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Age

Me, Amelie, Nanny Irene and Gerold with Luca - we all go out together



WE ADOPTED a grandma

It was a priceless moment. Seeing my two-year-old daughter Amelie playing happily with my mum and dad brought a smile to my face. 'I wish she got to do this more often,' I sighed to my husband Gerold, 40. But unfortunately, Amelie rarely got to see her grandparents, Horst and Ursula. That's because they live more than 16,000kms away from our home - in Germany. Gerold and I had studied in Australia when we were younger, so after falling in love we decided to stay to build our lives together. We were happily settled in Sydney with Amelie, now five, and another bub on the way. It was a very exciting time, but it made me think of Mum and Dad back home. And when Gerold and I headed back to Germany for a visit, I so wished Amelie had more time to feel the joy that

My mission to find a gran began - but there was one problem

only a grandparent can bring. Some of my most treasured memories from my childhood involved my grandma Anna. Seeing her almost every day, we baked cakes and played board games together. Even though she passed away 23 years ago, I've never forgotten those precious moments. And that's why, after returning to Australia and welcoming a son, Luca, now three, I decided to act. I'd heard of several schemes in Europe where people could volunteer to become grandparents for families who had lost or lived apart from theirs. It was just what my kids needed. So my mission to find a gran began - but there was one problem. I wasn't able to find a similar scheme in Australia.

Frustrated, I decided to take matters into my own hands. 'I'm going to create my own website,' I said. 'To help put grandparents in touch with families in need.' For weeks I spent hours at my computer, working on my site - www.findagrandparent.org.au. I set it up so all of the grandparents must go through a criminal check - it had to be a safe way for people to connect. Then, a few weeks before the site went live, a lady called Irene registered. She happened to live a few doors down from us and popped in to say hello. She was so friendly, offering me advice and playing with the kids in the backyard. Could she be the gran I'd been looking for? She was! Over the next year Irene became a very important family member. She babysits from time to time - but that's not all. All five of us go out together as a family, enjoying trips to the park and exploring

the city. 'Where's Nanny Irene?' Amelie asks if she hasn't seen her for a few days. Sometimes I even find the kids knocking on her front door to say hi. *Bless.* Thanks to my website, other families have found surrogate grandparents for their kids too. Bringing people together is truly priceless. ● *Cate Kloos, 37, Coogee, NSW*

At risk?

Future generations of Aussies could be 'grand-orphans', as women are delaying having kids until their 30s and 40s, meaning they're likely to be 70 or 80 before they can play the role of granny. Marriage breakdowns and family relocations are also causing kids to miss out on a relationship with their grandparents.

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