Grand gesture

This is the scene Marta Faller never thought she’d see. Her daughter, Melissa, relishing in the attention of “grandmother” Lisa Englander, who has taken on the important role because Marta and her husband Steven’s parents all live overseas. REPORT PAGE 8
Adrian Bernechich

Marta and Steven Fuller have done everything they can to give their two-year-old daughter Melissa a loving home. But with Marta's family in Poland and Steven's family in Scotland, the Fraser couple have been hard pressed to give her the joy of regular visits with grandparents.

The couple, both 35, met in the UK nine years ago, married in 2007, and moved to Australia in 2008 before Melissa was born a year later. After returning from a holiday to Europe last year, Ms Fuller found out about an organisation — Find a Grandparent — which connects older people with families that do not have grandparents.

And following the service's rigorous application process, the Fullers finally met Northcote art teacher Lisa Engelander seven weeks ago.

Since the meeting, both parties have met at least once a week in bond.

"I really had been missing my family," Ms Fuller said.

"And it's great because Lisa is not on Skype, she's right next to us. "I was a bit nervous wondering whether we were going to get on well, it was a great opportunity."

Ms Engelander, who has a 25-year-old son, said before inquiring about the service she had some friends who did not have local family and so she understood the issue.

The 54-year-old, who used to live in Inverloch East, said she was keen to meet a young family and was excited when she met the Fullers, who "live just down the road!"

"My son doesn't look like he's going to give me grandchildren anytime soon, so I had a look at it," Ms Engelander said.

"And it's been great for Marta especially because she's had someone else to talk to."

She said she hoped to spend special occasions such as Christmas and birthdays with the Fullers.

Findagrandparent.org.au