



International  
Social Service  
**Australian Branch**

# ANNUAL REPORT

1 January 2007  
to 30 June 2008

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# President's Report

Our level of activities nationally has remained fairly constant over the past 18 months' reporting period, but with particular need to pay attention to client demand so that we remain responsive to contemporary needs. Significant technological change in recent years makes self-help initiatives increasingly easier and so relevance is an ongoing issue for ISS globally and one we are constantly addressing. Nothing can replace the international network connections and case management options that we are in a unique position to offer and this is the remit that we continually reinforce with our referrers and funders.

During this 18 month period Executive Director, Maria Brett, attended the 2007 and 2008 ISS Asia Pacific regional meetings, accompanied by international Council Member, Anne Cordner. Maria Brett also represented our Branch at the 2007 and 2008 Executive Committee meetings in Geneva, which was also attended by Anne Cordner in 2008. Our new Secretary-General Mr Jean Ayoub is now in place at the General Secretariat in Geneva and we welcome his leadership skills and experience to our worldwide network.

We welcomed two new Directors, Karen Carris and Sally Nicholes, to our Australian Branch Council of Management and we value their expertise and input very much. We also welcomed on board our second formal Patron of ISS Australia - The Honourable Alistair Nicholson, and his knowledge and connections have already been of significant benefit to us.

My thanks go to all Council of Management colleagues for the generous time and competent consideration you commit for the organisation.

The fundraising challenge continues for ISS - here and internationally. For ISS Australia, support from the philanthropic sector is absolutely vital for our project and research work. We really value this financial support and it invariably results in excellent outcomes. Revenue for ongoing casework delivery is vital; some revenue for this work comes from fee-for-service tasks undertaken for various referring sources and some revenue ensues when we manage to fit within specific government program criteria. Importantly for us no work can be done unless there is enough infrastructure support for operations and revenue for this underpinning work is and always has been a real challenge for ISS Australia. It is fair to say that annual financial operating results in the negative generally reflect this latter problem and so it is for us. We as an organisation are fortunate to have a valuable property asset, but funding day to day costs is the real issue. At annual operating budget preparation time we invariably struggle to identify funds for much of our core workload.

To those members and individuals who know us and provide financial support - thank you so much. Be assured that every dollar counts when running a small organisation such as ours. We do stretch each dollar to the maximum and can assure you that your investment results in outcomes of which we - and you - can be mightily proud.

This has been an eighteen month financial reporting period and it's not been easy to manage this change, but thanks to a combination of excellent financial management skills we have completed the process. From July 2008 on we will be financially managed on a routine financial year basis, instead of a calendar year basis.

Our ongoing relationship with the Federal Government, through Attorney-General's Department funding, sees many clients who would otherwise go unserved given appropriate attention. And so it is pleasing to acknowledge that on matters to do with international parental child abduction we are proving to be expert in the field and keen to assist those so affected wherever and whenever we can. We also are increasingly being recognised for our expertise in working with and providing training for others on important new international Conventions relating to children. More detail on these aspects of our work is covered elsewhere in the Annual Report.

I commend Executive Director Maria Brett for providing strong and sound leadership for the organisation. In particular and in conjunction with our highly skilled staff, the constructive relationships now built up with our funders and referring sources is the most significant factor in what results in success in our endeavours. Part of the ISS team is located at our Sydney office and while funds for travel are limited, with clever use of communication technology combined with visits where possible and with sincere thanks to the NSW government for their ongoing financial support of ISS Australia and our NSW clients, the role of our resourceful Sydney office is both connected and absolutely integral to our operational accomplishments for clients.

Special thanks go to all staff that departed during the year: we will miss them, but we realise that they invariably move on to bigger and better things and as they move on with enhanced and excellent knowledge of international influences in people's lives and how to deal with them, that's a good outcome. We also continually improve our service delivery and operations generally and our new client management database enhances this significantly. To our wonderful volunteers in your various roles, thank you for your valuable input and interest in us - we trust that the flow is two-way and that you too get as much value as ISS does out of the relationship.

It is a privilege to serve as President of ISS Australian Branch. Looking to next year, challenges abound for us all - particularly for small non-profit service providers such as ISS Australia. But I feel confident that within our governance, our staff, and our volunteer human resource contingent, thankfully we do have a quantum of expertise and experience to make the necessary decisions and negotiate the future and all it presents.

***Margaret Roberts***  
***President***

## **Executive Director's Report**

This has been a challenging 18 months, not least because the financial year has been so long. For many years we followed the practice of ISS internationally of operating a calendar financial year but this had become increasingly problematic for ISS Australia as government funding is received for the July to June financial year. We sought and received approval from ASIC to change our financial year to bring it into line with our funding arrangements and this has resulted in an 18 month financial year during the transition.

This is an opportune time to reflect that the change to our financial year has been a significant achievement for ISS Australia and now that the transition is complete, we look forward to improved efficiencies in our finance and reporting systems. I want to give my special thanks to our highly skilled bookkeeper, Vivienne Zethoven, for navigating the many technical challenges involved in this 18 month financial year and to our new auditors, Saward Dawson for invaluable guidance during the transition.

