



NEWSLETTER OCTOBER 2017

DATABASE: 7455 WHANAU CARERS

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



## Taking The Long Way Home with Bruce Hopkins

14 October 2017 – to 25 March 2018

Last month we introduced you to Bruce Hopkins who has just embarked on a 5-month long odyssey walking the length of New Zealand. Apart from his Macpac and other essentials he is also carrying some of his late father and brother's ashes back to Stewart Island, the place of his birth. **He is also raising awareness and funds for GRG!** It is wonderful to see donations coming in daily to our [Givealittle page](#) from all over the world.

Along the [3,000 km journey on the Te Araroa Trail](#), Bruce is keen to meet grandparents raising their grandchildren and already a number of you have got in touch to meet him and lend him support, food and shelter along the way which is wonderful.

If you know a family who might wish to share their story, please get in touch with Grace Vujnovich at Spark PR on 021 737 090 or

[Grace.Vujnovich@sparkactivate.co.nz](mailto:Grace.Vujnovich@sparkactivate.co.nz)

Anonymity to protect identities can be accommodated. Next month we hope to share some highlights of the

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journey with you so far. Bruce is doing weekly [Podcasts on Radio NZ](#) and we will have links and information on our website throughout the journey to his [Facebook page at www.facebook.com/BruceHopkinsTeAraroa/](#)

## 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.



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## From the CEO's Desk this Month

### Bruce Hopkins Walking the Long Way Home

A message on my cell phone in late February 2017 from Bruce Hopkins had me intrigued. He was "wanting to do something a bit different to raise funds for GRG". That was the start of getting to know Bruce, a truly inspiring one-of-a-kind individual, aka 'Gamling' from the Lord of the Rings, ex-Limbs dancer, MC, actor, voice artist, business owner and tour guide. It is hard to believe eight months later and Bruce is on his way down Ninety Mile Beach from Cape Reinga.

After months of catch-ups with Bruce at our local cafes talking through and planning the logistics, it is with a sense of awe at what he is setting out to



achieve in his 3000 km journey on the Te Araroa trail and deep gratitude that he is choosing to help our organisation so that we can do

more to help grandparents and whanau caregivers throughout New Zealand.

As I write this, it is Sunday 15 October and Bruce has just featured on [Newshub's Three News](#) along with our long-time and indomitable GRG member, Julie Herbert and her amazing grandson Ryan. He is on the Trail and while initially aiming to raise \$50K for GRG, the photo featured here is the moment he upped the ante to \$100K. Way to go Bruce!

On behalf of all of us at GRG, Go Well—we are most proud of you and looking forward to your check-ins along the way. Kia kaha!

### Next Woman of the Year Awards 2017

On Thursday 12 October, 30 finalists were celebrated in various categories for the [Next Woman of the Year Awards](#) at Auckland Art Gallery. Winning the Community Category and Supreme Award was Kristine Bartlett, an aged-care worker, who with the support of her union won a case against her employer which set the precedent for a sector-wide pay increase for more than 55,000 aged care workers. Among the finalists was our very own Founding Trustee, grandmother extraordinaire, incredible listening ear and source of wisdom for so many...Diane Vivian. One of four finalists in the Community Category of this year's awards, we are so proud of you Di and you are most certainly our Woman of the Year!



## Celebrating the International Day of Older Persons 2017

An initiative to forge closer working relationships with Age Concern NZ, Carers NZ and Volunteering NZ and to celebrate the **Talents, Contributions and Participation of Older Persons in Society** resulted in an enjoyable event hosted at [Ngā Taonga Sound & Vision in Wellington](#) at which two short versions of the NZ-made and directed films; [The Coffin Club](#) and [East Meets East](#) were shown.

This was an opportunity for us to acknowledge the significant contribution thousands of grandparent caregivers raising vulnerable children make to society, our staff and the many volunteer grandparent and whanau

caregivers who also volunteer their time and energy to support them. [My full speech](#) is on our website along with [further photos of the event](#).



GRG Celebrates IDOP 2017

We look forward to developing stronger working relationships with all the organisations involved to ensure better support for older persons in our community.

