



NEWSLETTER NOVEMBER 2017

DATABASE: 7516 WHANAU CARERS

Tena Koutou, Talofa Lava, Kia Orana, Fakaalofa Lahi Atu, Malo e Lelei, Bula Vinaka, Taloha Ni, Kam Na Mauri, Greetings to all!



## GRG Trust News

### Nola Ann Adams 31 August 1949—19 August 2017

Nola Adams passed away on the 19 August, 2017. We want to recognise Nola for her 14 years and her time and effort she gave to GRG in Hawkes Bay and also as a Field Officer nationwide. Nola made an enormous difference to many of us for her advice, support and kindness. Due to Nola's wish for privacy her death notice was not put in the paper and we would like this to be a remembrance of her for all those that don't know she has passed. For the last 18 months of Nola's life she was fighting her own battle with cancer, but she was still supporting and advising those that needed help on the phone, even when she was bedridden. Rest in Peace Nola.

Our thanks to Maria, Hawkes Bay member for forwarding this remembrance for publication in our newsletter.

### Farewell to Diana and Margaret

This month we farewell Diana East and Margaret Aspinall, two of our Field Officers who leave GRG this month after seven years and four years respectively.

Over the years they have formed strong relationships with many of you in their roles. On behalf of us all at GRG, we thank them for their valuable contribution to GRG over the years and for their support for our grandparent and whanau care families.

We wish them all the very best for their future endeavours.

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## New TEXT Service for Helpline Callers

Our 0800 GRANDS helpline only enables us to accept calls from a landline. We know that many of our member caregivers no longer have a landline and the mobile phone costs of calling us on our landline is cost prohibitive for many of you.

To ensure you can get the help you need from our Member Support and Advocacy Service, we now have a new text service.

**TEXT** your name to **027 398 0388**. We will call you back. If your number is private please include that information in your text that too.



## From the CEO's Desk this Month Kate Bundle, Chief Executive

### Update on Bruce Hopkins' Walk the Long Way Home

Last month Bruce walked from Cape Reinga to Reotahi and along the way gave our cause huge profile in the North and nationally with his interviews on local radio, Radio NZ and local newspapers. To date over \$6000 has been raised! Our wonderful Kaitaia and Kerikeri Support Group



Coordinator, Martha was a trail angel for Bruce, feeding him some great kai and putting him up for the night. Our supportive friends from Zonta Whangarei club also met Bruce with biscuits as he arrived in Reotahi (see pic).

Thank you, Martha and Zonta Whangarei for your wonderful support for Bruce.

If you've been following Bruce's journey on Facebook you'll know that he had an unfortunate accident slipping on jellyfish and seaweed on Ocean Beach in Northland damaging his shin. This resulted in a nasty cellulitis infection and a forced lay-up for the past two weeks. Despite this setback, Bruce is a very determined fellow and we are most grateful for his support. His plan is to resume his walk on Friday 17 November from Marsden Point to Waipu and we wish him safe and smooth walking from here on! To keep up with Bruce's progress please see his Facebook page at [www.facebook.com/BruceHopkinsTeAraroa/](http://www.facebook.com/BruceHopkinsTeAraroa/)

### MSD Advisory Note: Change of provider for family breakdown assessments

The Ministry of Social Development uses an external agency to carry out assessments of the relationship between a child or young person and their parents where there's an application for Unsupported Child's Benefit ("UCB"), Youth Payment or Young Parent Payment.

This service has recently been re-tendered, and Barnardos will be carrying out family breakdown assessments from 16 November 2017. Barnardos is an experienced provider, strongly focused on the needs of children. There's no other change to the process, just the provider.

[Unsupported Child's Benefit](#) is for people caring for children aged under 18 who can't be supported by their parents. The relationship assessment report is one piece of information the Ministry uses to decide if an Unsupported Child's Benefit can be paid. The final decision is based on a number of factors, not just the report.

**[GRG Additional Note:** If you are applying for the UCB you are still required to make your application

via Work and Income. However as has been the case for some time, their policy guidelines require an assessment by an externally contracted agency, as to whether there has been a family breakdown in each case. Previously, applicants were sent for an interview with Life Unlimited and they assessed the family relationship and gave their professional opinion as to whether there was a "family breakdown"; as required to be eligible for the UCB. The new contracted Agency has now been allocated to Barnados. If you are applying or have applied for the UCB and have any questions, please don't hesitate to call us on our helpline.

