliant day!
There are so many
wonderful carers. To
see government and
NGO's get together
in partnership to
up the support for
grandparents caring
for grandchildren
shows there is hope
for the future.
Well done!*

- Continuing work to support grandparents—need for supports—websites, regional networks.
- Concerned that much of the focus for grandparents is on finances (and handouts?) and dealing with legal issues. A mediation process is needed. Grandparents are ill-informed and need to be informed. Grandparents need to be given assertiveness training to deal with bureaucracies, law enforcement, courts etc.
- I think its important that we all take something away with us that we can do in our own workplace/family.
- I need to push for a whole family approach and support.
- Financial help.
- Many but won't be able to be resolved in this forum.
- As above—unjust tax laws.
- Long drawn out court case—even when children are at risk.
- Yes, numerous.
- See question six.
- These issues come up every day so we deal with them at the time.
- Huge financial costs incurred that should have never occurred.
- Yes, we need for those that stepped over the one to be made accountable and admit to their mistake and for the same thing not to happen to someone else.

9 Any other comments?

- Thank you
- Holistic case management across the services.
- Thank you muchly.
- I would have liked the grandparents come up the front so they could share their stories so we do know how to help them. Thank you. Excellent.
- Many thanks for the day.
- It was great that different service providers and community members could get together and work collaboratively.
- Kinship carers of children in care in the ACT do receive a payment. There may be questions as to the adequacy of the amount, but the implication was that no kinship carers receive any income support.
- Overall a great day! Great location! Great food! Thanks for the opportunity.
- I was delighted that the grandfather, who is parenting the child that I am the caseworker for, came to this forum. I am sure he will gain from this experience. Personal invitations need to be made to get grandparents connected to support and information forums.
- Great presentation—thank you.
- This has been a brilliant day! There are so many wonderful carers. To see government and NGO's get together in partnership to up the support for grandparents caring for grandchildren shows there is hope for the future. Well done!
- Great forum. Exciting future directions as a result of the trifacta/partnership.
- Thank you for arranging this.
- Really important that we lobby for grandparents to get a regular payment like foster parents.
- I came away somewhat disheartened that the perspective of grandparents because they were unintentionally so preoccupied with their task that their perspective on this huge issue was so narrow. We need people who are personally involved to be encouraged to have a broader outlook before this whole issue can ever be improved.

- It was a fantastic summit. Well done. I felt especially privileged to hear the grandparents voices.
- Congratulations—these training opportunities have been wonderful and have made an impact.
- The forum confirmed how strong these grandparents are and how neglected they are by governments, even after state and federal governments have acknowledged the justice of their case.
- It was a brilliant day. Congratulations to all concerned and best wishes for all future endeavors.
- Well done! Great work congratulations Canberra Mothercraft Society.
- Please put my name on a networking list.
- Great day good info I hope today has a good result for the future. I have 6 grandchildren, I am 55, the ages of the kids are 5, 6, 8, 9, 10, 12.
- Great work.
- Congratulations.
- Services—with knowledge and worthwhile financial support.
- Thankyou it was fantastic.
- Thank you all ever so much for today, it was very informative.
- A good forum—worthwhile.
- Thanks and its great to be involved with the Canberra Mothercraft society and to see what a great job they are doing and they need to be congratulated for the Grand Jugglers.
- Very useful and informative. Glad that I came.
- Thank you heaps.
- I thank the persons responsible for today's great job as it was excellent and gave us a new insight to what is going on. The jugglers were excellent and the field that QEII is in is a feather in the caps of all concerned.

ATTACHMENT H

Media release**Thursday, 13 October 2005****Issues of care forum****Grandparents parenting because of alcohol and other drugs**

Canberra Mothercraft Society will host a one-day Forum on Thursday, 20 October (9am–4.30pm) at the National Museum of Australia, Acton Peninsula.

Canberra Mothercraft Society, Grandparent's Alcohol and Drug Parenting Project Officer said the Forum will raise the issues faced by grandparents raising grandchildren because of alcohol and other drugs.

A spokeswoman for Grandparents ACT & Region said "special funding from the National Illicit Drug Strategy provides an opportunity to bring together the voices of:

- grandparents
- families
- drug and alcohol services
- community organisations
- child protection agencies".

