



Ross Henderson and Kin Raising Kids Tas.

Following the passing of Ross on the 15th December 2024.



My name is Frank Tyers and the first time I encountered Ross Henderson was at a meeting of the then Government Advisory Committee (GAC) back in 2010.

This GAC Group was made up of representation from each of the Tasmanian Regions (South, North and North/West) to advise government on needs and supports for Grandparents Raising Grandchildren (GRG) around Tasmania.

The meetings were chaired by the late John Ward who was one of three delegates from South, I had been nominated as one of the delegates for the North at that time and Ross Henderson, Kath Milburn and Wendy Roberts were those nominated to represent the North/West region. The GAC concept was developed following the 2003 government inquiry into GRG.

An article published October 25, 2010, in the Advocate newspaper depicted the groups frustration carers were experiencing and included:

"It's about time the government honoured the recommendation from the 2003 inquiry. "They said in the first five of the 28 recommendation to give grandparents raising grandchildren equal financial support with foster carers. "It is discrimination, there is nothing else to call it." Ms Milburn isn't alone. When she first began caring for her grandchildren she searched for a support network. Upon finding nothing, Ms Milburn created 'Save Our Sanity' for other grandparents in a similar situation along the Coast for social support.

'Save our Sanity' was starting to strengthen, meeting regularly at individual's homes on a completely voluntary basis. On the 20th June 2011 Ross and his extended family featured on Today Tonight, an Australian current affairs television program produced by the Seven Network. The link to this program is:

<https://youtu.be/9GnL04XuUk8?si=EMF7FtN4eLV2bylk> Titled 'Incredible Grandparent' and broadcast: 20 June 2011 on Today Tonight.

This show depicts one of the massive advantages for those in kinship care as compared to foster care. These kids are able to acquire many more life skills and further schooling.



By the end of 2012, the Uniting Church, having obtained a small grant from the Tasmanian Government, had become very supportive of grandparents raising grandchildren, acknowledging the inequity of carers that existed right around the State. Support groups were trying to establish in all three regions, however it was apparent the NW stood above the South and the North.

Thanks to the efforts of Ross and Judy Henderson, Wendy and Derrick Roberts and my wife and I, having shifted back to the NW Coast that year, a new group was created calling themselves Grandparents Raising Grandchildren – North West (GRG-NW).

Some of the Uniting Grant money was used to employ a part time coordinator, Christine Jeffries. This Tasmanian Government funding was relatively short lived, however it was temporally supplemented with funding made available from the Federal Government through Syd Sidebottom. When this funding dried up the Uniting Churches along the NW Coast rallied together to continue to support the retention of GRG-NW, in whatever way they can, as they still do today. Christine relinquished her role some eight years ago and Debbie Emmett has excelled in the coordinator role of GRG-NW since.

Many of the Save our Sanity Group on the coast have since passed on.

Ross, utilising his advocating skills gained over a lifetime of lobbying, parliamentarians particularly, helped instigate a very detailed submission in 2014 to the Senate Inquiry into Grandparents Raising Grandchildren. Several submissions, private and otherwise were presented from Tasmania's NW Coast, but GRG-NW were invited to expand more specifically to a panel of Senators to directly promote their concerns. This was a massive achievement and a real credit to Ross' ability.

Even though a few of the recommendations from this Senate Inquiry were considered Federally, many were handballed back to the States for consideration and implementation, in the main they have been overlooked and not acted on. This being consistent with the previous 2003 State Inquiry.

The Formation of Kin Raising Kids Tasmania Inc.

The grandparents raising grandchildren were becoming increasingly frustrated with the lack of action particularly from the State Government who have responsibility for Child Safety.

One small windfall presented by Labor Minister, Lyn Thorpe, was where recognition as a carer could be acknowledged if endorsed by a DHHS Regional Manager.

This was very short lived when a change of government put a stop to this initiative.



The GAC Group concept had fallen over due to ageing of participants (John Ward, a significant driver, was just burnt-out and unwell), many no longer caring and the government representatives of various departments were disinterested or had career path changes and no longer available. GRG no longer had a State based support group. Each of the Regional Support Groups for Grandparent Carers were either fading away or not able to lobby parliamentarians because their coordinators were employed and bound by company ethics.

In 2017 a group of grandparent carers, initially calling themselves 'Kincarers', but having to change this to 'Kin Raising Kids' Tasmania (KRK), evolved out of GRG-NW, to lobby, advocate and represent where practical, all Grandparent, Kinship and Kith Carers, both formal and informal, from all around Tasmania.

The original committee was:

Ross Henderson – President.

Frank Tyers – Secretary.

Judy Henderson – Treasurer.