### GRG Trust NZ Strategic Plan 2017-2020

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Trust NZ's vision and purpose is to provide quality support services, information and education programmes to enable grandparent and whanau care families to achieve better life-long outcomes for the children in their care.

In an environment of significant growth and demand for our services (2000+ new families in the past three years), more complex issues facing families, significant changes to the sector overall and a tighter funding environment that also requires a greater focus on results-based accountability the Trust has engaged in a rigorous process reviewing its strategic plan and looking at how GRG can enhance its service delivery to achieve better outcomes for grandparent and whanau care families.



Our service delivery framework (linked to desired outcomes per diagram above) has been reviewed and improvements are being implemented which will include recruitment over the next few months of further qualified and experienced staff to support and advocate for our families to ensure they receive the professional help and resources needed for the children and young people they are raising. We look forward to sharing further news about these developments in our service delivery with you all in coming months.



## I've been thinking...

### Hot issues on our 0800 GRANDS Helpline

Diane Vivian, Founding Trustee

Family breakdown is the main reason why grandparents are raising grandchildren in New Zealand and it is caused by a range of factors as our research over the years has shown. Domestic violence, substance abuse, mental illness, parents unable to cope resulting in the neglect of their children. But for more than 20 years and for as long as I have been providing support to our members on our 0800 helpline service; methamphetamine or 'P' has been a major factor for many. It still is. Where substance abuse was a cause, in 86% of cases 'P' is the main drug that has led to family breakdown and our grands stepping up to care for their moko!

**As the P epidemic continues more grandparents find themselves in the unexpected position of raising their grandchildren. It has become so common that for every child in foster (non-family) care, around 20 are being raised by another family member.**

Sadly, I foresee more grandparents will continue finding themselves raising their grandchildren as this epidemic continues. But for these families, it is not just the addicted parents themselves that are affected; it is the whole family and especially the children who suffer.

On the plus side, research shows that children fare better when they are in the care of relatives. Grandparents, in particular, are more likely to keep siblings together than if they are placed in foster/non-family care. I've seen for myself over the years that the grandparents, despite the incredible difficulties they are more likely to hang in there for these children. This ensures the children are more connected to their family, their identity and roots and in turn the children tend to feel more loved and accepted.

Unfortunately, I hear daily on our helpline that this P epidemic is causing a lot of other issues for grandparent care families too. The children, often have emotional difficulties and may act out with challenging behaviour for their grandparents. Love and keeping them together is not always enough for these children who are traumatized which is why it is so important for grandparents to know that they are not alone, to be able to talk to other people who are experiencing what they are experiencing. That is where we can guide our families towards the help and education they need to break the cycle of intergenerational abuse and addiction. But more needs to be done.

### What can be done at the policy level to support grandparents raising grandchildren victimized by the P crisis and/or family breakdown involving trauma and neglect generally?

I believe changes need to be made to policies to ensure:

- That priority is given to place a child with a safe and stable member of the family in the first instance and as soon as possible with proper support for that placement.
- Trauma-informed support and caregiver education should be provided for these children and their caregivers.
- Respect for what caregivers are doing. No matter what the circumstances, as all grandparents will know, there is that guilt, that feeling they did something wrong to wind up raising their grandchildren. And they haven't done anything wrong. They are doing something right by stepping in and raising the children and they need better acknowledgment and respect for what they are doing to provide a safe, stable and loving home for these children. I am also concerned at the other serious needs of these families.

### Homelessness and inadequate housing!

This is an increasing problem we are hearing more and more about on our helpline. The reasons include: the rent being put up too high, people are being evicted from Housing NZ homes because they have been landed with multiple extra grandchildren and the home is now considered over-crowded, grands and grandchildren are living in garages, even one family I know of living in a tent!

Others, are desperately waiting on a HNZ home, as most cannot afford the market rental and are going under financially, which adds extra stress to an already struggling family, often with children who have special needs and already suffering trauma.

### The solution?

When I visited New York in 2007 as a key note speaker for the first international GRG conference, we took a trip to visit the Grandparents and grandchildren apartment complex in Queens. I see no reason why this cannot be mirrored here. This would be my dearest wish. The apartments consisted of 2 – 4 bed roomed apartments only for grandparents who are raising grandchildren full time. As you enter the building there is a reception desk with a security guard (needed due to unwanted visitors, if you get my

drift).