### The Prevalence of 'P'

This post is prefaced with an acknowledgment that not all children are in grandparent care because of parental substance abuse. The reasons are complex, many and varied. However, the prevalence of methamphetamine use in our society has undoubtedly contributed to the breakdown of many families over the last twenty or more years and for as long as we have been supporting full-time grandparent caregivers it has been a major catalyst. Just how prevalent methamphetamine or 'P' is as a reason why children go into grandparent care we didn't know for sure until recently.

In August/September we ran an internal survey amongst 2145 of our member families who were on email, via Survey Monkey, representing 55% of our member families. This post outlines some of the preliminary results and analysis of the 492 (23%) completed surveys that were submitted.



Statistically a response rate of 23% is impressive and we are grateful for the time and interest shown by our members to respond and take part to help us all better understand the extent of this issue.

[Our 2016 Grandparent and Whanau Caregiver Survey](#) didn't specifically ask questions about this drug, but it did ask the question as to what were the reasons for the children coming into their care, of which 43% indicated drug addiction as a reason. In our survey the response to this question was considerably higher with 72% indicating that 'Yes' the parent's drug use was a reason. A percentage of members who received or initially opened the survey didn't consider the issue relevant to their circumstances giving rise to this statistically higher percentage. However, only the 351 respondents who answered 'Yes' were then asked specific questions about the drugs involved. A significant 86% ("the Meth Group") indicated methamphetamine as the drug involved. (6% answered 'No' and 8% weren't sure).

The remaining 14% identified a range of drugs including cannabis (25%), alcohol (20%), synthetic cannabis (12%), Cocaine (2%), with Other (41%) being a range of these drugs, body building drugs, morphine.

Significantly for the Meth Group a plethora of other drugs were also known to be used by the parents: cannabis (81%), alcohol (71%), synthetic cannabis (19%) and other drugs (19%) including cocaine, heroin, GHB, MDMA, Opiates, prescription and psychiatric medications (including Valium, Codeine, Tramadol, Ritalin), gym steroids, magic mushrooms and even bath salts.

Disturbingly, from the free-text responses to this question it is apparent that methamphetamine users tend to also take many other drugs at the same time, for example one respondent stated "any type of drug she could get she would use," and another "Ritalin and anything else he could get his hands on."

Both parents were affected by drugs at the time the children went into grandparent care in the majority of cases (Meth Group 50%; Other Drugs 43%). Our 2016 Survey revealed that most children go into grandparent care from sole mothers and that is likely to explain why in this survey in other circumstances it was the mother that was most often identified as the drug affected parent at the time of placement, as compared to fathers.

In 60% of the Meth Group cases the parents are

still affected by drugs (cf: Other Drugs group: 51%). Of concern is the fact that 24% of respondents don't know if the parents are still affected by drugs. As we know from our 2016 Survey, this has safety and wellbeing implications for children and caregivers having contact with drug affected parents in accordance with supervise access/contact and unsupervised contact orders or agreements.

The number of grandparents and whanau caregivers stepping up to raise vulnerable children removed from homes in which their lives, health and wellbeing have been endangered by 'P' and other drug use and manufacturing has increased significantly in recent years judging by our 20-22% year on year growth in membership since 2013 .

How do we turn the tide and mitigate the damage to our society which is most surely stealing the hopes, dreams and futures of many of our children?

Our survey respondents are calling out for help and education to cope, to know what drug use signs to look for with the parents and the children, how to best guide their grandchildren as they become teenagers, how to get better access to professional support and treatment for the children affected and users themselves.

One can't help but wonder if the "harm minimisation" approach to drug awareness education employed by many agencies today, is in reality more of a "how to" guide for drug taking that simply normalises illegal drug use, making it seem more acceptable.

Too often we hear from members that the drug education literature is unhelpful for grandparent caregivers. The fact also remains that there is a huge gap between the ideological approach to illicit drug use as a 'choice' that can apparently be done "safely" with harm minimised and the hideous reality facing thousands of methamphetamine and other drug users and the devastating effect on their children, wider family, whanau, friends and work colleagues as our members know well. The issues are complex.

