

MEDIA RELEASE – EMBARGOED TO 12:01AM MONDAY 22 OCTOBER

Grandparents save \$88 million in childcare in NSW alone each year
Grandparents Day, Sunday 28 October, reminds the community about the valuable level of support provided by grandparents

Monday 22 October (Sydney) - Research released today by Council of the Ageing NSW (COTA NSW) estimates that grandparents are saving families \$1.8 million a week, or \$88 million a year, in childcare across NSWⁱ. In the lead up to Grandparent's Day on 28 October, the research highlights the crucial role of grandparents across the community.

In New South Wales, 10 per cent of people aged over 65 years provide unpaid childcare for their grandchildren, while in some areas this reaches almost 20 per centⁱⁱ. At a conservative estimate, 200,000 grandparents across NSW provide 12.7 hours unpaid, informal care for children each weekⁱⁱⁱ.

In some Sydney electorates, almost one in five grandparents provide regular unpaid child care. Grandparents in affluent suburbs are more likely to be part-time carers of children, suggesting that even higher earning families need grandparents to fill crucial care roles to meet their living expenses. Sydney's northern suburbs and the Hills District boast the highest number of babysitting grandparents, with Davidson and Baulkham Hills topping the state for caring grandparents.

The next highest number of grandparents providing regular care can be found in Sydney's south, with Cronulla and Menai representing the highest number of grandparents providing unpaid child care in the area.

Grandparents provide a full gamut of care across the community, from occasional babysitting, holiday and after school care, through to taking on full time parental responsibility. Up to 15,000 grandchildren are living in the permanent care of their grandparents in NSW^{iv}. Grandparents provide more out of home care for children who are unable to live with their parents than any other group.

"Speaking with grandparents, it's clear that many step in to make sure that their families can afford to stay in the area, often needing both mum and dad to work to keep up with mortgage payments and other costs. Furthermore, grandparents provide many other levels of support, such as stepping in when children are unwell and unable to go to school, or when a call comes through last minute, as well as being there for kids' sports and extra-curricular activities and holidays to name a few examples." says Ian Day, Chief Executive Officer, COTA NSW.

"It isn't just the financial support that grandparents are providing through their care, grandparents provide very special emotional support, security, personal attention, intergenerational sharing, and love. Whether they're there all the time, or tell a good story on the special occasion you see them, we're asking everyone to remember, acknowledge their contribution, and celebrate with grandparents on Grandparents Day, Sunday 28 October" says Ian Day.

Sylvia Payten, a grandmother of 10, provides frequent care for five of her grandchildren living nearby in Manly. Ms Payten says that many of her friends provide care for their grandchildren.

"We help keep the wheels on the cart; we can step in to keep everything going when the mums and dads are stuck at work."

Having helped one of her daughters care for twins while they were babies, Ms Payten went on to provide high levels of care for the two children of her youngest daughter, who launched a business five years ago.

“My daughter could not afford to pay for care and she also needed someone who could care for the kids when she was busy. It wasn’t a situation that lent itself to putting the kids in formal child care, even if she and her husband could have afforded it,” says Ms Payten.

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About Grandparents Day

Grandparents Day is a NSW Government initiative to recognise the unique role that grandparents play in our communities as custodians of individual and cultural memories and providers of care, love and guidance to their children and grandchildren.

Grandparents Day is being coordinated by COTA NSW. COTA NSW is widely recognised as the peak body representing people over 50 in NSW. It is an independent, non-government organisation that works with government, policy makers, service providers and the media to promote the interests of older people. It also delivers adult education and a range of community programs.

Families are encouraged to remember or celebrate with their grandparents on Grandparents Day. Community events will be held across NSW on Grandparents Day, Sunday 28 October. For full details please visit www.grandparentsday.org.au

ⁱ COTA NSW estimate from ABS Census 2011 data of grandparents providing informal care calculated using current childcare costs for children aged 0 – 12 and ABS Child Care Survey 2005.

ⁱⁱ COTA NSW analysis of ABS Census 2011, assuming people 65 and over who were ‘caring for children not their own’ were grandparents; the children being cared for were also assumed to be grandchildren.

ⁱⁱⁱ COTA NSW estimate from ABS Census 2011 data of grandparents providing informal care calculated using current childcare costs for children aged 0 – 12 and ABS Child Care Survey 2005.

^{iv} COTA NSW analysis based on ABS Census 2011 and data and advice from Department of Family and Community Services (FACs).