



Kinship Alliance Australia

A national network of kinship care advocates

Charter

Background

The United Nations General Assembly (2010) describes kinship care as ‘family-based care within the child’s extended family or with close friends of the family known to the child, whether formal or informal in nature’.

It is widely believed that most kinship carers are grandparents, however current Australian data suggests that around half of all kinship carers are other relatives or family friends.

Australian 2011 census data suggested that over 100,000 children were in kinship care at that time. Over 80% of the identified kinship care families were providing care on an informal basis, that is, without recognition or financial support by child protection authorities (Kiryaly et al, 2021; Kiraly, 2023). With population increase, the number of children in kinship care in 2024 can be confidently estimated to far exceed 100,000. Indigenous children and families are over-represented (Kiryaly et al, 2021).

Kinship Alliance Australia is a national network of organisations with an interest in the wellbeing of all Australian kinship care families.

Vision

A country that provides financial and professional support to all children in kinship care and their caregivers as needed to ensure they can thrive and achieve their life goals.

Mission

Kinship Alliance Australia aims to raise awareness and advocate for policy changes that recognise and address the needs of all kinship carers and the children in their care. State/Territory matters specific to formal kinship care are beyond the remit of Kinship Alliance Australia.

Objectives

1. Act as a national voice for organisations supporting kinship care families to advocate for better recognition and support.
2. Promote legislative and policy changes to support kinship carers in obtaining necessary documentation and financial and social service assistance.
3. In recognition of the poverty-related challenges faced by informal kinship care families, accord priority to raising awareness of their pressing need.
4. Collaborate with relevant stakeholders to implement recommendations that relate to kinship care generally from the 2014 *Senate Inquiry into Grandparents raising Grandchildren* and the 2015 *Senate Inquiry into Out of Home Care*.
5. Seek funding to establish a National Kinship Care Organisation to sustain advocacy to improve the life circumstances of kinship care families.

Activities

1. Organise awareness campaigns to highlight the contributions and challenges faced by kinship care families.
2. Engage in lobbying efforts with Federal authorities to amend existing legislation and enact new laws that recognise and support kinship carers and children in their care.
3. Collaborate with the *Parliamentary Friends of Grandparent and Kinship Carers* to facilitate communication between MPs, grandparent/kinship carers and children and young people in their care, in order to promote legislative and policy change.
4. Make submissions to relevant government inquiries and invitations for feedback, including State/Territory Inquiries that have potential spin-off benefits for kinship care families nationally.
5. Seek funding to support the costs of advocacy activities.
6. Other actions as decided from time to time.

Legislative Initiatives

1. Advocate for amendments to Commonwealth, State and Territory Carer Recognition Acts, as necessary to promote equitable recognition and adequate support of all Australian kinship care families.
2. Advocate for the renaming of the Foster Child Health Care Card to accurately reflect its eligibility criteria that include children in informal and formal kinship care.
3. Advocate for the establishment of a Commonwealth Informal Relative Caregiver Statutory Declaration.
4. Lobby for a review of the Double Orphan Pension and the institution of an Unsupported Child's Benefit, considering the New Zealand model.
5. Encourage the revisitation and implementation of other relevant recommendations from the 2014 and 2015 Senate Inquiries.
6. Other legislative initiatives as decided from time to time.

Governance and funding

Kinship Alliance Australia operates under the auspices of Grandcarers SA
<https://grandcarers.au/>

Inaugural Directors are Mr Mike Feszczak, CEO of Grandcarers SA, ceo@grandcarers.au and Dr Meredith Kiraly, kinship care authority/pro bono consultant, mkiraly@unimelb.edu.au

As at April 2024, the primary functions of Kinship Alliance Australia are unfunded. Kinship Alliance Australia may receive occasional grants associated with specific activities, with Grandcarers SA acting as grants Trustee.

Membership

Membership of Kinship Alliance Australia is open to organisations and formally recognised carer groups (funded and unfunded) who are committed to advocating for the recognition and support of all kinship care families, both informal and formal. Member organisations shall be represented by an identified, preferably senior, representative of each organisation or recognised group. Members will be invited to partner in submissions to relevant Inquiries and Reviews, and in representations to Federal Parliament and other activities.

There is no membership fee.

April 2024