



NEWSLETTER SEPTEMBER 2017

DATABASE: 7415 WHANAU CARERS

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

## The Long Way Home

Walking the Te Araroa Trail for GRG!

14 October 2017 – to 25 March 2018



The  
Long  
Way  
Home



It is an honour and privilege to introduce **Bruce Hopkins** to our GRG whanau. Well known to many as 'Gamling' of Lord of the Rings fame, in his 60's, Bruce is also a proud grandfather of three, a role which fills him with profound joy. This sense of enjoyment has led him to want to help grandparents around NZ who are thrown back into the full time parental role, usually due to a traumatic or unexpected event or family breakdown.

As well as being an actor, Bruce is an experienced tour guide and will start the 3,000 km [Te Araroa Trail](#) from Cape Reinga to Bluff and Stewart Island to raise awareness of the needs of grandparents raising grandchildren and to raise \$50K for GRG!

Born a 4th generation Stewart Islander, spending his childhood years in Russell and teens in Auckland, for him personally, it is also a journey home to Stewart Island with some of the ashes of his late father and brother and an expression of his gratitude to be born in our beautiful

country. His incredible journey 'The Long Way Home' will commence at Cape Reinga on **14 October 2017** and take five tough and grueling months as he traverses some of our country's most difficult terrain and high mountain passes.

We are getting alongside Bruce over the next several months and supporting him on this journey which will be promoted on our website, Facebook, podcasts on Radio NZ, our Givealittle page and other print and social media. Bruce would love to meet grandparents raising grandchildren and hear your stories where his journey comes to your part of New Zealand. If you can support him in some way on the trail, or you are willing to share your stories on this journey with Bruce we'd love to hear from you. Bruce's trail schedule and further details will be posted on our website and Facebook soon.

For further information please contact our CEO, Kate Bundle, [kate@grg.org.nz](mailto:kate@grg.org.nz) or 027 2446763.



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## Hot issues on the CEO's Desk this Month

### Experiences of grandparents seeking income support from Work and Income



In 2016, many of you took part in our 2016 Grandparent and Whanau Caregiver Survey and last month the in-depth report by Pukeko Research on the experiences with work and income offices seeking income support was published in [Kotuitui: New Zealand Journal of Social Sciences](#). It revealed that many caregivers experienced dreadful treatment with only fifteen percent told they may be entitled to the Unsupported Child Benefit (UCB) on the first approach to a Work and Income office.

At the time this report was published the media was mostly focused on Green MP, Metiria Turei's admission of benefit fraud and unfortunately the pre-election campaigning by political parties has overshadowed the importance of the findings of this report. However, following the release of this report, which was also provided to Work and Income's National Office at their request, we have had the following response from Kay Read, Group General Manager for Client Service Delivery:

**"Work and Income recognise the extraordinary love and support Grandparents provide their grandchildren, mokopuna in times when parents are unable to care for their children.**

**There is financial help and support available to Grandparents; one of these is the Unsupported Child's Benefit (UCB). Work and Income is keen to make sure the right supports are in place, including the income assistance available to Grandparents for the care of the child whilst in their care. To achieve this, a partnership is essential and Grandparents Raising Grandchildren has recently strengthened this in the Auckland area through working directly alongside Work and Income on the development of a new training package. The training has been delivered successfully and the material positively received. In addition, Auckland Work and Income have committed more resources per site to take UCB applications, in support of improving services and quality outcomes. While the training is Auckland based only at this time, we see further opportunity to partner this idea across a wider spread of our regions. This is exciting."**

Much credit is due to our Advocate, Tricia Corin, who over many many months has advocated directly with the Auckland regional office of Work

and Income for these changes and better training for frontline staff and managers. It is starting to show positive results in the Auckland region with grandparent caregivers being properly advised and informed at their first interview as to the UCB and we are hopeful that this will continue to be the case with this training rolled out throughout NZ.

**For more information about the criteria for UCB available go to the Work and Income website at:** <https://www.workandincome.govt.nz/map/income-support/main-benefits/orphans-benefit-and-unsupported-childs-benefit/unsupported-childs-benefit-01.html>

### The Meth Issue

Methamphetamine and its devastating impact on so many of our children, caregivers and whanau has been the subject of much debate and discussion across the country and in the media in recent months. [Our 2016 Caregiver survey and research](#) revealed some alarming statistics and stories impacting on so many of our children and grandparent/whanau caregivers.