At GRG, however, we are committed to providing education and information options for our caregivers and the children they're raising that ensures that they are better informed of the risks and consequences of drug use, empowering them to make positive and safe lifestyle choices. I am exploring new options on this frontier and look forward to sharing these with our members soon.

—Take care and best wishes, Kate Bundle

## The Love of a Grandparent

by [Diane Vivian](#)

When we age, we cast off the care and responsibilities of raising our children – as they move on with their lives, so do we. Freedom comes, to do as we please, to stay in our pyjamas all day, should we desire. To travel, garden, join clubs and lead a carefree life, but something happens in the form of a beautiful baby who has the ability to twist us around its tiny finger. Yes, “I am a grandparent”

The joy of this tiny babe for one to fuss over, adore, and spoil with no responsibility and to be able to hand back to the parents, adds a new dimension to our lives. The first smile, the first tooth and first word not only swells the heart of the parent but also the hearts of the grandparents.

We as grandparents, being older have something so special we can add to the richness of this child's life; ‘time’. This is something busy parents rarely can afford. Somehow small children and an older person were designed to be together. Small children take tiny steps and notice things a busy parent may not, and older people are often slower, and have time – to study a caterpillar or an interesting bug with a young one at our side.

A bond grows between the small child and the grandparents; we can tell them what their parent was like as a child, tell them the family history.

We do not mind reading the same story over and over again and the joy on their (and our) faces when we see them fills one's heart with pure love. This relationship also gives us a chance to find the child in ourselves once again. To sing silly songs, tell silly jokes, to laugh and colour in once again. We can impart so much knowledge; they, whilst young are like little sponges and soak information up.

A visit to my grandmother when I was a small child meant sitting on the couch not talking, in my Sunday best – my how things have changed! In today's schools they even have ‘Grandparents’ day’ – something unheard of in our day.

All too quickly they grow and become teenagers, with teenage problems. This is where grandparents really can help. If a bond is strong with a grandchild and things get tough with parents, as they often do,

grandparents can be that stop-gap, the voice of reason, a safe haven until things settle. One of our teenage grandsons is known to bike to our home when things get tough at home, his mother phones and tells us ‘you have incoming’!

A hug, hot meal and a warm bed for the night usually sees him back home the next day, and you know what? We would not have it any other way.

Sadly, sometimes parents separate and this throws our grandchildren into uncertainty. Too often we hear of grandparents who are deprived of their grandchildren, the pain of this is unbearable. To have been involved in your grandchildren's lives and suddenly not be able to see them is soul destroying for grandparents not to mention the grandchildren concerned.

This is a time when grandparents need to be involved in the grandchildren's lives; they may be the only constant in a life that seems to be turning upside down. It is really important to be impartial in this situation, as hard as that may be. No put downs about either parent are necessary or helpful, your grandchildren need to have something that is normal in this unsettling time. They need to know that their whole world has not collapsed.

We, being older, live in very different times to when we were young. Drug problems can sometimes grip our children, violence seems to be everywhere and when it enters our lives we have to dig deep, really deep. Today many grandparents have to step in for safety reasons and take on the role of actually raising their grandchildren. This is not just a NZ problem, it is world-wide. This happens for a variety of reasons. Violence and neglect, mental illness, imprisonment, substance abuse, abandonment, death and terminal illness are some of the reasons the grandparents step up to the plate. Research undertaken for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Trust NZ in 2005, 2009 and 2016 tells us the main reasons that grandparents take on this role is, substance abuse, neglect, domestic violence and mental illness.

This is one of the hardest things a grandparent undertakes, to go into a Family Court against your own child to keep at risk grandchildren safe, but do



it, they do, by the thousands. In doing this, we are entering unsheltered waters. This divides families, places pressure upon one's finances and indeed one's health, but the grandchildren need us.

Grandparents find themselves thrust into Family Courts, dealing with lawyers, psychologists, lawyer for child, often Child Youth and Family and angry parents.

The grandchildren may have experienced things that no child should experience; they may be behind scholastically, emotionally and may suffer psychological problems. Some revert back to bed wetting and soiling, anger rages and many have special needs. This means very hard Caregiving for the grandparents, with little recognition.

