



The Woking Declaration on Kinship Care and the formation of Kinship International Network (KIN)

On 2nd-4th of October 2013, thirteen delegates drawn from five countries met in London to discuss kinship family care. The meeting was called to identify matters related to kinship care across countries and which should be addressed on an international basis.

Delegates confirmed their commitment to several shared beliefs about kinship care. First, that it is beneficial to children if, wherever possible, they are raised by a member of their extended family or friends, if their birth parents are unable to do so. Secondly, that agencies and governments across the world should work to provide programs and policy that empower and enable kinship carers to fulfil their role.

Purpose

Delegates agreed that it was time for international perspectives and action to support Kinship care families. They resolved to work together and with other organisations to:

- Promote kinfamily care since it has been very good outcomes for the children and is the only form of out-of-home-care that keeps the child within its biological family
- Highlight programs and research that document the outcomes of kinfamily care
- Advocate on behalf of kinfamily carers to ensure that their views are central in any discourse about Kinfamily care
- Support KIN members in their endeavours related to Kinship family care

The place of Kinship care families

A major concern of the delegates was that Kinship care was often not seen as part of the foster care, adoption and institutional care continuum.

Delegates agreed that kinship care is based on the biological family connection between carer and child, and therefore should be differentiated from other types of care where the biological connection does not exist.

UN Convention on the Rights of the Child

Delegates recognised the importance of the 1989 UN Convention on the Rights of the Child and resolved to align the work of KIN to its intent and articles.

Five issues of concern

Delegates identified the following issues for attention (references are to the relevant articles in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child as outlined in the appendix):

- The poverty and disadvantage that kinship carers often suffer, (Arts. 7, 8, 27)
- The need for systems supporting kinship care families to be better coordinated, particularly at a local level (Art. 7, 8, 20)
- The need to empower and enable kinship care families to be heard in public discourses (Art. 12)
- The need for advocates that assist kinship families to be better able to navigate the systems and find resources (Art. 20)
- The need for programs that assist kinship care families to overcome isolation (Art. 20)

Five "Convention" articles given priority

Delegates prioritised a number of clauses from the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child that impact on the work of kinship carers and that are in need of immediate attention:

- Article 12 - Respect for views of child
- Article 20 - Children deprived of family environment
- Article 27 - Child's right to adequate standard of living
- Article 07 - Birth registration, name, nationality and right to be cared for by parents
- Article 08 - Preservation of identity.

Founding members

The delegates at the meeting in London were practitioners supporting kinship families and researchers developing advice about the policy that should support kinship care families.

Australia

- **Anne McLeish** - Director, Grandparents Australia and Kinship Carers Victoria
- **Brian Babington** - CEO, Families Australia
- Naomi Whyley - Admin. Officer, Kinship Carers Victoria
- Juliet Williams - Consultant, Kinship Carers Victoria

Ireland

- **Valerie O'Brien** - Lecturer, University of Dublin

Netherlands

- Rob Van Patee - Director, Director Eigen Kracht Centrale

United Kingdom

- Andy Couldrick - CEO, Wokingham,
- Cathy Ashley - CEO, Kinship Care Alliance
- Elaine Farmer - Prof, Child/Family Welfare, Bristol University
- Shelly James - Kinship carer

United States of America

- **Cate Newbanks** - Director, National Kinship Alliance for Children
- Gale Burford - Director, Child Welfare Training, University of Vermont
- **Joan Vance** - KIN Care Specialist, University of Vermont

Secretariat and Steering committee

Delegates marked in bold type form the KIN Steering Committee and the KIN Secretariat at Grandparents Australia. Contact: **Anne McLeish**: director@grandparents.com.au