In July I spoke at the [Matua Raki Addiction Leadership Conference in Auckland](#), sharing the findings of our research. Last month, along with representatives from the rehabilitation, enforcement, policy and community service sector I was invited to the Government's Methamphetamine Action Plan workshop hosted by the NZ Police. Minister for Police, Paula Bennett had called for a refresh on the plan and further recommendations to tackle the supply, demand, justice and health issues caused by this dirty drug. Recommendations will be reported to Cabinet in November and the National Party has announced a \$82M plan for rehabilitation services. Undoubtedly there is a need for increased resources for the health and rehabilitation with many of our families reporting long waiting lists for residential rehabilitation for their grandchildren's affected parents. Whichever political party becomes the next Government after Election 2017, we hope the initiatives to tackle the problem underway will be further strengthened. We have recently run a survey amongst our members to ascertain the degree to which methamphetamine has been a factor leading to their grandchildren/kin coming into members' care. The results of that survey will be discussed in our next month's newsletter.

Best wishes to all for the next month,  
**Kate Bundle, Chief Executive**

## Celebrating the International Day of Older Persons

1 October 2017

This year the United Nations has chosen the theme **“Stepping into the Future: Tapping the Talents, Contributions and Participation of Older Persons in Society.”**

We know our grandparent and whanau caregivers are the unsung heroes in our society and we want to celebrate your selfless and significant contributions to the lives of thousands of children and young people.

We have partnered with **Age Concern NZ, Carers NZ and Volunteering NZ** to highlight this day in our calendar.

On **2 October at Ngataonga, Sound and Vision Archives, Wellington**, the occasion will be marked by a get together of representatives from our organisations and many other government and non-government community organisations with the screening of two short films *“The Coffin Club”* and *“East Meets West”*. This event will be an opportunity to further raise awareness of the contribution you all make raising our young in society.

## Support Group Check-in



### Nelson GRG Support Group

These are just some of the GRG members who attend this support group. Some were camera shy.

Please call Paula on 03 544 5714 or txt 0210626583 for venue and times.

You will be very welcome.

### New Coordinator

We would like to introduce and welcome our new coordinator covering Upper and Lower Hutt, Serenah Nicholson. You can contact her on 021 743414 or [manager.whanau.group@xtra.co.nz](mailto:manager.whanau.group@xtra.co.nz).

## Looking For...

Auckland members who are raising a baby or a toddler full time that is still being bottle fed. Ages 6—12 months plus. Please contact Di on 09 4806530. You will be glad you did.

## Trending

Latest trend spreading around NZ, is to paint rocks and hide them around town and playgrounds plus the botanical gardens etc for other kids to find and re-hide (almost like a great easter-egg hunt) and a lot of fun for the kids. This has kept my ones busy all morning. Hide them in the bush walks, playgrounds and public walk ways.



## Extraordinary Care Fund

Opens September 18<sup>th</sup> and closes October 20<sup>th</sup>.

Please go to our web site [www.grg.org.nz](http://www.grg.org.nz) for more information on this fund.



## My Child Doesn't Remember the Neglect as an Infant, But His Body Does

My son doesn't remember being hungry — but his brain does! The trauma from infant neglect can cause lasting impressions in the memory bank of a baby.

My son was just 8 months old when he came to live with us. Even in those short months, he had experienced serious neglect that unknown to anyone had a lasting impact on his life. He spent the majority of his infancy in a car seat, as his parents partied and fought in another room. Just how often did he get fed? His cries for a bottle went unheard. How often did he get changed? His cries of discomfort from dirty diapers weren't heard. When he came to live with us, he had a rash in the shape of a diaper on his entire front and bottom.

*"Babies don't remember."* That's what I thought. But I was very wrong.

He was a delightful baby, although hypervigilant in watching me. Anytime I left the room, he would begin screaming. And even when I was in the room, if a door would suddenly shut, he would begin screaming. It was then, I began to realize how serious his neglect had been.

**But he didn't show signs of infant neglect.**

I admit he was a demanding baby and toddler, but aren't the "terrible twos" and "three-age" years supposed to be? I didn't think anything was wrong in regard to tantrums at that age until...

His day care began reporting numerous tantrums and meltdowns, that began escalating to rages and aggression toward the teachers and other students. He eventually got kicked out of THREE day-cares due to his rages, and I had to [take FMLA family leave](#).

I researched, read numerous [adoption & parenting books](#), and [tried every parenting technique](#) I could find. But the rages continued. Even [medication didn't help](#).

However, [our family vacation on a Disney Cruise](#) was pivotal in uncovering the mystery of my son's tantrums. On the last day of the cruise in which we had endured numerous meltdowns, I finally discovered the trigger for my son's meltdowns.

*"Son, you do this every time, right before we eat!!!"*  
"I had an epiphany as the words came out of my mouth.

I gave him a chocolate, and like magic, he immediately turned back into my sweet little boy. My little boy had been hungry!

