

Submission to the ACT 2017-18 Budget Consultation Process

ACT Grandparents' Day



Introduction

Most States in Australia celebrate generational family connection through a Grandparents' Day or similar. Such an event allows the highlighting of the role that the senior generation play in the ongoing life and care of Canberra families and children.

There is an emerging trend to try to coordinate these celebrations around the last Sunday in October. Children's week is scheduled each year to include Universal Children's Day (which is the fourth Wednesday of October). This means that the two events will now align, with Grandparents' Day rounding off Children's Week each year.



According to ABS data released in July last year "Grandparents are the main providers of informal care for children of working parents". The study went on to say that "grandparents provide child care for almost one-third of 0-12 aged children of working parents". Of the nearly 50% of children accessing some form of child care, grandparent care was used at 1.5 times the rate of long day care.

Yet these carers receive almost no support, resources, help or recognition in this incredibly important role.

A regular celebration of Grandparents' Day in the ACT, with a range of media, awards, celebrations, awareness, promotion and grants could go towards addressing this gap.

Grandparents also often bear a large load in supporting children with additional needs and their families. It is important to take time and make a formal effort to thank those who do such 'heavy lifting' in our community with very little funding, assistance or acknowledgment.

The Purpose

Grandparents have a unique role in our society

They don't just connect everyone to the values, stories and histories of people's families, but to the values, stories and histories of Australian communities.

The purpose of Grandparents' Day is to celebrate the vital role that grandparents play in our Territory, as custodians of individual



and cultural members and as providers of care and love to their children and grandchildren. Grandparents' Day recognises the irreplaceable role grandparents have in their families in the wider Canberra community.

The Day and activities throughout that week are:

- To honour grandparents,
- To give grandparents an opportunity to show love for their children's children,
- To help children become aware of the strength, information and guidance older Canberrans can provide,
- To recognise and celebrate how much we all benefit from spending time together and connecting across the generations,
- To grandparents from the wide range of cultures and ethnic groups that exist in the ACT and to break down any social isolation that they may experience.

"Nobody can do for little children what grandparents do. Grandparents sort of sprinkle stardust over the lives of little children."

Alex Haley

Grandparents are important to children and families in so many ways. They have patience and time when parents are often busy. They have stories to tell and interesting games to play. They are also good for fun and treats and spoiling, which we all need from time to time.

This special time recognises the significant contribution that grandparents make to their families and communities. It also recognises the role that grandparents have with older children and young people (including those away from home), and the significance that this relationship may take on during the challenging teenage/young adult years.

It is also an occasion for acknowledging the efforts and devotion of grandparents who are full-time carers for their grandchildren. Also to give something back to those grandparents from other cultures and languages who may otherwise feel isolated and disengaged.

Objectives of Grandparents' Day

- Raise community awareness of the role, needs, rights and achievements of grandparents in the ACT
- Encourage the community, children's services, support groups, schools, community groups to plan and conduct events to celebrate grand parenting
- To highlight issues involved in grand-parenting in Canberra
- Honour grandparents and recognise the contribution they make as carers in families and in children's development
- Assist individuals, groups and organisations to organise local activities and events that support and involve grandparents and children and their families, through the provision of small seeding grants
- Encourage the participation of both grandparents and children in activities and events as another dimension to ACT Children's Week
- Provide opportunities for groups, organisations and schools to 'open their doors' to give the community an opportunity to thank grandparents
- Help promote the work that people are doing to support children and youth in our community
- Recognise grandparents who are an example and role model for others through the presentation of Awards



When to celebrate Grandparents' Day

Grandparents' Day can dovetail into ACT Children's week (21 – 29 October 2017) so shared activities can occur across the ACT.

By placing Grandparents' Day within the Children's Week umbrella, activities can be scheduled for children and grandparents all week - allowing a much greater involvement from organisations and the media etc. It would also align the timing with the current schedule for Grandparents' Day in other jurisdictions.

How the ACT can celebrate Grandparents' Day

Many families can celebrate thorough family get-togethers, picnics by the Lake or outings to Canberra's national institutions when they come "on board".

It can be celebrated across the ACT through:

- Community run events
- Activities in schools (morning tea or shared lunch or afternoon tea - given so many grandparents in Canberra do the school pick up of children)
- Activities in preschools and child care centres
- Activities in libraries such as shared story time and shared story reading
- Link with Canberra business to run a Grandparents' playgroup and activity session in Garema Place, Civic (transport to be provided by the Flexible Bus Service)
- Activities in the national institutions (such as the gallery, museum etc)
- Small grants to allow organisations, individuals and businesses to find unique and innovative ways of recognising and celebrating grandparents in their community



Playgroups

- The major event of ACT Children's Week (PlayFEST) is to be held on Tuesday 25th October with 2,500 people in attendance at ACT Playgroups in Cook, ACT
- Universal Children's Day is held on the fourth Wednesday each October, and this can be expanded to include the valuable role that grandparents have in their family and community (and to the ACT economy)
- Grandparents' Playgroups and Paint and Plays around Canberra (also for grandparents and their grandchildren)
- Intergenerational Playgroups run at different aged care facilities around the ACT

Note – all of these events will be ideal for the attendance of the Minister – and for updates on ACT Playgroups, COTA ACT and the ACT government social media). Pre-publicity will also be available during the Seniors Expo and National Playgroup Week in March 2017.

Other Activities may incorporate:

- Grandparents Colouring-in sheets and crafts (available to download from the Office of Veterans and Seniors, COTA and Playgroups web sites)
- Grandparents shared activity ideas
- Advice and support for grandparents from Parentline ACT
- Special deals or offers for grandparent carers during the week
- Social media/technology focus (getting younger people involved in giving back to their grandparents by helping them access and learn new technologies)



And, with a focus on Grandparents themselves:

Active grandparents make all the difference for their grandchildren so lots of publicity about keeping active and active ageing in Canberra. For example:

- Heartmoves
- Beat It - Physical Activity and Lifestyle Program
- Heart Foundation Walking
- Nutrition Australia

A grandparents website and Facebook page can be set up by the Office for Veterans and Seniors and can be co-hosted by COTA ACT and ACT Playgroups.

Publicity can be provided through the Seniors Newsletter, City News and Canberra Weekly which will achieve maximum publicity for minimum cost.

This is also an opportunity to publicise the issue of Elder Abuse and the support Helpline.

Primary support for the program can be provided by ACT Playgroups and Council on the Ageing ACT. Partnerships will also be sought with a range of local organisations including the ACT Children's Week Committee, Kidsafe ACT, Canberra Parenting and etc.

Funding

This project requires an initial start-up fund of about \$60,000 and then ongoing resourcing of about \$75,000 per year to succeed. These funds would be used to provide small seeding/activities grants (about \$30,000 p/a) as well as event/award funding (of about \$15,000) and admin/media/publication etc funding (of \$25,000) to maintain websites, engage media, assess awards and grants, organise events etc. This funding will be more than matched by financial and in-kind contributions by partners and organisations involved in the program as well as through synergies and efficiencies created by linking this project with ongoing programs and processes.



More support/information

The proposal for establishing an ongoing Grandparents' Day in the ACT already has the support of a working group formed to discuss this issue. This group includes the Ministerial Advisory Council on Ageing (MACA), COTA ACT, ACT Playgroups, Youth Advisory Council, Senior Clubs ACT and the ACT Children's Week Committee and all parties have committed to progress this project through their own organisations and networks should this budget bid be successful. COTA ACT and ACT Playgroups would be happy to provide any further information required or to meet to answer any questions or concerns that may arise.

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