

# Love is not enough: Grumpy grandparents want childcare pay <sup>[1]</sup>

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## AVAILABILITY

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## EXCERPTS

For Christine Snelling, love is enough.

For almost 40 per cent of grandparents, though, it's not. They believe they deserve to be paid for looking after their grandchildren.

Ms Snelling – a 69-year-old retiree – spends her days chasing after an energetic six-year-old grandson. She packs lunches, does the morning school run, makes afternoon tea and then dinner.

Her daughter is a single mother, for whom paid childcare is out of reach.

Ms Snelling doesn't mind stepping in and last December moved into a granny flat on her daughter's Gisborne property, north of Melbourne, to make things a little easier.

"It's what I'm here for," she says.

For a long time, that's how most baby-boomer grandparents have felt.

But it seems love only goes so far for the generation whose retirement dreams have been hindered by their family ties.

Two in five Australian grandparents believe they should be paid for taking care of their grandchildren, new research shows.

One in four would like to provide less care than they do.

On average, grandparents are caring for each of their grandchildren for 16 hours each week.

Most say their lives revolve around their childcare commitments: 75 per cent of grandparents live closer to their children to help take care of the grandchildren; 58 per cent forfeit recreation; 42 per cent sacrifice travel; and 30 per cent change their work arrangements.

A survey commissioned by the Australian Seniors Insurance Agency shows more than 37 per cent of grandparents believe they should be paid for taking care of their grandchildren.

But it's likely that number is even higher, ASIA spokesman Simon Hovell said.

"There is a stigma around asking for money," Mr Hovell said. "It's reasonable to assume that there is a percentage of grandparents who would like to be paid, but feel uncomfortable asking for it."

Still, the vast majority of Australian grandparents – 84 per cent – say they care for their grandchildren "out of love".

The survey shows many Australians believe grandparents providing childcare free of charge is a "normal part" of how a family should operate. The older generation in particular feels that if their parents were able to "make do" in their day without pay, so should they.

It's just as well, because around 937,000 children in Australia are currently receiving care from their grandparents.

It's saving the country \$127.4 million each week in childcare costs.

That figure, however, is calculated at a rate of \$8.50 an hour – a fraction of what the vast majority of parents are paying for childcare.

Some countries pay grandparents to look after children in the same way nannies are paid, or allow the transfer of paid parental leave entitlements to grandparents so new parents can return to work earlier. In the UK the issue was addressed years ago, with the creation of special welfare payments for grandparents who care for a child under the age of 12.

Last year, the Australian government's National Commission of Audit recommended grandparents be eligible for a childcare payment.

The proposal was also raised by independent senators Glenn Lazarus and Jacqui Lambie as part of a crossbench wish-list in exchange for supporting the federal government's \$3.2 billion families package.

But the suggestion was rebuffed by Treasurer Scott Morrison who said: "For those who are doing the normal thing like my parents do and a lot of peoples' parents do then, no, the government isn't considering that."

-reprinted from Sydney Morning Herald

**Region:** Australia and New Zealand <sup>[3]</sup>

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