My son doesn't have a memory of being hungry as an infant, but his brain does. That baby's developing brain was hard-wired with a terrifying memory of being hungry, not knowing when he would be fed, and believing he was going to die!

The fear response of fight, flight or freeze would kick in — and my baby would fight! — the only way he could as an infant — by screaming. As he got older, his fear response from hunger escalated from screaming to actual fighting!

When I look back on the documentation at the day-cares, his rages occurred around 10 in the morning and mid-afternoon. My child was hungry!!

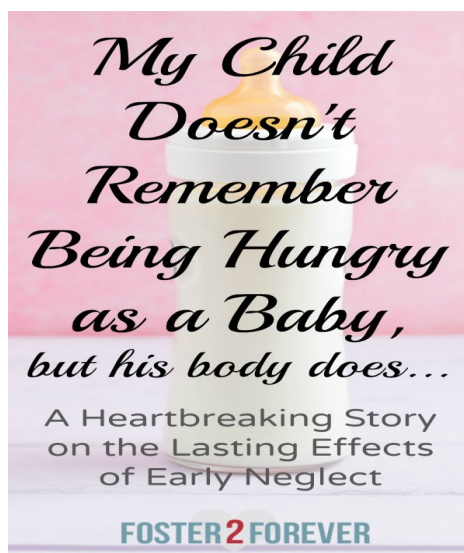
I can now attribute about 90%

of my son's behaviour issues to hunger. Although I understand the trigger to the majority of his crankiness and tantrums, I still struggle with parenting my son — a strong-willed finicky eater! (*That's another blog post*)

My son still has a memory of hunger — but he doesn't remember it.

**4 Questions to Ask When Early Childhood Trauma Causes Behaviour Issues.** <http://foster2forever.com/2017/05/early-childhood-trauma-effects.html>

**Early childhood trauma** can radically change the way a child's brain experiences a situation. Trauma causes the brain to go survival mode which triggers the FEAR response (flight, fight, or freeze). When a traumatized child is in FEAR with his hunger, plus



he had a huge bag of sunflower seeds at home. I wanted to just get him home. In response, the brain shuts off the thinking part of the brain, and the child cannot think or even recall coping skills. The primitive part of the brain is about only one thing — SURVIVAL!

With a simple trigger that the child probably doesn't understand or remember.

Recently, my child wanted me to buy him sunflower seeds after baseball practice. I knew he needed to eat a good meal so I just wanted to get him home for dinner. But hunger (even perceived hunger) is a huge trigger for children who have experienced early neglect or food insecurity. (You can read [his heart-breaking story on infant neglect here](#).)

As the situation escalated, I tried to reason with my child, but he was becoming more irritated. The sunflower seeds were not going to help. Logical thought processes can be hijacked by the FEAR response caused by early childhood trauma. Trauma has the unique ability to rewire the brain, and what may seem like ordinary simple everyday situations, can become huge triggers for children that have experienced early trauma.

A child may not even remember the neglect or abuse experienced, but magically, the body remembers. This buried, intrinsic memory can trigger the FEAR response. FEAR hijacks the brain

#### COMMON SENSE SAYS:

- I have sunflower seeds at home
- I can wait 20 minutes to get my sunflower seeds
- It's okay to just go home and get my sunflower seeds
- Sunflower seeds won't keep me from feeling hungry

**But you can't reason with a brain in fear response!**

#### EARLY CHILDHOOD TRAUMA SAYS:

If I don't get sunflower seeds right now, I WILL STARVE TO DEATH!!!

I stopped the car at a park and let my son out to cool off and SWING (the repetitive motion of swinging is therapeutic and calming for the brain). As I was watching him and becoming more calm myself, I began asking questions.

#### QUESTIONS TO ASK WHEN EARLY CHILDHOOD TRAUMA CAUSES MISBEHAVIOR



#### WHAT IS TRIGGERING THE BEHAVIOR?

*My child hasn't eaten dinner yet. (Read more about [emotional triggers](#))*

#### WHAT'S GOING ON IN MY CHILD'S BRAIN?

*My child in FEAR response.*

#### WHAT DOES HE NEED TO FEEL SAFE?

*My child needs to know that I will meet his needs.*

#### WHY AM I SAYING NO?

*I am saying NO because of all the common sense reasons.*

#### MEETING YOUR CHILD'S NEED & CALMING THE TRAUMATIZED BRAIN

In that moment, I had an epiphany and realized that I should give my child what he NEEDS – that is **food security!!!** Therefore, my child has to know that I will meet his NEEDS so he won't ever FEEL that he will go hungry again. **A child has to FEEL SAFE!!!**

**My child needed the sunflower seeds to feel safe and calm his brain!**

Parenting children from hard places is different than the way we were raised. You have to meet your traumatized child's needs – even if it doesn't seem like common sense.

