**More Deadbeat Granddads Failing To Make Birthday Payments**

Randwick, NSW—At 7:34 p.m. on Monday, two police officers forcibly entered Room 3B of the Sunwood Assisted Living complex, and, after waking him up, took Randwick’s No. 1 deadbeat granddad into custody—79-year-old Roy Ehrengruber, who owes over $480 in grandchild birthday-card money.

Sam Conklin, 10, has not received a birthday payment in eight years.

According to figures from the Department Of Child And Family Services, Ehrengruber is part of a growing problem: 58 percent of all septuagenarians with grandchildren willfully neglect or underestimate their moral obligation to provide small, cash-only birthday stipends.

According to DCFS administrator Mike Leavitt, millions of Australian children go dangerously under-gifted as a result.

"We see it over and over: In the first five to seven years of grandchild support, these men generally make well-timed and generous payments," Leavitt said. "Eventually, however, they start arriving later and later, sometimes several months late, and even occasionally addressed to the wrong child. Over the years, the cards contain less and less money, until they stop coming at all."

The report indicated that deadbeat granddads nationwide owe a collective $23 million in two dollar coins. This figure does not include the extra amount of outstanding one dollar coins that need to be recouped, which officials estimate at just over $425,000.

"Without adequate support from their grandfathers, the burden of children's birthday spending money is unfairly placed on parents, aunts and uncles, and even the kids themselves," Leavitt said.

Sally Howicker of the Grandchild Support Bureau of Randwick’s Department Of Social Services said the Ehrengruber case is a "devastating" example of grandparental neglect.

"Mr. Ehrengruber's youngest grandson turned 10 six months ago, yet has received less than two dollars since he was a toddler, forcing him to save five and ten cent coins in a non-interest-earning piggy bank," Howicker said. "For over a year now, he's been struggling to save enough money to buy the new bike he wants, but he's still $39 away."

"This is the time in life when a boy needs his grandpa most," Howicker added.

Despite high-profile cases like Ehrengruber's, the study found that 32 percent of deadbeat granddads acknowledge and contribute to their grandchildren's birthdays. What distinguishes them from responsible grandfathers, however, is that they consistently fail to keep up with inflation.

"Tens of thousands of Australian 7-year-olds get two $1 coins for their birthday, instead of a much more realistic $20 note," Leavitt said. "Some even receive a card, but no money. What kind of world do these grandfathers live in?"

State welfare authorities say that tracking down deadbeat granddads can be extremely difficult.

"We've tried to contact these grandfathers, but it's nearly impossible, since some of them go months without communicating with friends and family, living the easy life in far-away places like the Gold Coast," said Sonya Lucas, head of Randwick’s Department Of Human Services. "And standard enforcement procedures such as suspending driver's licenses are often ineffective, as many of theirs have long since expired—in some cases decades ago."

Some evasive tactics are more cunning, said Howicker, who has helped apprehend deadbeat granddads for nearly 10 years.

"Many seem to think their grandchildren ignore them except when they want something, or that since they had to work hard for everything they earned, why should their grandchildren get a free lunch," Howicker said. "Others even go so far as to blame their negligent behaviour on so-called 'senior moments.'"

While politicians across the country have proposed garnishing deadbeat granddads' pensions, Social Security payments, and income earned from scratch lottery tickets and race track winnings, only Randwick and Waverley have put such laws in place. However, they are not always strictly enforced, and a large number of deadbeat granddads still manage to evade authorities.

What's more, according to Leavitt, the problem of nonpayment has stretched beyond birthdays. The report noted a similar failure to compensate for graduations, Christmas, Easter, a good report card, and even family visits.

"And to think that some of these men have the nerve to call themselves 'World's Greatest Grandpa,'" Leavitt said.