

Meredith Kiraly

From: Kinship Alliance Australia <admin@kinshipalliance.org.au>
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To: Meredith Kiraly
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Welcome to the second newsletter of Kinship Alliance Australia, and to our growing community of Supporters, Organisational Members and Friends of the Alliance. This quarter has been busy!

Parliamentary friends

A central plank of the work of **Kinship Alliance Australia** has been engagement with the **Parliamentary Friends of Grandparent and Kinship Carers**. We have continued our meetings and our work behind the scenes with the Convenors and other Parliamentarians.



Grandparent and kinship carers from across Australia meeting with the Parliamentary Friends of Grandparent and Kinship Carers, October 2023.

Statutory Declaration for Informal Kinship Carers

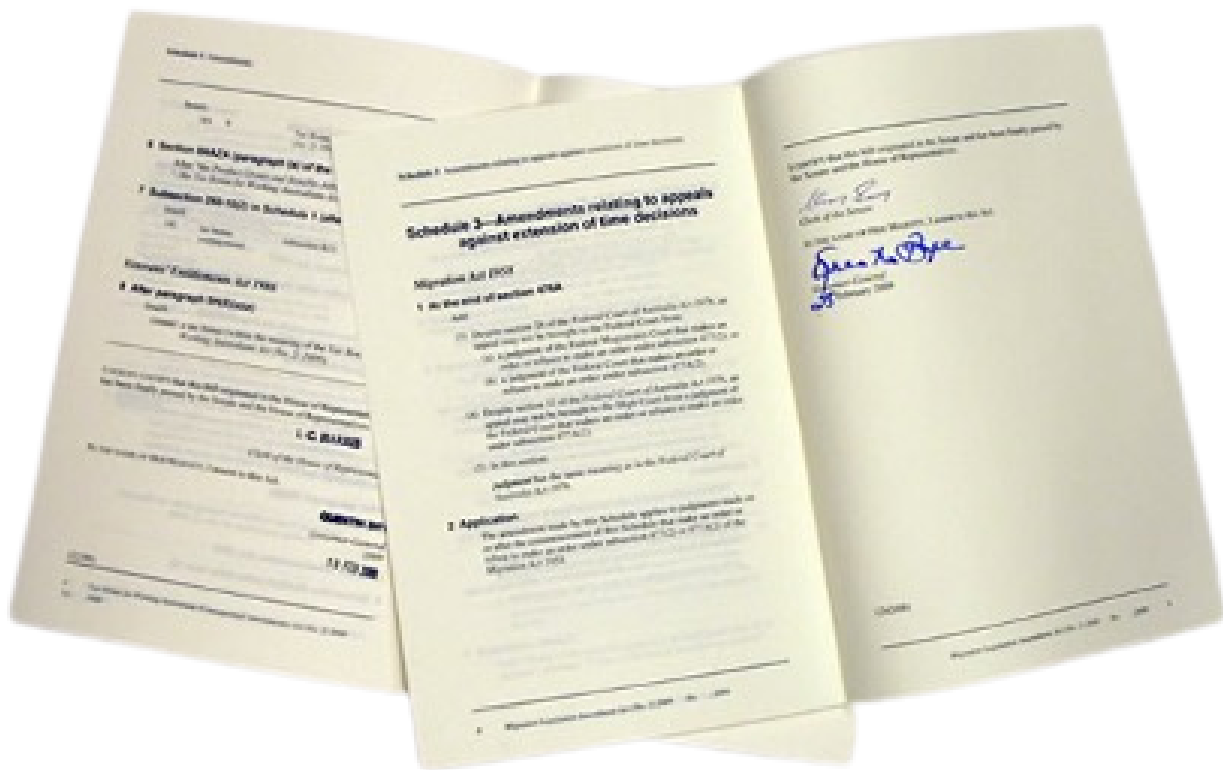
A constant complaint of kinship carers is about the difficulty of being recognised as *in loco parentis* for official purposes such as authorising children’s activities and treatment, and obtaining necessary documentation for them. We have been calling for the implementation of a customised *Commonwealth Government Statutory Declaration for Informal Kinship Carers*.

This idea was included in Recommendation 17 of the 2014 Parliamentary Inquiry into Grandparent Care, with the aim of providing a consistent means of recognising informal kinship carers across Australian jurisdictions. Ten years later this Recommendation remains unimplemented.

Kinship Alliance Australia has provided the Parliamentary Friends with a draft based on a similar South Australian Statutory Declaration, and we are pleased to report that the draft Statutory Declaration is now in the Office of the Commonwealth Attorney-General for consideration. We are assisting with a request to the Parliamentary Friends for further advice.

Private Member's Kinship Bill

Also at our recent (October 2024) meeting with the Parliamentary Friends, a small number of MPs put forward their wish to create a **Private Members's Kinship Bill**. Once again, we have been able to provide advice on items to include in such a Bill based on the unmet needs of Australian kinship families, and on a similar Private Member's Bill introduced in the UK House of Commons in 2023.



