



**Wednesday 30 November 2011**

**MEDIA RELEASE**

**MAKING PARENTS PAY CHILD SUPPORT A NEW STRESS FOR GRANDPARENTS RAISING GRANDCHILDREN**

“Thousands of children in NSW are being raised by their grandparents because their own parents can’t – or won’t – care for them,” says Ian Day, CEO of Council on the Ageing NSW (COTA NSW). “Tragically, many grandparents raising grandchildren do so because their own children have crippling drug or alcohol dependencies. These grandparents have seen their grandchildren experience neglect, mistreatment or abuse at the hands of their own children. They feel they have no option but to raise their grandchildren themselves,” he says.

Measures announced on 24 November 2011 by the NSW Community Services Minister Pru Goward will require these grandparents to apply to the Federal Government’s Child Support Agency (CSA) for a child support assessment. Grandparents could then receive a portion of the relinquishing parent’s income or benefit.

Mr Day acknowledges this measure is intended to relieve the financial stress faced by these grandparents. “COTA NSW is always pleased when moves are made to relieve the financial pressure on grandparents raising grandchildren, especially those on fixed incomes.” However, he believes “this new measure may have unintended consequences.”

Paul Bickford, a member of the COTA NSW-run Grandparents, Relatives and Kinship Care Alliance, also believes that this measure may have negative impacts on some families. While appreciative of moves to bolster grandparents’ access to financial support, he fears some grandparents will face anger from relinquishing parents unwilling to contribute to the cost of their children’s care. He says, “unfortunately many of these parents are quite dysfunctional. Despite the fact that it’s the CSA who will be obtaining money from them, their anger will be directed towards their own parents and children. I often hear of cases of relinquishing parents threatening to remove children from their grandparents - and to put them back into extremely damaging situations - if they come into conflict. The sad reality is that we’ll see this come to a head over the Christmas period.”

Mr Bickford also notes that “grandparents raising grandchildren have to navigate a series of State and Federal bureaucracies to receive benefits and services to assist them with the task of raising grandchildren. The system is extremely complex as it is. This new requirement will compound the stress associated with the process of accessing benefits and services.”

Mr Day says COTA NSW’s focus is on seeing grandparents raising grandchildren gain access to the same benefits and services that non-relative carers of children receive. He adds “if not for the commitment of these grandparents, these grandchildren would in all likelihood be in the foster care system, which is itself under great strain. These grandparents do a great service. As a community we need to make much stronger efforts to support them and in turn, some of our most vulnerable kids. The bottom line in all decision making processes has to be the welfare of these children.” **END**



**Council on the Ageing NSW Inc. ABN 31 090 328 955**

**CEO, Ian Day, is available for interview:**

**W: [www.cotansw.com.au](http://www.cotansw.com.au)**

**T: (02) 9286 3860**

**M: 0417 210 234**