

Grandparents

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As grandparents, you naturally want the best for your grandchildren. You want them to be happy, well educated and to have every chance at a good life.

You have no doubt worked long and hard to provide a good education for your own children and are therefore puzzled and afraid when you hear that your grandchildren will not be going to school. You are immediately afraid that they will be left behind, lack future opportunities and turn into misfits

You may not know much about homeschooling or if you do, like most of the population you connect it with alternative living and maybe weird, isolated cults. Homeschooling has been around a long time, since the 1970's and has been gaining in popularity ever since. There has been a huge surge of interest in it in the past five years. This is mainly due to the many well-researched reports from top academic institutions world-wide that have found it to be a highly successful form of education – in fact – they can find no fault with it either academically or socially. It has literally gone from the extreme to the mainstream as far as educational methods go. This, coupled with the very serious issue of bullying in schools, has attracted many parents to the safe learning environment it affords their children.

Your concerns as grandparents are naturally well founded. You were brought up in an entirely different era, with an entirely different focus on

education. Not that education is not important these days, it certainly is, but in the past education was held up as the way out of the depression years and the pre and post war years. This country needed white collar workers and families that had struggled for many years just to survive wanted more for their children. Governments encouraged young people into tertiary studies by abolishing university fees - the country needed to grow and families were swept up in the priorities of the era, working even harder to ensure that their children made it through secondary school and into university for a chance at a good career and ultimately a well-paid job ensuring a comfortable life.

This has been the mind set in the western world since the post war years. We don't even think about it anymore. Families work hard, often both parents for most of their working lives, going without life's luxuries for themselves to send their children to the best schools they can afford. This is what you know and this is how you have brought up your family. So what has happened – what has changed? Why is it that your family suddenly doesn't want this for their children – your grandchildren?

The truth is that life has changed on many levels during the past 50 years. The economy is much wealthier and the hardships of the past have slipped into our history books. The children, your children that were born into this new era, have never known hardship. For them the ride has been an easy one. They have grown up in an era where they haven't had to focus on survival and their minds have been free to have a good look around at life. They have passed through times of great social change with an emphasis on free thinking

and of choosing a life path that is right for them individually. The ability to have free choice in life is very empowering and their choices have expanded to include the raising of their own families.

Education is not the same as it was in your day. Academic standards have been greatly lowered in schools and while schoolyards have never been pleasant places, these days many parents feel that they have become very unsafe. Bullying, while always the seamier side of school life, has become a major problem that no amount of anti-bullying programs can come close to eradicating. Your children are looking at all this with new eyes and they are starting to ask, “Why does education have to be this way?”

They are also acknowledging their own hurts and failings in the schoolyard as children and thinking “I really don't want my children to suffer in this way” There has to be something better.

Your children have also grown up in the era of mass communication. We are no longer isolated both in a personal sense or a physical sense. The internet is becoming as common as the telephone and brings into our homes all the knowledge we can possibly want and use. Any one of us today, including our children, can enhance their knowledge in subjects as diverse as their imaginations. Education is no longer restricted to the schoolyard – it is freely available whether on-line or through the multitude of grade level work-books that can be purchased anywhere from the post office to educational bookshops.

Your children, as parents, would have done plenty of research about home education before choosing

it for their children. It has a lot going for it on many levels. It is attractive from the educational sense in that families can decide what they wish to learn and how they intend to go about it. It is attractive from the safety level in that parents can provide a safe, secure and family-friendly environment in which their children can learn and grow without the physical and mental stress of the schoolyard. It is also attractive from the spiritual level and it is this level that it is most profound in its beneficial qualities.

It has always been legal in Australia to teach your children at home but until the brave souls took the step of removing their children from school in the 1970's no-one probably thought it was possible. I have no doubt that through the long years of compulsory schooling there have been a certain percentage of parents who would have loved to keep their children at home. You might have been one of them and why shouldn't you have been? They were your children after all, yours to raise, to comfort, to read to, walk with, laugh with and most of all, share the values that you consider are important. These are the reasons that many parents are realising are just as important as, if not more than, the academic reasons. If a child is allowed to grow and learn at their own pace, within the loving security of their own family, then they will grow up to be strong and confident young people capable of anything they set their minds to.

You, as grandparents, can play a huge role in your grandchildren's lives. One of the sad facts about our society today is that the young and old seem to be segregated most of the time and these are just the two generations who should spend a lot of time together. Throughout history many societies have

existed where families have all lived and worked together for a common goal. In such families, it is mostly the older generation who teach the young. They have gathered so much wisdom and knowledge over time that they are the best guides of all. You have the chance to really share your grandchild's years of growing up. There are hours for fishing, sewing, reading, chatting about issues important to both of you, travelling, laughing and crying.

Make the most of it. The benefits to you both will be everlasting.



Grandparents



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