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MEDIA RELEASE

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Senate Inquiry recommends greater help for grandparents shouldering responsibility for primary care of grandchildren

COTA Australia has welcomed the recommendations of the Senate Inquiry into grandparents who take primary responsibility for raising their grandchildren and its potential to significantly improve the lives of many tens of thousands of Australian grandparent carers and their families.

COTA Chief Executive Ian Yates said the Senate Committee had picked up all of the issues that grandparents had raised with COTA and was covered in its submission.

“The recommendations from the Senate Inquiry will transform the quality of life and care of grandparents who have sole caring responsibility for their grandchildren in Australia,” Mr Yates said today.

“Many grandparent carers told us honestly about the financial strain placed on them when they took on sole care for grandchildren and how they often felt there was inadequate support or training available.

“Grandparent carers and their families should look forward to positive changes ahead if the recommendations in this report are adopted by governments.

“COTA is pleased that specific actions and recommendations have been produced for Commonwealth and state and territory governments – not just vague statements of support.

“In particular, the proposal to review the grandparent adviser position with a greater focus on the unique challenges for rural and remote communities should increase attention and action for some of the most vulnerable families.

“A new commitment to develop information for grandparents about the support available and also to fund community and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander legal services to provide legal assistance to grandparents are also steps forward.

“There is a huge gap being filled by older Australians because their children are unable or unwilling to care for their own children due to issues ranging from substance abuse to criminal conviction to serious mental illness.

“It’s vital these grandparents get the formal recognition and support of the important role they play in society and in the lives of their grandchildren,” Mr Yates said.

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COTA Australia is the peak policy development, advocacy and representation organisation for older Australians, representing COTAs in every State and Territory and through their members, over 500,000 older Australians.