

**1 in 4**  
grandparent households  
are led by a single  
grandparent  
Source: ABS Census, 2021.



## An impossible Christmas choice

FOR GRANDPARENTS LIKE DEBRA, RAISING GRANDCHILDREN SOLO ON A PENSION, THE LEAD-UP TO CHRISTMAS MEANS CHOOSING BETWEEN CELEBRATION AND SCHOOL ESSENTIALS

### 'EVERY KID DESERVES TO HAVE A HAPPY EDUCATION'

**DEBRA**  
Grandmother to Tavish and Emmett, two school students supported by The Smith Family

When Debra's grandsons started getting new school supplies through The Smith Family, they'd leave everything in the packaging just a little longer.

"They just love to get home and have something new to open," Debra says. "a bit like a Christmas present."

It's understandable, given that for years, presents weren't a sure thing. Nor were school supplies.

#### The trickiest time of year

Debra, who lives on the south coast of NSW, has been raising Tavish, 10, and Emmett, 14, since birth. Both boys have disabilities.

Living on a pension while trying to cover uniforms, bags

and books meant calculations other families never consider. "Many times the answer was to go to the clothing pool for the second-hand stuff."

About one in four grandparent households nationwide are led by a single grandparent – parenting again on fixed incomes. "The job's that much harder if you're older."

Christmas time compounds an already impossible squeeze: the 25<sup>th</sup> arrives with its expectations, and something has to give.

#### An unexpected gift

In 2016, the boys' school told Debra about The Smith Family's *Learning for Life* program, which provides financial support for

almost 72,000 students across Australia. It helps cover school essentials and offers access to programs focused on developing literacy, numeracy and careers knowledge and skills, as well as assistance from a dedicated Smith Family team member. The boys were matched with a sponsor, and when that first support came in? "They thought they were rich!" Debra says. "It gives them independence – they have that much more appreciation for everything."

They now choose their bags and pick out their own shoes, and school supplies have finally stopped competing with presents. For Christmas, their sponsor

## CHRISTMAS TIME COMPOUNDS AN ALREADY IMPOSSIBLE FINANCIAL SQUEEZE: THE 25<sup>TH</sup> ARRIVES WITH ITS MANY EXPECTATIONS, AND SOMETHING HAS TO GIVE



Opposite page and this page: Debra and her grandchildren, Tavish (left) and Emmett (right).

gifted them vouchers so they could go present shopping for one another – and grandma too.

For Debra, *Learning for Life* lifted an enormous weight. "I'd stress over the cost of living alone – just putting food on the table is struggle enough."

Both boys now have perfect school attendance. Tavish is excelling at maths and science, the self-proclaimed "pro gamer" of the family. Emmett creates comics inspired by *Dog Man* and *Captain Underpants*. At school, he received a special award for his drawings.

"It means so much that they're loving school, and that they go to bed happy," Debra reflects. "Every kid deserves to have a happy education, without having to worry."



### Give a gift that lasts beyond Christmas Day

This festive season, sponsor a child through The Smith Family, and help Australian students experiencing disadvantage access the essentials they need to thrive in the coming school year.

Become a sponsor today at  
[thesmithfamily.com.au](https://thesmithfamily.com.au)

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sponsor a child