Tony Walters – Vice President.

Wendy Roberts – Publicity Officer.

Lee Courto – Committee.

Garry Love – Committee.

John Ward - Committee.

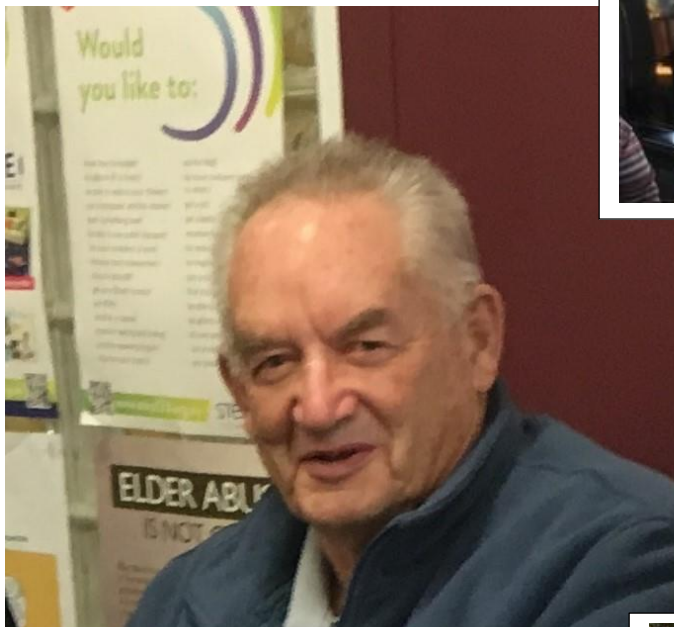
Derrick Roberts - Committee.

Under the leadership of Ross, KRK was soon established as a representative group for kinship carers in Tasmania. Meeting with politicians, both State and Federal and other like-minded organisations, but never losing sight of its grass roots, those many carers doing it tough. Ross was one of the first to hold up his hand to be included in appointments and meetings.

KRK celebrated its registration with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profit Commission and the Australian Taxation Office as a Not-for-Profit Organisation or Charity. This has opened many doors not the least of business houses being able to sponsor or donate. Also welcomed as it assists with the endeavours to put pressure on politicians to recognise grandparent and other kinship carers.



Even after Ross had served his time as president, he remained on the Committee right up to the recent AGM held in October, where he was nominated and became KRK's first Life Member.



Mark Morrissey @MB_Morriss · 10s

Grandparent and Kin carers (Kin Raising Kids, Tasmania) appreciate the support of Senator Anne Urquhart and Hon Justine Keay MP, who joined the discussions on strategies to better meet needs of informal kin carers and the children they care for. [#afairerfutureforgrandchildren](#)





Three weeks ago, Ross took young grandson, Donnie's Subaru WRX for an errand to Devonport. Now this very flashy vehicle c/w sporty wheels (a true collector's car), is a fully spec'd and modified rally vehicle. The shockers stuffed, tyres very sus, steering, suspension and numerous other concerns desperately needing attention. A **'project'** for Donnie on his semester break this coming Christmas whilst home from university.

It was around dusk when two policewomen pulled him over on the Bass Highway, not that far from home doing 130km/hr.

Just a little over the speed limit.

Ross said he just couldn't see the speedo as the glaring sun didn't help but I didn't want to tell them that, he said.

He then said as they walked up closer to the driver side door, they both burst into laughter and continued giggling and cackling.

They were obviously amazed at the sight of this 86-year-old man 'hooning' in this rather attention-grabbing rally car all by himself.

Ross said he was just told to get home asap without speeding.

Still laughing and they didn't even book me.

Ross has always been a strong advocate particularly for things he knew to be wrong. He had a passion for kinship carers and continually wanted to remain involved to help correct disadvantages and inequities within the child safety system.

This last twelve months were noticeably more difficult for Ross Henderson.

His ailing hearing had become his biggest disadvantage particularly when accompanying a deputation meeting with parliamentary or government officials.

Technology was also a challenge with the computer not always doing what he wanted it to do. Donnie was often being called upon to help him navigate computer software and/or hardware. He would attract a few smiles with the headgear he wore during more recent online TEAMS meetings, but it worked and that was all that mattered.

Having always been intentionally conscious of body fitness. Ross regularly sailed both competitively and non-competitively, he regularly attended a gym, went bike riding and shared time with his family camping, fishing and general exploring etc. This last couple of years he spent much time building a very unique slide-on camper to fit his new utility.

Ross Henderson was himself a very unique individual and KRK will miss his wisdom and advice. We thank you for all you have done for Grandparents and Kinship Carers.

VALE ROSS HENDERSON.

Frank Tyers.

17th December 2024.