For a grandparent under these circumstances the rewards are tenfold, to see a sad child now flourishing, safe and happy; having routine in their life and achieving are just a few of the benefits. For a six-

year-old child who could not form a letter, nor knew a nursery rhyme to become top of their class in spelling and math, says it all.

Some grandparents are raising severely disabled grandchildren, and many have Autistic children, globally delayed children – the love for their grandchildren knows no boundaries, and has no conditions.

As a grandparent in this position, you have to put your life on hold, revert back to school pedestrian duties, lunchroom duties and school trips. And some words of advice, for school trips: don't volunteer to climb the local mountain, know your limits! After 14 years of raising grandchildren our teenagers do not go to bed or leave the home without an exchange of "love you". Does this make it all worthwhile? You bet it does.

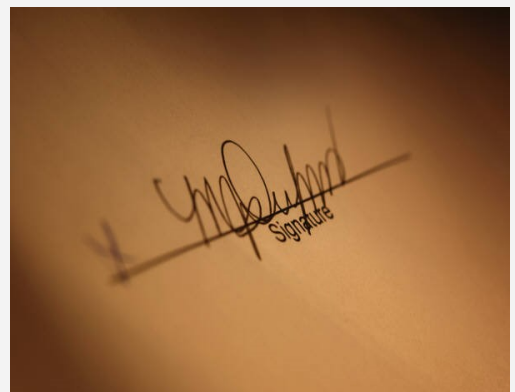
I now understand why grandparents are called just that: they all are so very, very GRAND.

## A Common Query to our 0800 GRANDS Helpline...

### The every day papers we all sign:

They seem to come at an alarming rate, permission forms to be precise. They come from schools, sports groups, all manner of places and we sign them as a matter of course. Do not leave yourself open to being charged with falsifying a document.

It has come to our attention a grandmother raising found herself being charged by the mother of the children. A form came home from school asking permission for the child to attend a school trip. It had the words 'parent/guardian' she signed it without a thought. The mother found out and had her charged. These are Legal Documents and she was not classed as the parent and was not a guardian. (If you are a legal guardian you can sign).



Apparently the notices should have the word 'caregiver' for her to have been able to have signed it. And you cannot write the word caregiver in either. This ended up in costing the caregiver \$\$\$ in legal fees.

Remember if the children are under the care and protection of Oranga Tamariki they are the ones who have to sign. Ridiculous and impractical? Yes! We know kids usually bring these forms home and they need to be returned the next day. This is a timely warning, for us all. Any forms should have these words on them 'parent/caregiver/guardian' to enable you to sign if the children are not under Oranga Tamariki.

***Now I am not a lawyer but I tend to think I would cross out the words parent/guardian and write in caregiver and sign, then it is up to the school to accept it or not, then one can't be charged with falsifying a document because you have accurately described your role.***

**A Member wrote:** Also, it is my understanding that grandparents, aunts, uncles, siblings (18yrs+) etc... are 'natural guardians' anyway, with or without legal custody??

***The answer is no.....you are only an additional guardian if this has been granted through the Family Court.***





Well done Safari, our 6-year-old ball deliverer from West Auckland!

Safari was the lucky girl selected to carry the ball onto centre court at the commencement of the first game between the Silver Ferns and the Australian Diamonds during the Constellation Cup tournament at Spark Arena in Auckland on 5 October 2017.

She did grandma, grandpa, her whanau and all of us proud.

Many thanks to Kate Agnew from Netball NZ for arranging for arranging this special honour for one of our tamariki.



**Whoops!**

It's Saturday, 10 AM.

I just went in to wake 2 sleeping girls up.

I said, "Hurry, it's almost 7. You need to get up and get ready for school.

Don't forget to pack your lunches." (They told me yesterday they want to make their lunches from now on).

"Naaaaan!" comes voice from under covers,

"Have you gone mad? It's Saturday and the school holidays. Oh maybe I have!

**Happy Sigh**

I've loved raising my 4 yo GD this week! What a great age. I loved snuggling her awake this morning, taking a long walk as sun was about to set, because everything she said was so achingly fresh and clear. I loved putting her to bed by making up a story in the dark (she asked me if I told stories to others and I said no). She made it clear that she only wanted me to tell stories to her. I guess it's our special thing.

