

A growing issue

Laurilee McMichael

With 9500 New Zealand grandparents raising around 17,000 children, the lack of support for grandparents acting as primary carers is a growing issue.

Most children have come into their grandparent's care because of a traumatic incident or family breakdown.

"A lot of [the children] have got special needs, a lot of them are globally delayed and a lot of them are angry. Unfortunately they blame themselves for their parents not caring for them," Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Trust New Zealand founder Diane Vivian said during Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Awareness and Appeal Week.

Taupō Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Trust co-ordinator Viv Needham, who is also a sales representative for the *Taupo & Turangi Weekender*, says parenting a grandchild is not easy, but it is rewarding.

Viv has been raising grandson Corey for the last four years after he was uplifted from his mother due to family breakdown, and says it's frustrating that grandparents don't get access to the same support services and funding that foster carers get.

"The system at the moment is so unfair. We [grandparents] are doing a better job than some of the state-appointed caregivers, but we don't get the support, which places a lot of financial burden on grandparents — some of whom are pensioners."

The Interim Report released last month into Modernising Child Youth and Family by the Expert Review Panel appointed by the Minister for Social Development Anne Tolley, revealed that more than 60,000 children are notified to Child Youth and Family each year for concerns relating to abuse and neglect. However only three in 10 children were subject to the care and



NANA KNOWS BEST: Taupō grandmother Viv Needham who is raising her grandson Corey Scott, 11, says although parenting grandchildren isn't easy, it is very rewarding. 051115twgrg

protection intervention and support process and only one would end up in state care, with the rest placed back in the family — many of whom are grandparent carers where there is no eligibility or access to specialised state-funded support services to help children overcome trauma.

Labour Party social development spokeswoman Carmel Sepuloni says the lack of support for grandparents caring for grandchildren is a growing issue.

"Here you have people with very little support, or no financial support raising kids who often have multiple issues and they can't access simple things like the OSCAR subsidy during school holidays. They don't get access to the same entitlements that a biological parent might or a foster carer might. There needs to be some work done identifying the gaps in policy and looking at ways in which we can better support grandparents to raise grandkids."

■ For more information about Grandparents Raising Grandchildren Trust New Zealand visit www.grg.org.nz.