This 18-month period has seen ISS Australia grow with an additional casework position being created at both the National and NSW Offices and increases in administrative staffing at both offices. Despite these achievements, running a small non-profit organisation the size of ISS Australia continues to involve considerable difficulties: finding sufficient funding to maintain service delivery, retaining staff and volunteers, and the need to develop the organisation's infrastructure and increase our organisational capacity. While we have had some successes in this last 18 months on the fundraising front - there is still so much more to be done to get the organisation on to a more sustainable footing.

There have been some major changes in our staffing and while losing staff is always a loss to the organisation in terms of skills and productivity, we have been very fortunate to recruit some excellent new staff at both offices. There has also been growth in the contribution of

volunteers who have helped with administration and casework at the National Office, and social work students on placement from Melbourne, Latrobe, RMIT and Victoria Universities.

Thank you to the highly skilled and committed staff, volunteers and students who in the last 18 months have provided high quality services to our clients and have also contributed to improvements in the quality of our services, the building of our referral networks and the delivery of important projects funded by philanthropic funders.

In June 2007 we successfully delivered a regional training event for ISS in the Asia-Pacific region, funded by the federal Attorney-General's Department. The project involved the delivery of a three-day training seminar in Sydney from ISS partners from 15 countries in the region. The training focussed on the Hague Conventions of 1996 and 1980 and the child-centred, mediation-based approach of ISS to inter-country casework for families in conflict.

Statistics compiled by ISS Australia for the 18 months from 1 January 2007 to 30 June 2008 show continuing high levels of inter-country casework being delivered to our clients. Our government funders have been crucial in enabling us to expand service delivery and I thank the federal Attorney-General's Department and the NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS) for their continuing support and collaboration.

Growth in NSW funding from DoCS has inevitably resulted in growth in service delivery - a testament to the effective partnership between our NSW team and our partners within DoCS. In NSW we successfully completed the first year of the Inter-country Family Separation Support Program, which incorporates post-adoption tracing and support services and the International Parental Child Abduction Service in NSW. We also continued delivery of the Inter-country Casework Program which receives recurrent funding from DoCS.

Referrals in the International Parental Child Abduction Service continue to grow, both nationally and in the NSW Office, illustrating how valuable this program is for supporting families affected by abduction and in some cases, actually preventing abductions. ISS Australia has also been involved in mediating outcomes for families affected by abduction and this has resulted in an increase in funding from the federal Attorney-General's Department the 2008-09 financial year to undertake mediation of IPCA cases.

Growth in our unfunded National Family Services Program, which incorporates child protection and tracing work nationally continued to grow throughout 2007 but in the first half of 2008 has shown a decrease - perhaps because the current economic environment has made this fee-for-service program more difficult to promote and sustain. Thank you to the Myer Foundation and to individual donors whose support helped us maintain our core services nationally - your contributions are essential given that these services receive no government funding.

In 2008 we commenced implementation of a Development Plan which has involved significant changes to our service delivery systems. Of particular significance is the introduction of a new Case Management Database, which sees us effectively move from a paper-based system for managing cases to an electronic system. We expect this will not only improve the quality of our services, but will enable us to collect data to inform decision-making about service management and development.

I wish to thank the Ian Potter Foundation and The Fred Archer Trust for supporting our work through project funding. With their support we were able to progress two important projects: our Victorian Kinship Care Project and our 1996 Hague Convention Research Project. Full details are provided elsewhere in this report.

It has been a challenging but productive 18 months and I thank everyone who has contributed. I look forward to continuing to work together to build the organisation and deliver quality services to our clients.

***Maria Brett***  
***Executive Director***

# ISS Vision, Mission and Principles

## **ISS supports children, families and individuals in a globalized world**

Movements across borders and continents have become daily occurrences. The globalization process is unstoppable. With the ever increasing movement of the world's population, many children, families and individuals experience social problems, which all countries must face and address.

Such situations may involve adults, children and young people who are separated from their relatives leaving them vulnerable and at risk. Wars, poverty, hunger, ethnic persecution, natural disasters all take their toll on families. As a result, families fall apart, children lose their homes and countries; they are abandoned or abused; they cannot find their parents; they become orphans.

## **ISS Vision**

ISS works to protect, defend and support children, families and individuals in disadvantaged situations as a consequence of global movement, whose circumstances have led to the separation of families and children. ISS aims to ensure that respect for human rights is accorded to every individual.

## **ISS Mission**

ISS is a worldwide network, which offers professional services and helps to resolve inter-country social and legal problems affecting children, families and other vulnerable persons, wherever they are living. ISS work is guided by the international conventions relating to the protection of children and families, such as the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, the Hague Conventions on child abduction, international adoption and child protection.

## **ISS Principles**

ISS promotes and protects the rights of the families, children and other vulnerable persons according to the UN Conventions on Human Rights and on the Rights of the Child. Inherent to this approach is prioritizing the best interests of the child. As ISS celebrates diversity, it continually strives to practice in a culturally competent manner. The principles of neutrality, confidentiality, independence and impartiality are at the heart of our work. ISS shared commitment to families, children and individuals unites its global network.

