



For immediate release

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Founder of Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Trust NZ celebrated in New Year's Honours List

Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Trust NZ's Founding Trustee, Diane Marguerite Vivian has been made a companion of the Queen's Service Order in the New Year's Honour's list 2017.

In 1997, Diane Vivian and her husband, Erin, took on the full-time care of their foster daughter's two children. Two years later she started the first support group for full-time grandparent caregivers in Birkenhead, Auckland to help others who, like her, were struggling with a multitude of challenges, dealing with Work and Income, the Family Court and Mental Health services and having difficulty getting access to professional help and financial support for their vulnerable grandchildren.

In 2001, she set up the Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Trust NZ (GRG) which today supports over 6,000 full-time grandparent and whanau/kin caregivers. GRG is a Ministry for Social Development contracted and approved provider, of a range of support services for grandparent and whanau caregivers of 'at risk' children. It has support groups throughout the country and Community Outreach and specialist Advocate Field Officer services. It has also engaged in three major published research studies in 2005, 2009 and 2016 into the issues affecting grandparent care families.

Diane Vivian's work with policy advisers, politicians and community organisations has contributed to many positive and meaningful law and policy changes for the benefit of children in grandparent/whanau care and their caregivers.

These important changes have affected thousands of children and include the increase in the base rate of the Unsupported Child and Orphan's Benefit to match foster carers in 2009,

government funding for respite and holiday camps for children in grandparent care, and work exemptions for their caregivers in receipt of income support.

She was also appointed to the Ministerial Advisory Panel to advise the Minister for Social Development on support for children in extended families. From 2014 this resulted in the introduction of the School Year Start Up Payment, Establishment Grant and eligibility for the Extraordinary Care Fund for recipients of the Unsupported Child and Orphan's Benefit.

“Diane’s part in improving the lives of grandparent care families and to the knowledge and understanding of the grandparent caregiver experience in New Zealand and internationally has been considerable. Through her voluntary work for GRG she has spoken to thousands of people, educating and advocating for a better deal for them. On top of that, Diane has also manned our 0800 GRANDS helpline and written our monthly newsletter from the outset. She has helped thousands of caregivers over the past 18 years, instilling hope and reassurance while guiding them on their challenging caregiver journey, as well as empowering them with the information and knowledge they’ve needed to access help from others.”

“On behalf of the GRG members, staff and Board of Trustees we warmly congratulate her and her family. We are thrilled and delighted that Diane has been recognised and acknowledged for her work by the Queen and the New Zealand Government with this prestigious and well-deserved honour,” says Kate Bundle, GRG’s Chief Executive.

Diane Vivian recently retired from her Executive Trustee role, but continues her work for GRG as Founding Trustee and providing member support through the 0800 number and newsletter services.

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Photo Attached. Please credit Yvonne Powley if the photo is used.

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