



**For immediate release**

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## **GRG Founder Calls for Better Support for the “Unsung Heroes”**

Over 95% of the 6000 Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Trust NZ works with have the children in their care because of a traumatic incident or family breakdown.

“A lot of [the children] have got special needs, a lot of them are globally delayed and a lot of them are angry. Unfortunately they blame themselves for their parents not caring for them,” says Founder of GRG Trust NZ, Diane Vivian, appearing on the Good Morning show on TVNZ today with fellow trustee David White, to raise awareness of the grandparent caregiver phenomenon.

This week is Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Awareness and Appeal Week.

Vivian is calling for better support for grandparent and kin carers who are caring for children for exactly the same reasons as the State places children in foster care. “Some of them have been abused, neglected and they need assistance.”

The [Interim Report into Modernising Child Youth and Family](#) by the Expert Review Panel appointed by the Minister for Social Development, Anne Tolley, released last month reveals that over 60,000 children are notified to Child Youth and Family each year for concerns relating to abuse and neglect. However only three in ten children are subject to the care and protection intervention and support process and only one will end up in State care. The rest are placed back in the family or with whanau – many of whom are grandparent carers where there is no eligibility or access to specialised State-funded support services that could help the children overcome the trauma they have suffered.

The Interim Report also noted that “the numbers of children in [State] care each year have remained fairly steady,” stating that “This may, in part, be related to the fact that funding for State care is capped and there is therefore an incentive to restrict volumes (regardless of the needs of families and children).”<sup>1</sup>

Despite this the numbers of grandparents raising grandchildren in New Zealand has more than doubled in the last ten years according to the last Census with over 9,500 raising an estimated 17,000 children.

“Because we’re not involved in the Child Youth and Family system, and we’ve stepped up or we’ve been asked to take them on by Child Youth and Family we are left on our own,” explains Vivian who would like to see the GRG Trust as an organisation have “trained Field Officers right throughout the country” who support and guide the grandparent caregivers.

The Trust currently has one full-time and three part-time Field Officers providing advice and support dealing with predominantly Child Youth and Family/Family Court and Youth Justice issues; advocacy and advice on Work and Income/financial support and tax issues; and providing much needed general support

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<sup>1</sup> At page 64 of the Interim Report

for the caregivers who experience social isolation as a result of their caregiver role which is incompatible with their former social life, network and interests.

“Fish fingers and peas and homework is basically what you go back to. You don’t fit in. You go and do the school pedestrian crossing duty or the lunchroom. You’ve got nothing in common with a 25 -old mum. You’re in your 60s, 70s and 80s.”

“We are averaging 50 new members each month” says Vivian and “we are under-resourced” but “we are busy getting better entitlements for those grandparents out there,”

“These children are exactly the same as foster care. They’ve suffered this trauma and abuse, and we need to leave a footprint – a footprint on their hearts that they are loved and cherished...and I tell you what these grandparents out there and all these other kin-carers are our unsung heroes.”

ENDS

**For further information and interview opportunities contact:**

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