Lifts went to the various apartments operated by a swipe card. On the first floor there is a very large rec-room, which the children afterschool go to for afternoon tea and volunteers take them through their homework. It also serves as an entertainment area for the young ones.



There are smaller rooms off this which are used for counselling and medical appointments. This is an all-encompassing, wrap-around service for the needs of all the residents, both young and old.

The children also assemble here when there is an organised outing for them or indeed the grandparents as well. While the children are at school this area is used as a crèche, and social clubs, meetings and training for the grands.

The very top floor of the building is a lawn area, garden, both flower and vegetables, with seating, surrounded by very high fencing. At the back of the building there are basketball courts which apartments look down onto. You can watch the children. And beyond that is another apartment block of one bedroomed apartments: which the grandparents can move into once the children have become independent. This was designed so the grand's could maintain their long formed friendships with others.

I have heard these types of complexes have spread across the states.

Come on New Zealand let's think outside the square. With our increasing numbers of grandparents raising grandchildren in their retirement years—what about this as an idea for housing our grandparents and retirees who are raising our next generation?

Respect for you and all you do, and your need for a decent home for you and your moko is my greatest wish for you all.

## Conditioned Dependency

"Conditioned Dependency" is a condition seen very frequently in children, teens, and young adults on the spectrum. It is a condition of becoming overly dependent on others to do something for you, because you haven't been expected to do it for yourself.

In these cases, the person actually has the potential to do it, but we do not expect it of them.

Conditioned dependency is very common in developmental disabilities, because we often feel that they cannot do things, so we never give them the expectation.

This condition occurs for three main reasons: (1) we lower the expectation because of their

disability, thinking they are not capable; often holding the child back; (2) because of their opposition, anxiety, and fear of meltdowns we are scared to push them, or (3) with our busy lives it is simply faster to do it ourselves than to teach them. These three things are always a balancing act when raising a child on the spectrum.

We should be very careful not to "assume" that the child doesn't have the ability to learn something, regardless of their current skill level. We should assume "competency"; meaning that the child may not know how to do it now, but has the potential to learn it. If the child is not learning, then we need to change how we are teaching. If we start with this premise then we are always holding the bar a little higher, and not letting their "autism" lower our expectations. Referring to his 30+ years of working with developmental disabilities, Bill Nason explains in his books that our greatest disservice is the low expectation we assume. We get what we expect, and that often holds the child back.

## We-Do Activities

To avoid conditioned dependency, think of using daily routine activities as "We-Do" activities. Instead of doing "for them", do "with them." Include them in the activity. In we-do activities the child learns to be competent by "doing together" with you; helping each other out; learning by doing with you.

In we-do activities you do not teach by standing back and prompting the child to do it. You teach by doing it together, side by side, assisting each other. We tend to either prompt the child to do it, or we do it for him. We need to take the time to "do it together", allowing the child to learn by following our lead and doing it together. Simply guide and assist, rather than do it for them. Always expect the child to be an active participant (learner) in the activity.

Scaffold the activity (bathing, dressing, putting dishes in the dishwasher, raking leaves, whatever) to provide only the support needed to

maximize success, while fading that support as the child becomes more independent. You teach the child to feel competent by following your lead; learning by actively engaging with you. By turning daily activities into "we-do" activities, the child learns that he is expected to be an "active participant" in everything, and gains greater feelings of competence.



Many children on the spectrum are scared of uncertainty and avoid risking and learning new things. If you allow them to fall into this "comfort zone" of avoidance, it becomes difficult for them to grow. Children on the spectrum have strong comfort zones for everything (participation in activity, social interaction, sensory sensitivities, emotional security, avoidance of "thinking", etc.). We want to teach children to feel "safe, accepted, and competent." To do this we need to gradually stretch these comfort zones; keeping the children feeling safe by slowly stretching a little at a time, always expecting participation. By doing so, the child learns to feel comfortable risking and learning new things, over time experiencing mastery and building self-confidence.

This article was adapted from Bill Nason's book *"The Autism Discussion Page on Anxiety, Behaviour, School and Parenting Strategies."* It is part of a series on mentoring children on the spectrum which can be found at [Amazon](#). It is available in paperback and kindle versions.