## **The ISS International Network**

International Social Service is a non-profit organisation that was established in 1924 in Geneva, Switzerland. Initially, its purpose was to offer its services to families who had become separated when migrating from Europe and the Middle East to America.

Presently, ISS is a global network with Branches and Affiliated Bureaux on 5 continents and correspondent offices in over 140 countries (see next page for a list of the countries). Local ISS staff are familiar with the operations of the local laws, regulations and social service systems, as well as the language, and act within a common casework methodology throughout the entire network.

The ISS network is an international federation composed of the following units:

The **General-Secretariat**, located in Geneva, Switzerland, which has a leading role in the coordination of all ISS Units.

**National Branches**, which are legally independent non-profit organisations, representing ISS in their own country:

Australia	Greece	Japan	Philippines
Belgium	Hong Kong	Netherlands	United Kingdom
Germany	Italy	Switzerland	Venezuela

**Affiliated Bureaux**, which are bodies linked to ISS by a special agreement; most of them are governmental:

France	New Zealand	South Africa	Portugal
Israel			

**Correspondents**, which are organisations, government departments or individuals having an agreement with ISS with the purpose of an exchange of services:

Albania	Cuba	Latvia	Romania
Algeria	Cyprus	Lebanon	Russia
Andorra	Czech Republic	Lesotho	Sao Tome Principe
Angola	Djibouti Dominica	Liberia	Saudi Arabia
Anguilla	Dominican Republic	Liechtenstein	Senegal
Antigua	Ecuador	Lithuania	Serbia & Montenegro
Armenia	Egypt	Luxemburg	Seychelles
Aruba	El Salvador	Macedonia	Singapore
Austria	Eritrea	Madagascar	Slovakia
Azerbaijan	Estonia	Malawi	Slovenia
Azores	Fiji	Malaysia	Somalia
Bahamas	Finland	Mali	Spain
Bangladesh	Gabon	Malta	Sri Lanka
Barbados	Gambia	Mauritania	St. Christopher & Nevis
Belarus	Georgia	Mauritius	St. Lucia
Belize	Ghana	Mexico	St. Vincent & Grenadines
Benin	Grenada	Moldova	Sudan
Bermuda	Grenada	Monaco	Sweden
Bolivia	Guatemala	Mongolia	Syria
Bosnia-Herzegovina	Guinea	Montenegro	Taiwan
Botswana	Guyana	Montserrat	Tanzania
Brazil	Haiti	Morocco	Thailand
Brunei	Honduras	Mozambique	Togo
Bulgaria	Hungary	Myanmar	Tonga
Burkina Faso	Iceland	Namibia	Trinidad & Tobago
Burundi	India	Nepal	Tunisia
Cambodia	Indonesia	Nicaragua	Turkey
Cameroon	Iran	Niger	Turks & Caicos Islands
Canada	Ireland	Nigeria	Uganda
Cape Verde	Ivory Coast	Norway	Ukraine United Arab
Cayman Islands	Jamaica	Pakistan	Emirates
Central Africa	Jordan	Palestine	Uruguay
Chile	Kazakhstan	Panama	Uzbekistan
Colombia	Kenya	Paraguay	Vietnam
Congo Brazza-Villa	Korea	Peru	Vojvodina
Congo Kinshasa	Kosovo	Poland	Yemen
Costa Rica	Kuwait	Puerto Rico	Zambia
Croatia	Laos	Reunion Island	Zimbabwe

## About ISS Australia

ISS was established in Australia in 1961 and today is part of the ISS international network, spanning more than 160 countries, and working across international borders to assist families and children in vulnerable situations.

ISS Australia is a non-profit, non-government organisation that has no religious or political affiliations. We work across international borders with those in vulnerable situations, with a special emphasis on children. We work to ensure entitlement and protection under international human rights frameworks, through the professional delivery of casework and advocacy services. ISS Australia also undertakes research on issues emerging from our casework with families across international borders.

We are a national charitable organisation, with our Head Office located in Melbourne and a separate Office in Sydney serving NSW residents. Clients elsewhere in Australia, including those in remote parts of the country, can access our services by telephone and email. Currently we have the equivalent of 5.79 full-time salaried staff at our Melbourne Office and the equivalent of 3.1 full-time salaried staff at our Sydney office. Volunteers and social work students also make a valuable contribution to our work.

## ISS Australia's Services

The casework of ISS Australia focuses on the care, protection and support of children and families across two or more countries. The best interests of the child are paramount to our response. Services include:

- Child protection services
- Tracing and family reunification services
- Family counselling and mediation services
- The International Parental Child Abduction Service
- Information, advice and referrals in relation to all of the above.

Referrals are taken from government and non-government agencies within Australia, from members of the ISS network overseas and from self-referring individuals. The ISS service delivery model aims to best meet client needs through a national network of partner agencies within the government and non-government sectors, as well as partnership with members of the ISS network overseas. Access to the ISS network enables us to effectively support Australian families separated by borders, working directly with family members in Australia and providing support to family members abroad via our ISS counterparts abroad.

