



Geoff Lee

Minister for Skills and Tertiary Education

Acting Minister for Sport, Multiculturalism, Seniors and Veterans

MEDIA RELEASE

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DEVOTED GRANDFATHER TAKES TOP ACCOLADE

A 56 year old man from Raymond Terrace who has devoted over a decade to advocating for children with rare diseases is the 2019 NSW Grandparent of the Year.

Chris Walker's two grandsons Jordan and Logan were born with an extremely rare disease affecting the small intestine's ability to absorb nutrition.

Acting Minister for Seniors Geoff Lee said Mr Walker's fight to increase awareness around rare diseases was an incredible story of determination and resilience.

"Mr Walker has persevered through some tough times and his campaign to improve the lives of not only his grandchildren but other kids is truly remarkable," Lee said.

"The NSW Grandparent of Year Awards recognise and celebrate our wonderful grandparents, grand-friends and kin carers who give so much to communities."

Mr Walker has been fundraising, lobbying, running workshops and delivering keynote speeches.

"I was humbled and shocked to win this year's NSW Grandparent of the Year Award," Mr Walker said.

"Living on a drip is extremely hard going. All the work I do is to provide a better life for my grandchildren and other children who are living with these rare diseases."

The 2019 Grandparents Day Photography Competition provided judges with a tough choice between some brilliant entries. Natarsha Camilleri from Minchinbury won the Student Category award and Rebecca Hilton Brown from Orange won the Open Category prize. www.grandparentsday.nsw.gov.au/photography-competition

NSW Grandparents Day is being held on Sunday, 27 October 2019. For more info on events taking place across the State visit: www.grandparentsday.nsw.gov.au

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Note to editor:

Details of the NSW Grandparent of the Year Award finalists are outlined below:

- **Chris Walker (NSW Grandparent of the Year Winner)** – Chris Walker, grandfather to three from Raymond Terrace was named NSW Grandparent of the Year. Two of Chris' grandsons were born with X linked chronic intestinal pseudo obstruction, an extremely rare disease that affects the small intestine's ability to absorb nutrition. It is believed that they are the only two people in Australia with this condition. Chris has become an advocate for the boys and all children living with rare diseases. This work has spanned 10 years with Chris fundraising, lobbying the Government, organising workshops and delivering keynote addresses. Notably, Chris organised a symposium (education workshop) for consumers, carers and providers of Parenteral Nutrition for intestinal failure which is now delivered annually by AuSPEN ASM. This is the only consumer workshop hosted by a professional society anywhere in the world.

- **Jenny Davies (NSW Grandparent of the Year Finalist)** – Jenny Davies from Springwood has been a full-time carer for her granddaughter for a number of years. In 2017, Jenny set up the 'Raising Kin Support Group' for grandparents, relatives and kinship carers who have full-time care of a child relative. It is the only support group of its kind in the Blue Mountains and provides an essential service and welcoming environment for many local carers looking after loved ones.

- **Chris Haskard (NSW Grandparent of the Year Finalist)** – Chris Haskard from East Maitland cares for her two young grandchildren, both of whom have special needs, while working as a Palliative Care Community Nurse. In between being a mum, a wife, nurse and grandmother, Chris is an active member of her local church group, volunteering as treasurer and teaching Sunday school. She is a beloved member of her community who means the world to her colleagues, patients and family.