## Teenagers ...

A deep breath and a sigh required. As a Great-Grandmother now and having raised three generations of kids, (a work still in progress) I feel that I have been down this road before, several times in fact. I have learned much, a lot of it by the seat of my pants and just plain, old-fashioned instinct. I have come to recognise those first symptoms of approaching chaos even though the times have changed and it's a whole different world to the one I once knew as I was growing up. It's even a whole lot different to the world my own children knew as they grew up. The rules seemed to have changed overnight. But not mine! And mine haven't changed even though I may be getting old and dim-witted, because I have learned to think on my feet really fast. I've learned to be aware of trouble coming and to be prepared for it ... as best I can.

Teenagers are just teenagers. Very few of them have got the brains that God gave a duck and having this little bit of knowledge in the back of your mind gives you a head start right from the beginning of the disruption and confusion of puberty. It is recognising this disturbance in the household almost before it begins that puts you ahead of the game.

Looking back over the years I have wondered what was the first thing that gave me food for thought as my youngsters went from great kids to stupid teenagers and I think I have it. I was reversing my car out of my driveway all those years ago and had stopped to give way to two

twelve year old girls walking past. As I eyed them in my rear-vision mirror they stared back at me and slowed their pace and then with wide-eyed giggles I heard them say, "Oh my God, that's Aarons mother. OMG look at her great car, it's lovely, (it was a rattle-trap) and OMG look at their rubbish bin. (It was at the curb waiting to be picked up by the rubbish truck). Wish we had a nice rubbish bin like theirs..." What the hell, I thought. Are those two girl's idiots or what?

It had begun. But I hadn't known it at that time. Someone had a crush on someone ... the first telling sign that life was about to get meddlesome.

Sitting down to a family meal and the phone rings itself off the wall (yes, phones were attached to the wall in those days), and a sweet girlish voice asks to speak to my son Aaron who was only about twelve at this time. He still loved his BMX bike with his whole heart and we were very surprised when all we could hear from his side of the conversation was 'I love you from the bottom of my heart....' Lots of raised eyebrows at the table but he wasn't about to tell us a thing. The second sign – secrecy.



A year later at the age of thirteen I heard him on the phone yet again. It had rung at least three times and each time it was a different little miss calling him and to each of them he promised that he loved each of them from the bottom of his heart - and as he made these promises he was

admiring himself in the mirror above the fire-place and running his fingers through his own hair. – Vanity.

With girls, it was similar yet different too. But it still all began with that dreaded emotion 'The crush'. Take my granddaughter for instance. At fifteen she would spend hours in front of a mirror trying on one outfit after another and once satisfied with how she looked, would plead and beg and literally drag me into town for coffee at a certain coffee shop. Once seated her smile became brighter, her eyes became wider and her voice became more girlish and I had only to look around to spot some pimply-faced, teenage school boy who worked there in the weekends to know why having coffee in town every Saturday with Grandma had become so important for her (to spend quality time with me, just her and I together she would say). I was learning the ropes fast.



I could go on and on but those teenage years passed slowly but not without all the angst and the dramas. Broken curfews, dragged out of late-night parties, nailed up bedroom windows they could no longer sneak out of and the adventure-laden shocks of teaching each of them to drive etc. You name it; these youngsters put us through it all. But we survived and they survived. Somehow, we got them raised and I had almost forgotten about those teenage years until today!

Today I had taken my nine-year-old Great-Granddaughter that I am also raising to the local pools with four of her friends. Now four excitable, chatty and giggly nine-year olds in one car is an experience in itself that I was used to. But (and I stress the word BUT), I hadn't allowed for the fact that those teenage years were again drifting in from the far horizon and I was caught totally unawares. A young nine-year-old boy (from their class in school) was wandering down the street and before I knew what had happened, my car was rent with screams and OMG's and "It's him" and then more screams as they all then flung themselves at the window that faced the street and that boy... My driving became quite erratic in my sudden state of panic as I had really thought that someone had fallen out of the car or I had run over someone's puppy or something of that nature.

