

**Robert and Moira Christensen - The Joy of being a Grandparent (written by Moira Christensen)**

*It is said that grandparents have a lifetime of experience behind them, bringing a unique and special love, deep understanding and wise guidance to their grandchildren. This is so true, as we as children, grew up in loving homes with grandparents around us to regale us with their own life story.*

We are the parents of two children, Michelle and Anthony, and the grandparents of five adorable grandchildren, Luc, Gabby, Connor, Georgia and Emma.

As Michelle and her husband Darren live in Ipswich, we were always on hand to look after their children when needed. They are blessed with two children, Luc, born March 2000 and Gabby born October 2003.

Being a grandparent means being on hand day and night to answer the call to babysit – as Luc was our first grandchild, it was all new to us, and we relished in the fact that we were wanted again to care for, and most importantly, play with their child. We could impart all the old games that we played not only when we were growing up, but the games that we played with our children. Of course at times it could be a bit scary, as Michelle and Darren were entrusting us with their treasured child, and we took this responsibility very seriously.

Gabby came along about two and a half years later, and now we had two little cherubs to care for, play with, and to keep safe and sound till their mum and dad came home. The call of “Grandma” or “Grandad” was a familiar sound when we were looking after them, and we thoroughly enjoyed every minute of it. Bob took over the racing car challenges with Luc, I was the Grandma who became very good at dressing dollies to play in her Barbie house. Gabby was always interested in cooking at Grandma’s house, and we have photos in our albums of Grandma and Gabby making lamingtons, with Gabby covered in chocolate and coconut, combined with lots of laughs along the way. Cherished memories!!!!

The years rolled on, and as Bob had retired, and I was still working, he answered the “Grandad” call to pick up the children from school, always stopping at the bakery for a treat. The children remember those days as “the special treats that Grandad gave them”. He treasures those memories too.

Christmas was always held at Grandma and Grandad’s house, and we thoroughly enjoyed buying far too many Christmas presents for the children, and making sure all their special treats were there for them on that day. As everyone knows, it is a grandparent’s responsibility to spoil their grandchildren!!

Our son, Anthony and his wife Tracyann, were both in the air force, and every couple of years they were moving to a new town. So when their children were born, it was always a plane trip a couple of times a year to see them. Connor was born in

November, 2007, with Georgia joining the family in June 2010 and Emma coming along in September 2013. We were there for their christenings, which were a wonderful family gathering and we always made sure we slotted in a couple of visits a year to see them in wherever they were stationed. Although we did not see them often in their early years, they are our treasured grandchildren, and the times we spent with them were very special to us.

In January, 2019 Anthony was transferred to Ipswich, and we could not contain our joy in realising that we could now see all our children and grandchildren on a much more regular basis. So it was back to enjoying the fun of spending time with our younger grandchildren, being able to look after them on school holidays, and enjoying Christmas together as a whole family. So again, the cries of “Grandma” and “Grandad” were shouted through the house by the younger grandchildren, and we were again enjoying our grandparent duties, listening to their chatter as they were making boxes out of paddle pop sticks, gluing and sticking pictures in books, and sifting through Grandma and Grandad’s toy boxes to find that something special to play with.

One of their favourite things to do with us is water bomb fights, and they delight in seeing how many water bombs they can aim, and actually hit, their grandparents. We always seemed to dodge them, somehow, but they still have great fun in getting very wet very quickly!!!!

Connor plays the guitar, and was thrilled when grandad bequeathed his guitar to him, which is probably about forty-five years old. It sits alongside his own guitar at home, and he plays it often, comfortable in the knowledge that Grandad also strummed the guitar in his younger days. So for Bob, being a grandfather was made that much more special in that he can give Connor his guitar and know it will be a treasured instrument for his grandson.

During the recent school holidays, we were asked to look after Connor, Georgia and Emma, and it was, of course a very firm **YES**. Connor bought his guitar, and entertained us with his music, learning new songs from the internet, a new thing for these older grandparents. The girls gathered around comfortably and chatted about music and songs.