Within Australia, ISS makes facilitated referrals to our network of generalist and specialist agencies in all states, particularly domestic violence services, men's services, counselling services and community legal centres. Effective working relationships have also been developed with government departments including the Attorney-General's Department and state government departments responsible for child protection and out of home care.

Our inter-country casework services are delivered through four main programs:

1. Family Services National
2. International Parental Child Abduction (IPCA) Service
3. NSW Inter-country Family Separation Support Program
4. NSW Inter-Country Casework Program

## 1. Family Services National

This is a national program that incorporates a range of different services, including child protection, family tracing and reunification services, family counselling and mediation and other miscellaneous services. In all States except NSW, these services are provided on a fee-for-service basis as no government funding is provided. The program also relies on the generosity of ISS donors and philanthropic funders to continue operating.

### *Child Protection Services*

These services allow for a broader range of placement options to be safely considered for children and young people requiring out of home care, particularly in relation to extended family placements overseas and culturally appropriate placements. There is an emphasis on prevention and early intervention in that the services aim to avoid placing children in harmful situations through assessments, support and co-ordination of overseas placements.

<b>Target Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Children and young people in out of home care or the child protection system</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Nationally, no government funding is provided so fees apply</li> <li>• In NSW, funding is provided by the Department of Community Services</li> </ul>
<b>Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Tracing and assessment of parents or relatives overseas who may be possible carers for children on a temporary or permanent basis</li> <li>• Preparing children and families for reintegration of family members into the family or into the new country</li> <li>• Coordinating placement, monitoring and follow up of children with their families overseas</li> <li>• Support for children on child protection orders during visits to family members overseas</li> <li>• Facilitating contact arrangements with parents, siblings and other significant family members who are overseas</li> <li>• All of the above where children are coming from overseas to be cared for in Australia or to have contact with a parent her</li> <li>• Undertaking welfare assessments of children or families moving between countries</li> <li>• Advice and consultation for professionals working with children as well as training in the 1996 Hague Convention on the Protection of Children</li> </ul>
<b>Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Safe, well functioning and culturally appropriate care placements with relatives overseas are provided, assisted by appropriate local support</li> <li>• The capacity of families to parent their children, to be resilient and stay connected to their community is improved</li> <li>• Suitable placement and contact arrangements give children increased opportunities to understand their identity, culture and religion</li> <li>• Where satisfactory and permanent family/kinship placements can be made, the risk of long-term attachment difficulties is minimised.</li> <li>• The established, professional and unique ISS network enables services to be provided in an efficient and cost effective manner</li> </ul>

### *Tracing and Family Reunification Services*

These services cover inter-country post-adoption tracing and provides and intermediary and support service on behalf of adopted persons and birth families wanting to be reunited where one of the parties resides overseas. Tracing can be lengthy and time-consuming and ongoing support may be required because of complex identity-related issues. ISS also undertakes overseas tracing of family members where, for a wide range of reasons, contact has ceased. These services strengthen and promote family relationships and enable early intervention in conflict situations that can be disruptive and emotionally challenging.

<b>Target Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Family members who have lost contact and are separated by international borders, including as a result of inter-country adoption</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nationally, no government funding is provided so fees apply</li> <li>In NSW, funding is provided by the Department of Community Services</li> </ul>
<b>Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Post-adoption overseas tracing via the ISS international network</li> <li>The tracing of family members (not related to adoption) via the ISS international network</li> <li>Obtaining birth and adoption records from overseas and provision of associated counselling and support.</li> <li>Acting as an intermediary in family reunions, providing cross-cultural counselling to prepare for reunion and supporting contact post-reunion</li> <li>Where tracing of family is not possible, supporting adopted persons to obtain information about their country of origin</li> <li>Facilitating sharing of genetic medical information within families</li> <li>General advice and referral regarding inter-country adoption</li> </ul>
<b>Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Birth families and adopted people including parents and siblings are assisted to trace and make contact with family members abroad</li> <li>Where possible, reunion and contact enables adopted people to understand their history and origins, supporting identity development</li> <li>Support is provided to assist clients to resolve identity-related issues</li> <li>Genetic medical information can be shared allowing those individuals receiving the information to seek appropriate medical advice</li> </ul>

#### ***Family Counselling and Mediation Services***

Family counselling and mediation services are aimed principally at families separated by international borders that are going through divorce or other forms of family breakdown or conflict. Domestic violence and concerns about child welfare are common in these situations. ISS provides a unique counselling and support service, working directly with family members residing here, while an ISS partner works with family members overseas. This is the ISS mediation-based approach that enables us to help families in conflict across borders. As the prevention of the breakdown of a family unit is not always possible, ISS supports these families to reach agreements that consider the child's best interests.