Not so. Apparently, that 'boy' was the 'in boy' at school and all these girls would just 'die' to be his girlfriend and each of them would willingly push each other over in the playground and stomp their faces into the sandpit if it meant they would be the one he noticed first. And so here we go again....— **Pauline Sloan**

## Bang and Double Bang

One of the problems of having a special needs grandson here - I had a blowout on my way home from the city late at night this week. Ended up with two flat tyres! Called husband who said, "do I wake the child?" Errr that would be a NO! So, I called the AA - thank heavens for cell phones!! Had to wait on a dark country road for over 30 minutes for the man to arrive only to find out he couldn't help so he arranged a tow truck and left me - still on a dark country road. Tow truck man who arrived 30 minutes later was lovely and his tow truck smelt beautiful!! Arrived home to a worried husband and what looks like an expensive replacement of tyres. Girls can do anything - but it was scary on that dark road all by myself. Made sure I locked the doors and left lights on.

## Whew

This year we got urgent custody of our 3-year-old grandson. Poppa and I were extremely nervous. I was upset and so unsure of being a mum again (even though I'm nanna). Our grandson is adorable, needs heaps of love under his terms and when I cuddle him, I cuddle him with such love and commitment. I look in his eyes and think to myself, how we are all so very lucky to have this little boy in our lives. He is safe and we are coping; after all that is what family is all about.

Prior to getting custody of our grandson, Poppa and I were looking at slowing down our work commitments, relaxing and travelling in our bus. This has all gone by the wayside, but we accept it and are so grateful that we are able to help our beautiful grandson. We used to say to each other how lucky we were, quiet peaceful house, just the 2 of us - hmmm - how it has changed.



Yes, at times we struggle with his noise, mess, and temper tantrums, but what keeps everything positive is that we know he is now safe, our amazing, cheeky, funny grandson.

The GRG organisation has been wonderful and supportive with great knowledge of "how things work", entitlements, assistance etc.

was the relief of knowing Poppa and I were not alone in bringing up grandchildren.

Why have we got guardianship and day to day care of our grandson - due to parents being "P" addicts. Father is now in Jail, mother in rehab. Both doing OK but sadly due to circumstances they will never be able to bring up their child.

—Name withheld

### Who has eyes?

For over 20 years my little car has always had magnetic signs on its doors for GRG. Today I got a message from member who had seen it out on the road with a young person driving and was ready to

go into 'stolen car mode' and chase, and follow. She messaged me in panic, quickly I messaged her to say that it was my grandson, he had borrowed my car.!!

He makes me laugh. No concerns about signage. Proud he is. Di

### Support Group Notice:

#### Whanganui Support Group

Our Support Group Coordinator Jenny Morton will be on leave until the New Year for health reasons. We wish her a full and speedy recovery. Members please call 0800 472 637 ext 1 for assistance



Thank you for your support for GRG!

Give a little to GRG via our secure DPS payment system on our website at [www.grg.org.nz](http://www.grg.org.nz) or at <https://www.givealittle.co.nz/org/grg>

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### Can we help you?

Members ONLY services are available nationwide  
Caregivers Toll free helpline  
0800 GRANDS (0800 472 637)  
For landline caregivers only

Or

#### TEXT 4 SUPPORT

TEXT your name to 027 398 0388

We will call you back.

New members and general information please call 0800 472 637 or 09 418 3753 or join via our [website at www.grg.org.nz](http://www.grg.org.nz)

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If you no longer wish to receive this newsletter or you have changed address please update your details by contacting Kelly at the Trust Office as this is where the total mail out membership is kept.  
Moved home or planning to? Be sure to let us know.

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Heoi ano, na. *E te Atua, aroha mai..... O God shower us with love.*  
*Ka kite Ka Whangaia ka tupu, ka puawai* - That which is nurtured, blossoms and grows  
We are respectful, we listen, we learn

*He rōpū manaaki, he rōpū whakarongo, he rōpū ako mātou*

Please pass this on to other grandparents/kin carers you know.

GRG Trust Head Office hours are 9am – 2pm daily. (We raise grandchildren too)

We are a Charitable Trust



[Anti-bullying](#)



0800 456 450

[www.powertoprotect.net.nz](http://www.powertoprotect.net.nz)

Thank you to our Sponsors and Funders supporting GRG's Support Services throughout New Zealand including this newsletter



## SUPPORT GROUP CONTACT NUMBERS

For the most up to date contact details please go to our website [www.grg.org.nz](http://www.grg.org.nz)

If you are a grandparent or whanau caregiver and need a referral to one of our Field Officers please call 0800 GRANDS (0800 472 637) or if you are in Auckland please call 09 480 6530

\* Telephone Support \*\* Telephone Support and Meetings

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