

# Grandparent 'child care' a win across generations

June 7 2022

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As parents struggle to juggle work and family commitments, early childhood education experts are encouraging Australians to acknowledge the important role of grandparents as critical caregivers in society.

With an [aging population](#) and challenges with Australia's childcare system, the University of South Australia's Emeritus Professor Marjory Ebbeck says strong grandparent-child relationships can deliver reciprocal benefits for Australian families.

Investigating intergenerational relationships in Australia, Singapore and Hong Kong, a new study led by Prof Ebbeck contrasts [cultural differences](#) between family life in Asian and Western societies.

She says while cultural and societal values differ across countries, the wisdom and knowledge that grandparents can share is universal.

"In many Asian cultures, grandparents are very integrated into [family life](#), often living with their children and playing an active role in their grandchildren's education and development," Prof Ebbeck says.

"While this immediately suggests benefits for working families—in the form of potential childcare—it also delivers significant value to grandparents by boosting their self-worth, social connections and wellness.

"In return, children enjoy a close and respectful relationship with grandparents, with the opportunity to learn more about their family culture and stories.

"In Singapore and Hong Kong there is still a strong Confucian tradition of filial piety and respect for the elderly, and this respect can lead to grandparents having a stronger sense of identity and purpose. These increased intergenerational interactions also provide more [social connections](#) for grandparents.

"In contrast, through necessity, many older Australians spend their later years away from their families with many of them in residential health

care facilities.

"As a result, they're often lonely and less involved with the grandchildren."

Prof Ebbeck says close intergenerational ties could support both Australia's oldest and youngest citizens.

"The grandparent-grandchild relationship isn't a new phenomenon, but an increase in women in the workforce, the high cost of childcare and a range of other factors have seen many grandparents become critical caregivers," Prof Ebbeck says.

"In an aging society, where more parents are working longer, we must find ways to create synergies across generations."

**More information:** Marjory Ebbeck et al, Intergenerational Relationships: Stories from Selected Countries in the Pan Pacific Region, *Intergenerational Bonds* (2022). [DOI: 10.1007/978-3-030-81965-1\\_9](https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-81965-1_9)

Provided by University of South Australia

Citation: Grandparent 'child care' a win across generations (2022, June 7) retrieved 7 June 2024 from <https://phys.org/news/2022-06-grandparent-child.html>

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