

# ISS June 2009 Newsletter

In this issue you will find:

- Vale W F Martin Clemens, OAM, CBE, MC, LoM
  - Professor Jan Carter AM
  - Farewell to Siobhan Kavanagh, IPCA Caseworker
  - ISS Casework - Correspondent Profile - Family International Frankfurt
  - Child Rights Corner - Review of SBS program, Insight: "Kids on Divorce"
  - Case Study - The mediation based approach in IPCA matters
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## NEWS

### Vale W F Martin Clemens, OAM, CBE, MC, LoM

*By Fionn Skiotis, Executive Director, ISS Australia*

Martin Clemens, a Past President of International Social Service - Australian Branch, died recently in Melbourne at the age of 94. Born in Aberdeen, Scotland and educated at Cambridge University, Major Clemens was a hero of the Second World War, renowned for his exploits as the lone Allied coastwatcher on the island of Guadalcanal, where he played a key role in preventing the fall of Australia and New Zealand to the Japanese. He was awarded the British Military Cross and the American Legion of Merit for his contribution to the Allied counter-offensive in the Pacific War.

Following lengthy post-War service with the British Colonial Office in Palestine and Cyprus, Mr Clemens settled in Melbourne in 1961 and threw himself into community life. As well as ISS Australia, Mr Clemens was an active member of the Australian Red Cross, Austcare, the Overseas Service Bureau, now Australian Volunteers International, and many other organisations. He was an ISS Australia Council member from 1967 to 1968, President from 1969 to 1973 and Vice President 1974-1986. Mr Clemens is survived by his children Charlotte, Victoria, Alexandra and Mark, and nine grandchildren.

### Professor Jan Carter, AM

*By Fionn Skiotis, Executive Director, ISS Australia*

Professor Jan Carter, a former member of ISS Australia's Council of Management and a current organisational member, was appointed a Member of the Order of Australia in the recent Queen's Birthday honours, for service to social welfare, particularly as a researcher and contributor to the

development of public policy in the areas of homelessness, unemployment and child protection. ISS Australia congratulates Professor Carter on this recognition of her significant contributions in the social welfare field.

### **Farewell to Siobhan Kavanagh**

*By Helen Freris, IPCA Coordinator, ISS Australia (National Office)*

It is with sadness that staff at ISS must say goodbye to Siobhan Kavanagh. Siobhan joined ISS in September last year and, since her arrival at our Melbourne office, has worked enthusiastically as the inter-country caseworker on the IPCA team. Clients of the IPCA service and staff of ISS have enjoyed the benefit of Siobhan's professionalism and friendly nature. As well as working individually with clients of ISS, Siobhan has assisted in the redevelopment of much of the material related to IPCA on our website and in our new IPCA brochures. She has even undertaken the task of editing the most recent two issues of the ISS Newsletter.

So as Siobhan leaves us to pursue exciting travel and work opportunities, we say 'Thank you' for your commitment to the work of ISS and your unfailingly cheerful, responsive and professional approach towards clients and staff of ISS. You will be greatly missed.

### **ISS CASEWORK - Correspondent Profile - Family International Frankfurt**

*By Sabine Benisch, Social Worker, family international frankfurt e.V., German correspondent*

family international frankfurt e.V. (fif) was founded in 2004. fif is the German correspondent of ISS for the fields of international adoption and tracing, with its office in Frankfurt.

The team of fif is committed to the basic ideas of helping people to help themselves and ensuring the best interests of the child. The services fif offers and the professional counselling fif provides are subject to strict confidentiality in accordance with data protection and adoption laws.

There are 4 main fields of work:

family international frankfurt e.V. is a recognised inter-country adoption agency which can process international adoptions. The main focus of its work is on stepchild and relative adoptions. For non-relative adoptions, assistance is offered only in cases where the applicants have a special relationship to the other country. fif always consults with the relevant country regarding children in need of inter-country adoption.

family international frankfurt e.V. offers support to social agencies, authorities and courts to obtain reports in order to decide whether the planned adoption or planned recognition of an adoption is in the best interest of the child.