Building the network

A primary aim of the Alliance at this early stage is to build engagement across Australia to include **individual Supporters**, **Organisations** working in the kinship support space, and **Friends** of the Alliance who bring particular expertise for getting established. In recent months Meredith has had the pleasure of meeting and receiving support from grandparent/kinship carers and support workers in New South Wales and Queensland.

Everyone was so interested and felt really heard, and that the work they are doing caring for the Grandchildren mattered to more people than just them.

(Grandparent/Kinship Support Group Coordinator, NSW, July 2024)

New South Wales

The Central Coast and Hunter Regions of New South Wales have many grandparent/kinship support groups, most started years ago by social worker **Karen Lizosoain**. Karen is now a Friend of the Alliance. The July visit included **Glenrock Kinship Carers Support Group** (Charlestown); **Rlvergum Kinship Carers** (Grandparents as Parents); and **Central Coast ARAFMI Kinship Support Group**. Meredith also visited the **Central Coast Family Support Service** at Kariong. We now have Supporters and Organisational Members from each of these groups and organisations.



Rlvergum Support Group, Raymond Terrace NSW.

Southern Queensland

In November, Meredith was in southern Queensland where she made presentations to the **Caloundra Grandparents as Parents Group** and a **Yarning Circle** of Aboriginal service providers in Birtinya. In Bundaberg she spoke to the **Family Law Pathways Forum** about support for informal kinship carers and to staff of **Impact Community Services**.

In Brisbane she spoke to the **Older Persons Project** network, including **Time for Grandparents** (UnitingCare), the **Unaccompanied Humanitarian Minor Program** of Multicultural Australia, and **Human Rights Commissioner Natalie Lewis**. We now have Queensland representation in the Alliance across a range of services. A particular thanks to **Judith Shae** who pulled together the wonderful Yarning Circle which commenced with a Welcome to Country and didgeridoo playing.



Doing it tough on the Sunshine Coast.



Family Law Pathways Forum, Bundaberg.

Northern Territory

Currently the Alliance has no presence in the Northern Territory. We are grateful to **John Burton** and **Sarah Mohamed** of **SNAICC – National Voice for our Children** for introductions to a number of NT services and groups. Funding permitting, we hope to arrange a speaking tour to the NT in 2025.

Kin Raising Kids Tasmania AGM

Mike and Meredith were invited speakers at the AGM of **Kin Raising Kids Tasmania**, a dynamic and determined group of kinship carer advocates in Tasmania. Kin Raising Kids have been successful in influencing the Tasmanian Government to pilot an informal kinship care support program in the North-West of the State, hopefully to be extended across Tasmania in due course. Meredith was honoured to become Patron of this group. Mike also provided a separate presentation about Grandcarers SA.



Kin Raising Kids Tasmania representatives.

We want your support!

If you aren't yet a Supporter of Kinship Alliance Australia, please consider joining by contacting meredith@kinshipalliance.org.au. Please encourage anyone you know who has an interest in this work to visit our website: kinshipalliance.org.au and make contact with Mike or Meredith.

Other presentations

Mike and Meredith gave a Keynote Speech at the **National Kinship, Permanent and Foster Care Conference** in Melbourne in August. This was an opportunity to raise awareness of Kinship Alliance Australia to a large audience of professionals working in the alternative care field.

Other presentations have included **Berry Street Kinship Carers Support Group** (West Gippsland Victoria), and the **University of Melbourne Social Work Department**. The latter was an opportunity to alert academic researchers to the lack of robust research evidence about kinship care in Australia, and the need to address the gaps in knowledge.



Friends of the Alliance

We are particularly grateful to a small group of **Friends of the Alliance** with particular expertise who have helped us develop Kinship Alliance Australia to this point, and are providing ideas for a two-year Strategic Plan. These people are listed on the front page of our website: kinshipalliance.org.au



Fundraising

We are also grateful for the ongoing financial support for our travel requirements from the **Reichstein Foundation** and the **Australian Communities Foundation**. There is considerably more work ahead to maintain the momentum of our advocacy and build the Alliance.

We continue to engage with philanthropic funds and make funding applications, one of which is for a speaking tour to the Northern Territory, and to Torres Strait Islander communities in the Strait and in mainland Queensland.

For the next steps in developing Kinship Alliance Australia, we need a medium size grant (\$80,000-\$100,000). We would really appreciate any ideas you may have about philanthropic funds with an interest in national advocacy for systemic change to benefit of kinship carers and the children in their care. If you have any suggestions or can provide

warm introductions, please contact Meredith at meredith@kinshipalliance.org.au or 0400 913 659.



Planning for the future

Mike and Meredith have been looking at the way forward for **Kinship Alliance Australia** in 2025 and 2026. We will have more to say about this in the next newsletter due in February 2025.

Happy Christmas!

We wish kinship carers and their families, and those working to provide support to them, all the best for the holiday season and for the New Year.

Meredith Kiraly and Mike Feszczak,
Co-Directors, Kinship Alliance Australia



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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