I loved how sweetly she fell asleep in my arms, savored the peace.

Maybe this is better than any of the ideas I imagined for my old age, my retirement?

## Do you have a Vodafone Subscriber Email Address?

Vodafone will no longer be providing an email service from **30 November 2017** and **all their existing email services will be shut down**. We have some members on our database that currently have one of the following affected email domain addresses that are being discontinued:

vodafone.co.nz    vodafone.net.nz    ihug.co.nz    wave.co.nz    quik.co.nz  
pconnect.co.nz    paradise.net.nz    clear.net.nz    es.co.nz

If this affects you and you haven't already emailed us your new email address please email [kelly@grg.org.nz](mailto:kelly@grg.org.nz) or phone the office on 09 418 3753 so that we can update your membership records and ensure that you continue to receive important information that may affect you as a grandparent or whanau/kin caregiver.

If you haven't yet updated your or obtained a new email address, the following is a helpful article from Consumer NZ about the change and your options: <https://www.consumer.org.nz/articles/vodafone-closes-email-services> and here is a link to more information from Vodafone about this change <https://www.vodafone.co.nz/email/>.



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>



### 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 09 418 3753

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

<b>Auckland: North Shore**</b>	Diane Vivian (temp)	09 480 6530	<a href="mailto:di@grg.org.nz">di@grg.org.nz</a>
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<b>Hamilton / Huntly**</b>	Pat Davis	07 855 0530	<a href="mailto:hamilton111.grg@gmail.com">hamilton111.grg@gmail.com</a>
<b>Hastings</b>	Tom Kupa	06 879 4302	<a href="mailto:kupakarate@outlook.com">kupakarate@outlook.com</a>
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<b>Kaikohe*</b>	Moengaroa Floyed	09 401 3057	<a href="mailto:floyedz@xtra.co.nz">floyedz@xtra.co.nz</a>
<b>Kaitia* / Kerikeri</b>	Martha Taonui-Andrews	022 050 7056	<a href="mailto:jamcleaner@gmail.com">jamcleaner@gmail.com</a>
<b>Kaiwaka</b>	Dianah Roberts	022 381 9539	<a href="mailto:mydogmollymycowmoomoo@gmail.com">mydogmollymycowmoomoo@gmail.com</a>
<b>Levin* / Palmerston North</b>	Ann Waddell	06 362 7269	<a href="mailto:ann.hen@xtra.co.nz">ann.hen@xtra.co.nz</a>
<b>Napier**</b>	Rozane Duncan	06 843 0054	<a href="mailto:charleez06@xtra.co.nz">charleez06@xtra.co.nz</a>
<b>Nelson**</b>	Paula Eggers	035445714 021 062 6583	<a href="mailto:paulaeggers67@gmail.com">paulaeggers67@gmail.com</a>
<b>Otago/Dunedin*</b>	Aad & Leonie	03 465 1764	<a href="mailto:omaandopa@xtra.co.nz">omaandopa@xtra.co.nz</a>
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<b>Ruakaka**</b>	Tauser Kingi	09 432 8611	<a href="mailto:tauserkingi@outlook.com">tauserkingi@outlook.com</a>
<b>Taumarunui**</b>	Aroha Rudkin	027 873 0061	<a href="mailto:aroharudkin@xtra.co.nz">aroharudkin@xtra.co.nz</a>
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<b>Whanganui**</b>	Jenny Morton	06 344 3656 027 443 7780	<a href="mailto:jenidee65@gmail.com">jenidee65@gmail.com</a>
<b>Wairarapa**</b>	Tere Lenihan	06 379 5407	<a href="mailto:terel@swscc.org.nz">terel@swscc.org.nz</a>
<b>Wellington**</b>	Cecilee Donovan	04 477 0632	<a href="mailto:cecileed@gmail.com">cecileed@gmail.com</a>
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<b>Whangarei**</b>	Janet Puriri Lianne Nicholas	09 435 0044	<a href="mailto:grg.whangarei@gmail.com">grg.whangarei@gmail.com</a>