

To: meredith@kinshipalliance.org.au
Subject: Kinship Alliance Australia Newsletter (August 2024)



Introducing Kinship Alliance Australia

This is the first newsletter of **Kinship Alliance Australia**, a national network of organisations and formal groups with an interest in the wellbeing of Australian kinship care families.

The Alliance is the result of a year-long collaboration between founding Directors **Mike Feszczak** (CEO of Grandcarers SA) and **Dr Meredith Kiraly**, (pro bono consultant and kinship care researcher/advocate), during which time they developed the Alliance [Charter](#), [Fact Sheet](#), [Theory of Change](#) and [Website](#).

Mike and Meredith were also able to arrange meetings (with organisation representatives and carers) to lobby the **Parliamentary Friends of Grandparents and Kinship Carers (PFGKC)** cross party group in Canberra during October 2023 and March 2024, as well as many private meetings with Federal Parliamentarians including **The Hon. Amanda Rishworth MP, Minister for Social**

Services and also the **Secretary for the Department of Social Services, Ray Griggs AO CSC**.



Parliamentarians, carers and Alliance representatives at Parliament House in October 2023.

Kinship Alliance Australia was registered in May 2024 as a national kinship care advocacy network, with the Charter describing the Alliance's purpose and objectives and its focus on all kinship care families, informal and formal, Indigenous and non-Indigenous, and all kinship relationships including relatives and family friends/connected people.

The Inaugural Meeting of the Alliance took place on Tuesday 25 June at Grandcarers SA in Adelaide, followed by lunch at the South Australian Government House, hosted by **Her Excellency the Honourable Frances Adamson AC** and **Mr Rod Bunten** (Joint Patrons of Grandcarers SA).

Joining Kinship Alliance Australia

Membership of **Kinship Alliance Australia** is open to individuals, 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.

Organisation members also sign that they support the Kinship Alliance Australia [Charter](#). To date the Alliance has organisational members/Charter Signatories from every state and the ACT.

We would like to thank the following member organisations for their ongoing support:

- Glenrock Grandparents and Kinship Carers
- Grandcarers SA
- Grandcarers WA
- IFYS Ltd Queensland
- International Social Service Australia (Victoria & NSW)
- Key Assets (Queensland, NSW, Victoria, Tasmania, SA, WA & Norfolk Island)
- Kin Raising Kids Tasmania
- Kinship Carers Victoria
- OzChild (Victoria)
- Rivergum Kinship Carers (NSW)
- The Mirabel Foundation (Victoria & NSW)
- Wanslea Ltd (WA)

Over 40 people from across the nation have joined as Individual Members to support the aims and objectives of Kinship Alliance Australia.

For membership inquiries, please contact admin@kinshipalliance.org.au

Visit by New Zealand grandparent/kinship care expert Kate Bundle

Our advocacy was further emphasised during the week commencing 24 June, with the visit of **Kate Bundle**, the former CEO of the NZ **Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (GRG) Trust**.

Mike and Meredith took Kate on a whirlwind speaking tour of Adelaide, Canberra (Parliament House), Melbourne and Brisbane where Kate described GRG's success in 2009 in achieving parity between the NZ foster care rate and the Unsupported Child's Benefit. This Benefit is available to all children in informal kinship care where there has been a family breakdown. New Zealand is the only country in the world with such a level of support for children in kinship care regardless of statutory status.

Kate spoke about the research, advocacy and pivotal events that came together to generate this change in government policy, one that has made a huge difference to the lives of so many families formerly living in poverty. Also included in the workshops were presentations about the purpose and objectives of Kinship Alliance Australia by Mike and Meredith.

In Adelaide 40 stakeholders heard from Kate, Meredith and Mike, whilst **Jo Sadler** (CEO of Wanslea in WA) and **Alan Hoffman** (President, Grandcarers WA) spoke about the WA state benefit for Grandparent Carers. The Parliament House presentation was opened by two informal kinship carers from New South Wales who spoke of their experiences and the challenges of caring for children who have experienced trauma. In Melbourne, the workshop was hosted by the **Mirabel Foundation** and opened by recently retired **Senator Janet Rice** (Greens) who provided valuable tips on advocacy, whilst the Brisbane workshop was hosted by **PeakCare Queensland** and facilitated by their CEO **Tom Allsop**.



Tracey Roberts MP (centre) with Alliance representatives.



Kate during her presentation in Canberra.



A great crowd in Brisbane.

We were delighted with the reception we received at each venue and being afforded events to speak about national issues impacting on kinship carers, as well as the opportunities to extend the network of Kinship Alliance Australia.

Our representatives will strive to meet regularly with the Parliamentary Friends of Grandparent and Kinship Carers and Co-Convenors **Tracey Roberts MP** (Labor), **Senator Dean Smith** (Liberal) and **Senator Dorinda Cox** (Greens) and seek action on the objectives contained in the [Charter](#).

Conference presentations

Mike and Meredith are determined to use every opportunity to raise kinship carer topics and on 7 June presented a workshop at the Association of Children's Welfare Agencies Conference in Sydney. Entitled ***Informal kinship care, poverty, and what to do about it***, the presentation described the issues facing informal kinship care families and the objectives and activities of the Alliance.



Meredith presenting at the ACWA Conference.

They will also present a workshop at the National Kinship, Permanent and Foster Care Conference in Melbourne on 11 August entitled ***Achieving national recognition and support for all kinship care families – both informal and formal.***

Register for the National Kinship,
Permanent and Foster Care
Conference [HERE](#)

Building the network and campaigning

We are seeking organisations and small groups around Australia with programs that are open to informal kinship carers, usually in addition to formal kinship carers.

We currently have members and other stakeholders based in Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania, Victoria and the ACT, with some of those organisations also represented in New South Wales. These organisations are also listed on our [website](#).

SNAICC – Voice for our Children also joined in the Kate Bundle tour and we look forward to further collaboration to develop a collaborative approach to advocacy for all kinship families, Indigenous and non-Indigenous.

We are looking to build representation in New South Wales with a presentation tour to highlight the work of the Alliance, followed by network development in Queensland and the Northern Territory. Can you help us identify these groups?

Please also let us know if you are able to visit or connect with your local Federal member to support the objectives of the Alliance.

Contact us for more information at: admin@kinshipalliance.org.au

Funding

Kate Bundle's visit was made possible by a **Creswick Foundation** grant, and travel to Canberra has been funded by other small grants, but there is considerably more work ahead to maintain the momentum of our advocacy and build the Alliance.

We would appreciate any ideas you may have about philanthropic funds with an interest in national advocacy for systemic change to the benefit of kinship carers and the children in their care.

If you have any funder suggestions or can provide warm introductions, please contact us at admin@kinshipalliance.org.au

We look forward to your support,

Mike Feszczak and **Meredith Kiraly**



Kinship Alliance Australia is a national network of organisations and formal groups with an interest in the wellbeing of all Australian kinship care families. In recognition of the poverty-related challenges faced by informal kinship care families, the **Alliance** accords priority to raising awareness of their pressing need.

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