<b>Target Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children and families affected by cross-border family conflict</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nationally, no government funding is provided so fees apply</li> </ul>
<b>Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Cross-cultural counselling to support families separated by borders to resolve family conflict during separation and divorce</li> <li>Mediation of disputes between parents about the residence of children, parenting arrangements or concerns about child welfare</li> <li>Cross-cultural counselling to support contact between children and parents</li> <li>Facilitation of contact arrangements between children and other family members, siblings and significant others internationally</li> <li>Psychosocial assessment and reports relating to cross-border shared parenting arrangements or the child's place of residence</li> </ul>
<b>Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children are supported to maintain contact with both parents, which is beneficial to their development and identity formation</li> <li>Capacity of parents to parent and resilience of children are enhanced</li> <li>Families and their communities are strengthened</li> <li>Culturally appropriate supports for vulnerable families are developed</li> <li>At risk families are identified and supported, reducing the need for statutory intervention and likelihood of protracted legal proceedings</li> </ul>

## 2. International Parental Child Abduction (IPCA) Service

This national service provides information, referrals, counselling and support for families affected by international parental child abduction. The Service may be required when family breakdown, separation and parenting issues escalate with the abduction of a child by a parent overseas. ISS provides support to both parents, including mediation where appropriate and prevention of abduction where possible, and focuses on the best interests of the child.

<b>Target Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families affected by international parental child abduction</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Nationally, the IPCA Service is funded by the federal Attorney-General's Department and in NSW by the Department of Community Services</li> </ul>
<b>Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>A telephone advice and support service for parents and children affected by abduction and for professionals and agencies seeking assistance</li> <li>Practical and emotional support to left-behind parents, parents who have wrongfully removed or retained children, or are considering doing so</li> <li>Facilitated referrals to local support services including counselling, domestic violence services, men's services and community legal centres</li> <li>Where possible, support to both parents with assistance from ISS overseas, to facilitate contact between parents and children</li> <li>Mediation of outcomes that are in the best interests of the child using ISS mediation-based approaches</li> <li>Preparation and support for the challenging post-return period</li> <li>Community education and training targeted at relevant support services, higher risk groups and agencies working with these groups</li> </ul>
<b>Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Families and individual parents have access to support, advice and information for themselves and their children</li> <li>Prevention of wrongful removal of children from or to Australia is increased through early intervention with high-risk parents</li> <li>Families and workers are linked into a network of professionals and agencies already familiar with the issue, through facilitated referrals</li> <li>Family mediation may help reduce the likelihood of family breakdown and ensure outcomes focus on the best interests of the child</li> <li>Community awareness of IPCA is greater</li> <li>At risk families are identified and supported, reducing the need for statutory intervention and the likelihood of legal proceedings</li> <li>The Central Authorities are supported in their response to abductions involving Hague Convention signatory countries</li> </ul>

## 3. NSW Inter-Country Casework Program

This program receives recurrent funding from DoCS NSW and supports the functions of DoCS in relation to cross-border child protection matters. It also supports family members wanting to trace lost family members across international borders and seek reunification.

<b>Target Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Children and young people in out of home care or the child protection system in NSW or children overseas requiring care in NSW</li> <li>Family members who have lost contact and are separated by borders</li> </ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>NSW Department of Community Services</li> </ul>
<b>Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>The IPCA Service for NSW residents (details above)</li> <li>Tracing, support &amp; reunification services for NSW residents (details above)</li> </ul>
<b>Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Same as for child protection and tracing and family reunification services nationally (details above)</li> </ul>

## 4. NSW Inter-country Family Separation Support Program

This program received its first year of funding from the NSW Department of Community Services (DoCS) in the 2007/08 financial year. A further three years' recurrent funding for the program has now been granted. The IPCA Service is funded through this program in NSW as there was a high demand on the IPCA Service in NSW, which has the largest number of international parental child abductions cases nationally.

<b>Target Group</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• NSW residents affected by international parental child abduction</li><li>• NSW residents separated from their birth families across international borders, including as a result of inter-country adoption</li></ul>
<b>Funding</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• NSW Department of Community Services</li></ul>
<b>Services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• The International Parental Child Abduction (IPCA) Service for NSW residents (details above)</li><li>• Post-adoption tracing, support and reunification services for NSW residents (details above)</li></ul>
<b>Impact</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Same as for the IPCA Service</li><li>• Same as for post-adoption tracing and reunification services nationally</li></ul>

## ISS Australia's Projects

### 1. Mediation Training Project

With funding provided by the federal Attorney-General's Department, ISS Australia organised and delivered a regional training seminar for members of the ISS network in the Asia-Pacific region. All ISS Australia casework staff participated, creating a valuable opportunity for building the skills and capacity of our own branch.

The project involved the delivery of a training seminar over three days from June 25 to 27 in Sydney. The focus of the training was the Hague Conventions of 1996 and 1980 and the ISS child-centred, mediation-based approach to inter-country casework for families in conflict. Participants were from the ISS network in 15 countries in the Asia-Pacific region and a limited number of representatives from governments and NGOs in the region also attended.

The seminar provided a well-balanced program with sufficient breadth and depth to improve the knowledge and skills of participants. Feedback from seminar participants indicated that their knowledge and skills increased as a result of the seminar.

The project enabled the successful testing of the new regional seminar, which has now be used for training and capacity building in the wider ISS network, and made a significant contribution towards the development of ISS in the Asia-Pacific region. Key achievements included:

- Improved understanding of the Hague Conventions of 1980 and 1996 and its relevance to the work of ISS with families in conflict;
- Improved understanding of the ISS methodology for inter-country casework and how to put the methodology into practice;
- Improved skills in child-centred practice and mediation-based approaches for working with families in conflict;
- Opportunities for ISS to learn about our network in the region;
- Better links between members of the ISS network in the Asia-Pacific region; and
- Building the reputation of ISS Australia with key partners within the region.

