

A lifetime of caring

By Michelle Taverniti

IMELDA Rigney is not only known as "nanna" to her grandchildren but to hundreds of other Campbelltown children.

The Raby woman was one of the founding members of Campbelltown Council's Family Day Care service and was recently acknowledged for her 32 years of child-minding at a ceremony in the civic hall.

Family Day Care was established in 1977, one of the first in Australia at the time, and now has 110 local carers minding more than 1000 children in their own homes.

Mrs Rigney, 64, said she "loved" helping out working parents by looking after their children.

"I'm one of 13 children," she said.

"I love them being there and I know they're safe and secure in my home . . . and it keeps me young."

Mrs Rigney first started as a "day care mum" when she had two children of her own - one who was at school and one at home.

"I thought it would be nice to bring some children into my home while their parents went to work," she said.

"And I've been doing it ever since.

"My grandchildren come in as babies; they know I'm their



Everybody's nanna: Imelda Rigney (back right), of Raby, has looked after children as part of the council's Family Day Care service for 32 years. Her daughter Amy Phillips also became a carer with the service last year. Children pictured: (from left) Keyaan, Angelee, Cooper, Anastasia, Ronan, James and Liam.

Picture: Luke Fuda

■ Campbelltown's Family Day Care has had 16 carers serving for 10 years, nine carers serving for 15 years, four carers serving for 20 years and one carer - Imelda Rigney - serving for more than 30 years.

nanna and all the other children call me Nanna.

"But years ago, when my own children were young, they would object to the children sleeping on their beds or playing with their toys."

Her daughter Amy Phillips became a carer herself last year.

"I've lived with it my whole life," Mrs Phillips said.

"I loved being a stay-at-home mum and thought 'why can't I do this for other mothers who have to work?'"

"I'm enjoying it so much and I always wanted to be like my mum."

Mrs Rigney said the relationships she had built with families over the years was what she cherished most.

"There's one family in particular who still send me photos of their children," she said. "They're both married and they still think of me."

"Two children came last week so I could see them in their school uniforms."