Dear

**A fairer future for grandchildren – improving outcomes for children in the full-time care of their grandparents**

I seek your support to acknowledge and recognise grandparent carers who have the fulltime care of their grandchildren. Grandparent care is the fastest growing form of out-of-home care for vulnerable children in Australia. This is due to issues such as drug and alcohol abuse, mental health, family violence, and incarceration. Grandparents step up to provide their grandchildren with the love and security they so desperately need.

To do this grandparents make many sacrifices including to their own physical and mental health. Many struggle to make ends meet and face financial hardship. They need better support to sustain themselves in this vital role. They are saving us as a community and government the financial and social costs of foster care.

Changes you can create include:

* Paying grandparent carers an ongoing allowance similar to foster care subsidy payments that are provided by State governments
* Making all grandparent carers exempt from participating in activity requirements (training, job seeking) for Newstart, not just those with court orders
* Having Family Tax Benefits – that currently follows the carer – follow the child’s residence. This would increase income and reduce family conflict
* Keeping the Foster Child Health Care Card free from an income-test
* Changing the income limits for Child Care Subsidy to allow working grandparents greater access to early education for their grandchildren. This is especially important for children who have experienced early childhood trauma
* Providing ‘Evidence of Care’ – creating an easy system of identification, recognising that the grandparent has responsibility for the child(ren), facilitating access to Medicare, Centrelink, education and other specialist services
* Identifying grandparent-headed families through the census to allow better data and identification of patterns. This would help make decisions about resources and services.

I support the ‘Call to Action for a Fairer Future for Grandchildren’ and hope you will also support grandparents and grandchildren during the upcoming election campaign.

Yours sincerely