## 2. Victorian Kinship Care Project

The Fred P Archer Charitable Trust provided funding through Trust Company Limited for ISS Australia to identify children in out of home care in Victoria who may be assisted through overseas kinship care. A key achievement during the project has been building more effective partnerships with the Department of Human Services, Victoria, particularly staff in Out of Home Care and Child Protection.

We took advantage of a significant opportunity during the project to make a submission to the Department of Human Services' Kinship Care Review, in response to their Green Paper looking at future policy options for kinship care in Victoria. The issue of cross-border kinship had not been addressed in the Department's Green Paper so ISS Australia made representations about the potential to improve outcomes for Victorian children in out of home care through cross-border kinship care.

While it has been difficult to identify specific children in Victoria who could be placed with their kin overseas, there was one successful case undertaken during the project which demonstrated the excellent outcomes that can be achieved for children through overseas kinship care. There has also been a small increase in referrals, which appears to be directly related to the project. It is expected that in due course, these cases will result in children being placed with their kin overseas. ISS Australia also receives requests from overseas for children to be placed with their kin in Victoria, as well as other states.

## 3. 1996 Convention Research Project

The Ian Potter Foundation provided funding for ISS Australia to undertake research into the application of the 1996 Hague Convention on Child Protection in the inter-country casework of ISS Australia. Stage 1 of the project, which has now been completed, has enabled ISS Australia to prepare for the new Convention by making significant improvements to our service delivery systems, particularly with the development of a new service delivery model and implementation of a new casework database. The Research Report from the project demonstrates ISS Australia's expertise on the 1996 Hague Convention and will be a valuable resource for our service delivery and service promotion activities.

For full details of the impact of the project and how it will contribute to better outcomes for children in international situations, please see the Conclusions contained in the Research Report which is available at the ISS Australia website. Stage 1 achievements included:

1. Development of a new service delivery model to support implementation of the 1996 Hague Convention. Details of the model are contained in the Research Report. An ISS social worker has overseen this part of the project as well as the development of the accompanying database.
2. Development of a database for data collection purposes. The database is now operational in both offices of the organisation and is used for data recording for all inter-country casework. This part of the project took longer than expected but the database has a higher functionality than originally planned. Fine-tuning of the database is still being completed by the programmer and database development will continue until the end of the year.
3. Research into the 1996 Hague Convention including a literature search and review of inter-country child welfare cases previously undertaken by ISS Australia to determine how these align to the 1996 Convention.

Stage 2 of the project, also funded by the Ian Potter Foundation, will enhance the impact of the project as it will enable ISS Australia to more effectively operationalise our learning from Stage 1 of the project and to start promoting and rolling out the new service delivery model developed in stage 1 of the project.

## Examples of ISS Inter-country casework

*All identifying details have been changed to protect the privacy of ISS clients.*

### **“By sheer incredible coincidence” - reunification in the face of rejection**

*By Anna Marshall, Locum Social Worker, NSW Office, ISS Australia*

In 1994 a woman from NSW, who was born and adopted in Switzerland (not the real country), approached ISS for help in the search for her birth mother. A referral was sent to ISS Switzerland and in 1999 the birth mother was located and contacted. Unfortunately, the birth mother did not wish to have any contact with our client, although she was successful being reunited with her birth father.

In 2008, ISS USA (not the real country) had been assisting a lady, who was born and adopted in Switzerland and now resides in the USA, to trace her birth mother. ISS USA sent a referral to ISS Switzerland and the birth mother was found and contacted. The client in the USA was also rejected by her birth mother in the same way our NSW client had been, ten years earlier. Also in 2008, ISS Switzerland had been reviewing a random selection of historic cases. It was by sheer coincidence that the Swiss worker who had been working on the USA enquiry was allocated to review the closed file of our NSW client from 1994. It became apparent that these two cases had a striking similarity and that both clients had been searching for the same birth mother and that they were in fact half sisters. Our Swiss colleague reported she felt like she had won the lottery with this discovery!

ISS USA then made a referral to ISS Australia (NSW Office) in order to make contact with their client's half sister in NSW. Searches were conducted and the client was located and contacted. With the combined efforts of the 3 ISS units, we were able to facilitate a successful reunification of the half sisters who have reportedly already found solace in the opportunity to share with each other their own journeys.

### **Supporting the return of an abducted child**

*By Damon Martin, NSW Service Coordinator, ISS Australia*

Our client was referred to ISS by an Australian lawyer, who advised that a young mother in Europe required assistance during her visit to Sydney for a court hearing relating to an application under the Hague Convention for return of her child. The child had been retained in Australia by the father. The Central Authority asked ISS to support the mother while in Sydney, to make recommendations about the child's needs, for example when he should leave the country, and to assist in the handover of the child to the mother.