The forum's purpose is to raise the visibility and give voice to all the issues that impact on grandparents, parenting grandchildren because of alcohol and other drugs.

Presenters will include:

- opening address: Simon Corbell, ACT Minister for Health
- Marjorie Hayes, grandparent advocate
- Joy and Tony Lauer (former NSW Commissioner of Police)
- Margaret Fitzpatrick, author of report on grandparents raising grandchildren, commissioned by the Hon. Larry Anthony Minister for Children & Youth Affairs, July 2003
- Dr Stefan Gruenert, author of The Nobody's Client report, Project and parenting toolkit for the Odyssey Institute
- Karen Lenihan, Director of ACT Health Alcohol and Drug Service
- Lynne Magor-Blatch, ACT Drug and Alcohol Foundation.

This is an exciting cross-sector event with Youth Coalition, Adfact and ACT Health; and is funded through the Commonwealth Family and Community Services, Strengthening Families, National Illicit Drug Strategy.

ATTACHMENT I

Radio National: *Life Matters*

with Richard Aedy

Thursday, 20 October 2005

Grandparents under pressure

Grandparents are playing an extremely important role in the care of children. Many are caring for their grandchildren while parents are at work. There is a group of grandparents in Australia who are doing much more than that. It is thought that there are around 35 000 children in the care of their grandparents because their parents are unable to look after them.

The Canberra Mothercraft Society is hosting a one day forum to discuss the particular issues facing grandparents with custody of their grandchildren. And there are many—the emotional, financial, legal and practical challenges of looking after young children when you were ready for the quiet life.

Guests in this story:

- Margot Fitzpatrick, author of the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren report
- Shirley, grandparent

Story producer and researcher: Anna Whitfeld

ATTACHMENT J

The Canberra Times

Former police chief talks of a grand effort at caring

E Murray

Friday, 21 October 2005

Grandparenthood

For many, it is a time of freedom—freedom from the responsibilities of raising children, financial freedom after years spent saving for retirement, and freedom to pursue leisure activities that work and family responsibilities curtailed.

But former NSW Police commissioner Tony Lauer and his wife Joy have not just deferred plans for this more laid-back lifestyle, they have cancelled them.

Four years ago, they became primary carers for three of their grandchildren, after raising four children of their own.

There were 22 500 Australian families in which grandparents were the guardians of their grandchildren in 2003, according to the Australian Bureau of Statistics. It is estimated many thousands more are caring for their grandchildren under informal arrangements.

The Lauers, of Castlereagh near Sydney, were in Canberra yesterday to attend a forum on grandparents who have stepped in to parent grandchildren when their own children could not because of alcohol or other drug problems.

Their daughter, Tanya, battled heroin addiction in between giving birth to her children and living in a violent relationship. After considerable heartache, expense and legal challenges, the Lauers gained custody of three of her children when the youngest was just two weeks old.

They had to sell an investment property to fund extensions to their own home, cope with behavioural problems brought on by early-childhood trauma and struggled to find any support for people in their situation.

The proud grandparents reported yesterday that their grandchildren Alexander, 14, Zachary, 7 and Isabel, 4, were now doing well.

Their mother is working to raise awareness of addiction issues, while caring for her youngest child.

Mr Lauer, 70, retired from the police force in 1996 after 41 years of service, five of those as commissioner. He said his aim in telling such a private story so publicly was to bring greater understanding of the far-reaching problems of drug use. "I'm far from embarrassed," he said. "My grandchildren know who their grandparents are."

Mrs Lauer, 68, said she faced an endless pile of washing and ironing, and picked up every bug that the youngsters brought home, but looking back, the only thing she would change was her daughter's suffering. "It's not easy, but it's most satisfying," she said.

The forum at the National Museum of Australia was hosted by the Canberra Mothercraft Society.

Its community development officer, Emma Baldock, said grandparents desperately needed more information and support, both emotional and financial.

Unlike foster carers, grandparents who had saved all their lives were penalised by being denied many government benefits if they were home owners.

"If the Government is going to shift responsibility for the care of these children from the state on to grandparents, then they must recognise and address the financial inequalities," she said.

A report on the forum will be prepared and presented to the government late this year.



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