

Grandparents raising grandchildren Tasmania Speech

Mr President, recently I had the great pleasure of meeting with a couple of inspirational Tasmanians who are part of a small and hard working organization who offer assistance to Grandparents raising their grandchildren in Tasmania.

Their task is no small one; they are currently run off their feet supporting over 200 Grandparent families and this is probably less than half of those amazing Tasmanian Grandparents looking after their kids kids.

Mr President, we all know in this house the challenge of bringing up children but most of us have only had to do it for one period in our lives and then we use the rest of our lives to rest – and to sleep in on the weekends!

Unfortunately for some Parents, they are called upon a second time to intervene to offer a safe, protective and loving environment not for their children but for their children's children.

There are any number of reasons why this can happen; the passing of parents, mental or physical disability or more commonly, family breakdown due to poverty, drug or alcohol addiction, lack of adequate housing, neglect, abandonment or domestic violence.

So for any number of reasons the job of caring for young Tasmanians has fallen onto the Grandparents.

Mr President, things of course aren't necessarily easier the second time around, in fact they can be much more difficult.

Not only are Grandparents dealing with children suffering the trauma of living apart from their parents, but Grandparents also need to reconnect with services that have totally changed from when they were bringing up their own children.

The education department, child health services and the Family Assistance Office are examples and more often than not there is an expectation that

carers for children are internet savvy and can gain information or access services via computers.

Mr President, Grandparents raising Grandchildren are often on the back foot because they are usually of retirement age and may no longer be earning an income large enough to bring up a family. This puts incredible additional stress on the family unit.

So the question is, Mr President, what can we do to make life easier for these heroes in the community.

Firstly we need to understand their plight and not judge them or blame them for the state of their own children. Sometimes there is shame that they could have or should have done more for their own struggling child but we all know that no-one is an expert at bringing up children and any number of circumstances can push a child off the rails.

Secondly we need to offer as much assistance as we can afford as a community. If these children were in Foster Care then the cost to the

community would be much higher. Currently the State Government provide a small fortnightly payment which is under \$25 but this is clearly not enough and must be increased.

Thirdly, organizations like Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Tasmania should be adequately and recurrently funded by the State Government instead of having to rely on Federal grant money that provides no security and is not enough to provide full time services to the growing number of clients needing assistance in the state.

Finally Mr President, if members come across Grandparents who are raising their Grandchildren in the community, please mention to them the services provided by Grandparents raising Grandchildren Tasmania, so that they can be supported as they undertake the most important job anyone can have – bringing up children in a safe and loving environment.