ISS provided the courts in NSW with information on statutory child health checks required in the mother's country and met with the mother to discuss her anxieties about the handover process. ISS provided information about separation issues and what behaviours to expect from the child, and general parenting information. ISS met with the mother and the Central Authority the day before the proposed handover in order to formulate a plan. During the handover ISS gathered information about the child and his needs, including medical information. ISS offered assistance to the mother to address the child's medical and psychological needs. ISS also spent time observing the mother and child, assessing her parenting skills and their attachment. The child eventually returned to Europe with his mother where some further support was provided by ISS overseas.

ISS worked on this case intensively for a short period of time, providing specialised assistance to enable a smooth transition. We achieved a number of outcomes benefiting the clients including assisting them in accessing relevant information, services and support options and providing emotional and social support to the mother and her child.

### **Case Study - baby returns 'home'**

*By Carmel Alakus, Casework Coordinator, ISS Australia*

Would that we could identify the ISS unit who assisted us in this case for their prompt and professional service but respecting client confidentiality does not permit it. A baby was born in Australia of an overseas mother who immediately left for her country of origin. Child protection services in Australia who arranged foster care for the baby requested ISS Australia to arrange a home assessment and report on the baby's next-of-kin overseas who offered to share care of the baby with the mother. They also wanted ISS to enquire about child protection services and supports for the new carers in the country concerned.

While the manager of the child protection office in the other country liaised with the baby's relatives regularly, the overseas ISS unit made contact with local social services that could assist. With their support, the birth mother and her family were given information about child protection and support services and they co-operated with requirements for assessment reports and background checks. Assessment reports were promptly sent via the ISS units to the referring child protection manager in Australia and once arrangements were all in place, the manager escorted the baby 'home'.

### **A young person's move to Australia**

*By Tara Harvey, Social Worker, ISS Australia, NSW Office*

Sarah and her brother Samuel were born in the UK (not the real country). For the first 10 years of her life Sarah grew up in a family where there was domestic violence. Sarah and her brother were in and out of foster care for about two years before both their parents were tragically killed. Sarah's maternal aunt and family, living in Australia, said they would take on the responsibility of caring for the children.

ISS was asked to assess the viability of Sarah and Samuel being placed with their aunt. After the assessment and support leading up to the placement, the children arrived in Australia. They have now been living with their aunt and family for three years. They are settled and well supported here. ISS has continued to provide support to the family for the placement and provide regular reports to the UK on the progress of the placement.

### **A successful family reunion**

*By Feray Ergun, Inter-country Caseworker, ISS Australia*

ISS Australia and an ISS Unit in South East Asia have worked very closely and successfully in reuniting Robert, a 4 year old boy, with his family overseas. Robert came to the attention of ISS Australia following a referral from the relevant Child Protection Department. Robert had been placed in foster care when it was discovered that his mother was abusing prohibited drugs. Prior to Robert's birth, Robert's father had been deported to his country of origin. To ensure Robert didn't drift in care, the Department was considering options for kinship care.

The Department requested an assessment of Robert's paternal grandparents and father who were living overseas. Robert's paternal grandparents had offered to be the primary carers for Robert. The assessment conducted by ISS Australia's counterpart overseas strongly recommended the paternal grandparents as carers for Robert. Meetings between the Department, ISS Australia, other child welfare services, Robert's foster carers and his paternal grandmother took place to plan for Robert's travel to his new home. Robert then travelled with his grandmother to be reunited with his family overseas.

The great working relationship between the two ISS units ensured that the family was supported during the transition to Robert's new living arrangements. It has since been discovered that the relationship and bond between Robert and his paternal grandparents and, in particular, with his father is now very strong.

## Casework Statistics

Case numbers - January to December 2007 (compared to 2006)

Details	Family Services Total		IPCA Total		Total Cases	
	Cum - 2007	2006	Cum - 2007	2006	Cum - 2007	2006
Files carried over from previous year	183	148	43	30	226	178
New files opened in 2007	158	115	39	55	197	170
Files re-opened in 2007	11	5	3	1	14	6
<b>Total Files handled in 2007</b>	<b>352</b>	<b>268</b>	<b>85</b>	<b>86</b>	<b>437</b>	<b>354</b>
Advice Without File	339	334	99	47	438	381
<b>Total Cases handled in 2007</b>	<b>691</b>	<b>602</b>	<b>184</b>	<b>133</b>	<b>875</b>	<b>735</b>
Files closed in 2007	155	85	23	43	178	128
<b>Total Files carry over to 2008</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>183</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>43</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>226</b>

Case numbers - January to December 2007 (by quarter)

