

Media Release

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Grandparents helping make children smarter

New research has confirmed what many Australian families already know – grandparents are unsung heroes in the community and they also have an influential role in the development of their grandchildren.

Research commissioned by the Australian Government - *Growing up in Australia: The Longitudinal Study of Australian Children* - measures children's physical, learning and cognitive development plus social and emotional functioning.

Its findings show that children aged between three and 19 months who are cared for by family and friends as well as their parents, have higher learning scores than those who just receive care from primary guardians.

Much of this care is provided by grandmothers and grandfathers.

Grandparents are a strong support base for many families. Not only do they lend a hand with day to day family life by being there to care for children, they are also an important influence on their grandchildren's development.

Spending time with their grandchildren, reading to them, cooking together, taking them shopping are the simple, everyday interactions grandparents undertake that can make such a difference to children growing up.

The research also shows that children's learning and development is linked with other family factors including being read to more than three days a week, making reading an enjoyable experience and having children's books in the house.

While access to a computer at home can be positive, overall social and physical outcomes decrease as time spent watching television increases.

The upcoming ABC1 television series, *Life at 3*, has been made in conjunction with *Growing up in Australia*. The series is a Screen Australia National Interest Program in association with Heiress Films.

Life at 3, which follows the popular *Life at 1* production, goes to air on October 2 and 9 at 8.30pm on ABC1.

It tracks the lives of the children featured in the first series and reflects the research findings, with a focus on obesity and bad behaviour.

Growing up in Australia is the first comprehensive national study of Australian children over time.

It began in 2004 with more than 10,000 families with children agreeing to take part. Two groups of around 5,000 children were formed – one with infants aged 3 to 19 months and the other with children aged around 4 to 5 years.

Each child and their family are revisited for interviews every two years and the Australian Government is using this research to help deliver policies that are in

the best interests of children.

The report is available at:

http://www.fahcsia.gov.au/internet/facsinternet.nsf/research/prps-prps_36.htm

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