*(Read more on [overcoming childhood fears](#))*



# Grand's reflections...

## Reflections

She was dancing a jig in the toilet and refusing to use it. "Grandma ...Grandma there's a spider in here" she hollered at the top of her voice.

"Spider ...spider...spider..." screaming by this stage. Well, had to do what grandma's do so, I rolled up a newspaper and joined her in the littlest room in the house to murder whatever it was that was terrifying this little girl. I'm not afraid of spiders. I'm not, but her screams really were starting to bother me now in this small enclosed space. My eyes followed in the direction she was pointing and there, right in front of my face loomed this really frightening, awful scary spider the size of a pin-head. So small that it made my rolled-up newspaper seem like a sledge-hammer in my hand. I picked it off the wall with my fingernail and tossed it outdoors and have basked in Acacia's admiration of my bravery all morning, nodding in agreement with her even as I'm beginning to feel like a bit of a fraud...Still, you have to take admiration whenever you can get it so I mustn't disagree with her too often that it was nothing...

## Di's big day out

"The mighty Waikato". After meeting some awesome grand's I headed my way home, stopping at Huntly to top up with petrol at the Z station, I filled up and went in to pay. Upon leaving shop this young man perhaps 30 said, 'I am so sorry that I did not fill your car for you, I was down the other end of the court' I said, 'all good'. Yes he said, 'but you missed out on all this eye candy' and with that threw his arms out wide, did a twirl, huge smile with a wink. Topped of this old girl's fabulous day:)

## Bouquets from our members



- The Trust is a God send enabling those kin carers who care and provide for children 24/7. With volunteers who provide professional assistance to those who are otherwise in dire need of sound advice advocacy and a listening ear... I recommend this foundation to all who are need and are full time kin carers. Kia kaha Kia maia Kia manawanui
- You have done so much for Grandparents and the children they have in care You need a big pat on the back WELL DONE
- Wonderful organisation and the people within it. Life savers really!
- In desperation after having 4 grandies turn up on my step I simply did not know where to turn. Onto the internet and I found you. Thank God someone on the end of the help line really understood my position, calmed me down, gave me hope and the right information.
- In a world of stress, drama and no response from other Agencies, I found you! My world became calm again Thank you so much.
- I was delivered twin babies and had absolutely nothing, I was already raising a 3 year old. Did a panic call to GRG help line and they kindly did a call out to their local GRG members in my area, well my goodness! These wonderful grand's dropped off everything I needed. We were blessed. Sharing and caring.



## Meat in the Sandwich

Some days I honestly do not know which way is up. Raising 3 grandchildren and also caring for my elderly parents 89 and 90 whom also live with us, I feel like I have 5 children to raise. Once children are off to school my day is a never ending rush of showers, cooking, cleaning, Doctors, blood tests (thank goodness test are done at home) and running to my parents constant demands.

Yes I know I could get help, but they point blankly refuse any 'stranger' help. I feel like I am that little mouse on that wheel that just runs around and around. I am exhausted and then the children come in from school, then begins homework, meals and more showers. After all is done the children read to their great grandparents. YES, my time for a quick quiet cuppa. I am sure my parents do not hear a word they read, but I will take a deep breath and give thanks.



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>

**givealittle**  
from the Spark Foundation

### Can we help you?

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

New members and general information please dial ext. 2

For Member's Support, dial ext. 1  
Di Vivian  
Auckland/free callers:  
(09) 480 6530  
Email Di at: [Di@grg.org.nz](mailto:Di@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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**Member Support Manager: Di & Team (as a caregiver you are part of our team)**

*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



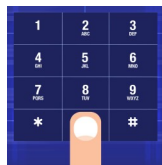
[Anti-bullying](#)



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

<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>East Auckland/ Tamaki**</b>	Tess Gould-Thorpe	09 535 6903	<a href="mailto:theresagouldthorpe@gmail.com">theresagouldthorpe@gmail.com</a>
<b>Canterbury**</b>	Veronica Brunt	03 942 5935	<a href="mailto:r.v.brunt@paradise.net.nz">r.v.brunt@paradise.net.nz</a>
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<b>Dargaville*</b>	Sandy Zimmer	09 439 4420	<a href="mailto:sandy.zimmer@hotmail.com">sandy.zimmer@hotmail.com</a>
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<b>Hastings</b>	Tom Kupa	06 879 4302	<a href="mailto:kupakarate@outlook.com">kupakarate@outlook.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>