Details	Family Services Total				IPCA Total				2007 Quarterly Totals			
	Q4 2007	Q3 2007	Q2 2007	Q1 2007	Q4 2007	Q3 2007	Q2 2007	Q1 2007	Q4 2007	Q3 2007	Q2 2007	Q1 2007
Files carried over	241	224	194	183	52	42	45	43	293	266	239	226
New files opened	39	41	41	37	13	11	5	10	52	52	46	47
Files re-opened	2	1	4	4	1	1	1		3	2	5	4
<b>Total Files handled</b>	<b>282</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>239</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>66</b>	<b>54</b>	<b>51</b>	<b>53</b>	<b>348</b>	<b>320</b>	<b>290</b>	<b>277</b>
Advice Without File	68	111	93	67	18	27	24	30	86	138	117	97
<b>Total Cases handled</b>	<b>350</b>	<b>377</b>	<b>332</b>	<b>291</b>	<b>84</b>	<b>81</b>	<b>75</b>	<b>83</b>	<b>434</b>	<b>458</b>	<b>407</b>	<b>374</b>
Files closed	85	25	15	30	4	2	9	8	89	27	24	38
<b>Total Files to carry over</b>	<b>197</b>	<b>241</b>	<b>224</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>62</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>42</b>	<b>45</b>	<b>259</b>	<b>293</b>	<b>266</b>	<b>239</b>

## Case numbers - January to June 2008

Details	NSW Child Welfare	NSW IPCA	NSW Post-Adoption	NSW Other	NAT Family Services	NAT IPCA	TOTAL
Files carried over from 2007	13	19	30	19	82	38	201
Files re-opened in quarter 1			2		1		3
Files re-opened in quarter 2		1	1			1	3
New files in quarter 1	3	5	6	1	29	8	52
New files in quarter 2	7	8	18	1	17	10	61
<b>Total Files handled 2008</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>129</b>	<b>57</b>	<b>320</b>
Info & Advice Service quarter 1	6	19	10	20	67	9	131
Info & Advice Service quarter 2	8	17	23	14	64	14	140
<b>Total Info &amp; Advice Service</b>	<b>14</b>	<b>36</b>	<b>33</b>	<b>34</b>	<b>131</b>	<b>23</b>	<b>271</b>
<b>Total matters handled</b>	<b>37</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>90</b>	<b>55</b>	<b>260</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>591</b>
Files closed in quarter 1	1	1		1	21	7	31
Files closed in quarter 2	7	3	8	8	39	2	67
<b>Total Files closed 2008</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>4</b>	<b>8</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>60</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>98</b>
<b>Current case load</b>	<b>15</b>	<b>29</b>	<b>49</b>	<b>12</b>	<b>69</b>	<b>48</b>	<b>222</b>

# ISS Australia People

## Council of Management

Margaret Roberts	President
Claudia Hirst	Vice-President
Merle Mitchell	Vice-President (retired March 07)
Chris Simpson	Treasurer
Diana Batzias	
Anne Cordner	
Vanessa Matthews	(retired December 07 )
Marilyn Webster	
Karen Cariss	(from March 08)
Sally Nicholes	(from March 08)

## Patron

The Hon. A Nicholson AO, RFD, QC	ISS Patron (from February 08)
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## Staff

Carmel Alakus	National Casework Coordinator
Rosemary Bailey	NSW Administrative Projects Officer (from Feb 08)
Maria Brett	Executive Director
Sandra De Silva	IPCA Service Coordinator
Feray Ergun	National Caseworker (from Oct 07)
Liz Forsyth	NSW Caseworker (to Mar 07); NSW Service Coordinator (to Feb 07)
Tara Harvey	NSW Caseworker (from Sep 07)
Ellen Mara	NSW Caseworker (from Aug 07)
Anna Marshall	NSW Caseworker Locum (from Apr 08)
Damon Martin	NSW Service Coordinator (from Feb 08)
Carmen Moreira	National Administration Coordinator (from Jan 07)
Leena Neumann	Book-keeper (until Jun 07)
Anjali Prabhu	NSW Service Coordinator (until Aug 07)
Jordan Shank	NSW Administrative Projects Officer (from Mar 07 to Jan 08)
Sally Szmerling	IPCA Caseworker (until Jun 08)
Phoebe Worthington	NSW Administrative Officer (until Jan 07)
Vivienne Zethhoven	Book-keeper (from Aug 07)

## Students and Volunteers (at the National Office)

Amuna Abdella	Casework Volunteer
Alex Connelly	Social Work Student, RMIT
Celia Dynon	Casework Volunteer
Claudia Komimbin	Administration Volunteer
Christina Moelholm	Social Work Student, University College Lillebaelt (Denmark)
Simon Mulvany	Administration Volunteer and Council Minute Secretary
Brenda Nyoni	Social Work Student, Latrobe University
Lauren Power	Social Work Student, Melbourne University
Amy Willis	Social Work Student, Victoria University
Elcoe Wan	Social Work Student, Melbourne University
Tommy Xia	Administration Volunteer

## Auditors

Saward Dawson	Chartered Accountants
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Queensland Department of Families  
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Victorian Department of Planning and Community Development

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The Ian Potter Foundation  
The Myer Foundation

## Pro-bono or discounted services

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KPMG (pro-bono auditors until March 2008)  
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Interconnekt (IT services)  
Perspexa (pro-bono designers)  
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## Corporate and organisational supporters

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Auburn Migrant Resource Centre	Post Adoption Resource Centre
Canterbury Bankstown Migrant Resource Centre	Spectrum Migrant Resource Centre
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Patricia Jo Elvins	The Hon. A Nicholson AO, RFD, QC	
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# Financial Statements