People who were adopted and are searching for their roots or for members of their family of origin are supported by fif.

People who need counselling in relationship issues or mediation in conflicts are also supported by our service. More information on fif can be found at [www.fif-ev.de](http://www.fif-ev.de)

## CHILD RIGHTS CORNER

### Review of SBS program, Insight: "Kids on Divorce"

*By Tara Harvey, Inter-country Caseworker, ISS Australia (NSW Office)*

In this Insight episode, no adults / parents were allowed in the audience in order to give the 12 - 20 year old children their say on their experience of divorce. The presenter, Jenny Brockie, facilitated discussion about a range of issues relating to divorce including how the audience members' parents informed them of the divorce, their relationship and contact with both parents after the divorce, step-parents, the children being a messenger between their parents, what information they want to know about their parents' divorce and what they recommend to parents in this situation.

The issues highlighted by the children in this Insight episode are reflected in the principles outlined in articles 9, 10, 12, 13 and 14 of the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. These articles highlight the importance of children having a relationship with both parents, when separated from one or both of their parents, as well as children's opinions being heard in decision making. Overall, the children / young people in the program talked about wanting contact, wanting to develop a relationship with both parents and wanting to be kept informed as to what is happening in relation to the divorce.

In situations of cross-border family breakdown, ISS Australia can assist with the following:

- Helping children and parents to stay in contact post-separation, when one parent lives in a different country to their children;
- Assisting parents to negotiate the adults' issues so that children can focus on having a positive relationship and communication with their parents. This provides the children with an opportunity to develop and maintain a relationship with both of their parents without feeling that they are in the middle of their parents' negotiations.
- Supporting parents to maintain a focus on the children's needs when they are dealing with a divorce.
- Assistance with mediating the contact arrangements between parents.
- Discussing with children their views and needs as well as ensuring their voices are heard when parents are making decisions about contact arrangements.

## CASE STUDY - The mediation based approach in IPCA matters

*By Siobhan Kavanagh, IPCA Caseworker, ISS Australia (National Office)*

Sam was referred to ISS Australia by a government department. His wife Kate had left the country with their children two years ago, without his knowledge or consent. She had not responded to his attempts to contact her and the children. Sam suspected they could be in one of two countries.

A referral was made to ISS in each of these two countries. One of the referrals succeeded in making contact with Kate, and the overseas ISS caseworker was able to engage her in a discussion of the situation, focusing on the best interests of the children. The two ISS workers exchanged messages from each parent, focusing on information about the children.

This communication alleviated some of Sam's concern for the welfare of their children. It also provided an opportunity to ask Kate, via ISS, if she was willing to facilitate contact between him and the kids. Kate clearly stated that she didn't want contact with Sam, but agreed to consider contact between Sam and their children.

This case is an example of how the ISS mediation-based approach, using two ISS caseworkers as intermediaries, can encourage communication between parents in the event of family breakdown and abduction of children. While the situation with Sam, Kate, and their children is by no means resolved, the parents have agreed to participate in formal phone-based mediation, and Sam's hope is that they may come to an agreement about re-establishing contact with their children.

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

### Contributions and Feedback Welcome

The ISS newsletter is produced every two months. If you would like to contribute to the newsletter, either by writing an article or a letter to the editor, please contact Fionn Skiotis at [iss@iss.org.au](mailto:iss@iss.org.au). We always appreciate your feedback. To respond to articles or give us feedback, please e-mail the editor.

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### MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION / RENEWAL FORM 2009-10

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Please send to: ISS Australia, Level 2, 313-315 Flinders Lane, Melbourne, VIC 3000, Fax to (03) 9614 8766 or e-mail to <a href="mailto:carmen.moreira@iss.org.au">carmen.moreira@iss.org.au</a> Thank you.										