Georgia and Emma know that cakes or scones are a firm favourite of Grandad. I remember vividly being in my mum’s kitchen, where she always had a cake or scones baking, so it is a pleasure to pass on those recipes to all our grandchildren, in the knowledge that they will continue the traditions of home baking.

When the grandchildren are at our house, the kitchen is always a busy place with the wonderful scent of freshly made patty cakes or scones. So when Grandad declares it is time for some freshly made cakes, Georgia and Emma are busy in the kitchen filling the cake tins with chocolate and strawberry patty cakes, with lots of icing, made in readiness for morning tea. Sprinkles seem to be the way to pretty up their

cakes, and a quick whip around with the vacuum cleaner is always a must as there seems to be more sprinkles on the floor than on the cakes. All good fun and such wonderful memories!! And Grandad declared they were the best cakes he had ever tasted!!!!

As Grandad is an avid gardener, our garden is full of flowers, vegetables and fruit trees. It is always a pleasure as a grandparent to watch the younger grandchildren Connor, Georgia and Emma having fun in picking the flowers or tomatoes, lettuces, lemons and limes from Grandad's garden. Grandad gave them have their own garden pots which they planted seeds in, and they watch with wonder as these little seeds turn into flowers!! The pots end up with a wonderful sprinkling of colour and a few fairies adorning them.

They all gather around Grandad and listen to his instructions on how to plant the seeds, and know they will always have a pot or two of plants with fairies in them to check on every time they visit us. It is such a pleasure to see our younger grandchildren wandering around our back yard, checking out the vegetables – sometimes pulling the vegies out of the ground just to see how they are growing, and them putting them back in, but that is okay, it makes us laugh to see the enjoyment in their faces when they pull freshly grown carrots from the ground!!

Our eldest grandson, Luc, is now an adult; we waved him off on his first day of school, and had the honour of seeing him on his last day of school, where he took part in the "Roll of Honour" run through his school grounds.

We ask ourselves - where did the years go, but we only need to wander through our photo albums to see that the many times we spent with Luc from when he was a babe in arms to that last day of school. He has become the man his parents and grandparents are proud of, with old fashioned family values of respect and love for his family. Although we do not see much of him these days, the text often appears asking if we can take him to work or pick him up, and of course, we always say **YES**, as it allows us to keep in touch with him and catch up on what has been happening in his life.

Gabby, our eldest granddaughter, is a very grown up eighteen year old, just finishing grade twelve, and working three jobs to afford her busy social life and the running of her car. Gabby always had a special bond with her grandad, and he was thrilled when she said she wanted to have her formal photos in "Grandad's" garden, it was such an honour as a grandparent to know that on her very special day, her special photos were taken in "Grandma and Grandad's" garden amongst the trees and flowers. It was such a proud day for both us as grandparents, and her parents, to see her blossom into a beautiful young woman.

So, what does being a grandparent mean to us? It means being there for our grandchildren whenever they may need us. Our photo albums are full of wonderful times...one such photo is of Luc presenting me with a funny knitted cap on mother's

day when he was about five years old, and the joy on his face as I put it on my head. His grandad was always teasing him about what his birthday presents were, and he would always say...a bag of worms. Luc somehow found a big ceramic worm, and had great fun in presenting it to grandad as his birthday present!!!!

Since Anthony and Tracyann have been back in Ipswich, we as grandparents have had the opportunity to spend more time with our younger grandchildren, Connor Georgia and Emma, and our photo albums are bursting with photos of the children, running around the garden throwing water bombs at anyone they can see, checking out the vegies and flower pots, Connor playing his guitar and the girls busy in the kitchen making cakes and scones. Precious memories!!.

We believe the photos tell the story of what it means for us to be grandparents. We have hundreds of photos of birthdays, christenings, family gatherings, and in many photos, there is Bob and I standing proudly around our children and grandchildren. So for us, it is an honour to be a grandparent, and for our grandchildren to let us into their lives, and be part of their future.