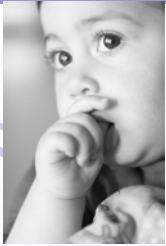




# Grandparents & Children in their care project.

## A Story of Community Development

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Family Skills is a service of Relationships Australia and part of the relationship education program.

We are a community based program funded to service families with children 0-12 yrs around parenting and relationships.

Our philosophy of working is grounded in capacity building through community development practices such as networking, partnerships and strengths base practice.

Our association with grandparents as primary carers was born and nurtured through our general service at Family Skills. Our first meeting with a grandparent was at a seminar, Managing Children's Behaviour, we were running from a Penrith community centre. At that seminar we met a grandmother who was very open about sharing some of the dilemmas around fulltime caring for her grandchildren.

The second profound experience, was meeting another fulltime grandmother and her grandson through our Me & My Friend children's group.



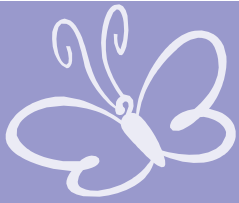
These discussions raised our awareness and were topics of conversation with other service providers.

Our 'on the ground' connections with these Grand carers allowed the seeds of understanding and support to grow. In fact the 'word was out' and other agencies had rallied to assist the formation of a Grand carers' support group. Our connections continued and developed as we kept in contact.

This led to the Grand carers' meetings at our Family Skills venue. Relationships Australia via the Family Skills program were eventually successful in securing two years funding through the Penrith Local Council. Our objectives build around the unmet needs expressed at the 'grass roots' level.



*Relationships Australia*



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## A Story of Community Development

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### Objectives

1. To build the capacity of Grandparents who are the primary care givers, managing their ongoing parenting role with the children; includes relationship enhancement.
2. Assist Grandparent and children to deal effectively with changing roles and expectations of themselves with each other and the child's natural parent.
3. To reduce social and emotional isolation of the grandparents and children.

### Our early discoveries of issues for Grandparents

Parenting v Grand parenting-

- Large dilemmas around role differentiation for parents, grandparents and grandchildren.
- Jealousy and competition for time from other grandchildren & children.
- Differences in 'life stage' expectations

### Rules v spoiling-

- Differences between grandchildren being cared for fulltime and other grandchildren rules and boundaries needing to be re-negotiated
- Grandparents social connections don't have young children to care for.

### Single grand carers Tensions

- Grandchild parenting v life choices for grandparent
- Grandparents aren't seen as people
- Tension when kids friends sleepover different upbringing vs grandparents style of parenting/dress/manners

### Extra Support

- Help to understand psychological effect on kids
- Managing stress
- Protectiveness of grandkids by grandparents
- Would like help for grandkids to understand their situation - why they are in it
- Different way of parenting than did with own kids
- Heightened sense of responsibility
- Fear of kids wanting to return to natural parents

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