



**International
Social Service**
AUSTRALIA

ISS AUSTRALIA NEWSLETTER – July 2011

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ISS News

1. Happy Birthday! – ISS Australia's 50th Anniversary

ISS Australia turned 50 in March 2011*, and celebrated this significant milestone with a reception at Government House kindly hosted by the former Governor of Victoria, Professor David de Kretser, AC, and Mrs de Kretser. The event was attended by the Minister for Community Services, the Hon Mary Wooldridge, ISS Australia's President Diana Batzias, current and former Board members and staff, and members and supporters of ISS Australia, in addition to stakeholders including representatives of the NSW Department of Human Services, the Family Court of Australia and philanthropic partners including the Myer Foundation and the R.E. Ross Trust.

"The strong ISS network worldwide has been paramount in ensuring human rights are protected..."
- Professor de Kretser

Professor de Kretser noted in his welcoming speech that the strong ISS network worldwide "has been paramount in ensuring human rights are protected and that displaced persons are reunited, particularly focusing on the rights and situation of children who do not have the ability or skills to help themselves".

Diana Batzias and I spoke on behalf of ISS Australia,

paying tribute to its founders, benefactors and former staff and Board members, who between them ensured the organisation's survival through difficult times and lean years. The usual requirements of privacy were relaxed on this special occasion to voice ISS Australia's thanks

to our sole Life Member, Mrs Neilma Gantner, who was one of the small group of founders 50 years ago and continues today as a staunch friend and benefactor.

Kammy Cordner Hunt (daughter of the late Anne Cordner, ISS Australia's long-serving Executive

Director and Board member) then launched "A Very Personal Service", a history of ISS Australia's first 50 years of service (1955 – 2005) in Australia. The author Dr Barbara Pertz of HistorySmiths wrapped up official proceedings with a witty and heartfelt response on her project. Guests were then free to mingle



Former Governor of Victoria, Professor David de Kretser, AC, and Mrs de Kretser with Minister for Community Services the Hon Mary Wooldridge (r), ISS Australia President Diana Batzias (2nd r) and Exec Dir Fionn Skiotis (l)

** International Social Service – Australian Branch was registered as a company limited by guarantee on 8 March 1961.*

and enjoy the unique surroundings of Government House; musical entertainment was kindly provided by Mr Rod Wilson.

Fionn Skiotis
Executive Director



2. International Roundup...

2.1. Meeting of ISS's Professional Advisory Committee in Geneva

The annual in-person meeting of the ISS network's Professional Advisory Committee (PAC) was held recently in Geneva (23-24 May). Under the network's revised Statutes, agreed at an Extraordinary International Council meeting in May 2010, the PAC is made up of all of the Directors (and equivalent positions) of the network's 18 Branches and Affiliated Bureaus. The PAC works with the ISS General Secretariat (GS) to provide information and advice to ISS's Governing Board, and to assist in implementing strategic goals determined by the Governing Board as the network's governance body. The PAC's Chairperson (Julie Rosicky, ISS USA's Executive Director) is a member of the Governing Board by virtue of holding that office.

The May meeting was attended by ISS Australia's Executive Director Fionn Skiotis, together with other PAC members and representatives of the GS, including the Secretary-General Jean Ayoub. It considered a wide range of matters relevant to the future of the ISS network, including the pressing issue of network development, and agreed an ambitious raft of goals and activities for the next year. Other matters considered included what work the ISS network will focus on in future, the role of ISS in the 1996 Hague Convention, the development of international family mediation services and the election of a Vice Chairperson (Hans van Hooff, Director, ISS Netherlands). The PAC will next meet by teleconference in October 2011 and in person at the International Council meeting in Banff, Canada in May 2012.

2.2. Meeting of Hague Conference Special Commission

While visiting Europe for the annual PAC meeting of ISS Directors, ISS Australia's Executive Director also attended part of the Special Commission meeting on implementation of the 1980 (Child Abduction) and 1996 (Child Protection) Hague Conventions, organised by the Hague Conference on Private International Law (the international body overseeing these Conventions). Held at the Peace Palace complex in The Hague, Netherlands from 1-10 June, the Special Commission (held only once every 4-5 years) brought together over 300 representatives of Central Authorities and the judiciary from around the world, in addition to representatives of international non-governmental organisations such as ISS. ISS representatives attended throughout the meeting on a roster basis.



The meeting undertook a comprehensive review of many aspects of implementation of the two Conventions. Of particular interest to the ISS network were consideration of the links between domestic or family violence and child abduction, whether the voice of the child should be strengthened in proceedings brought under the Conventions and the role of mediation in Convention proceedings, particularly in the context of child abduction matters. Discussion of how the most recent Convention – the 1996 Convention on the protection of children – will be implemented as it enters into force around the world, was also of strong interest to ISS as the network considers how it can best play an effective role under this Convention. The second and final part of the Special Commission meeting will be held in January 2012.

2.3. ISS Asia-Pacific regional meeting in Taipei

ISS Australia Executive Director Fionn Skiotis also attended the annual Asia-Pacific regional meeting in Taipei, Taiwan from 16-18 June. The meeting brought together the region's four branches (Hong Kong, Japan, Philippines and Australia) and was wonderfully hosted by our correspondent in Taiwan, ISS Taiwan. The meeting spent some time discussing the approach on network development agreed at the recent PAC meeting in Geneva, in which key branches and bureaus (to be known as "branches of reference") will take on increased responsibility for network development in a particular region or sub-region, in cooperation



with the General Secretariat. The meeting also reviewed the state of the ISS network in the Asia-Pacific region, noting the need for capacity building and development in the case of many correspondents in the region. Regional branches will undertake fundraising to try to ensure up to 6 Asia-Pacific correspondents can attend training and similar activities at the International Council meeting in Banff in May 2012.

ISS Australia gratefully acknowledges the warm hospitality provided by ISS Taiwan for the regional meeting and assistance in organising the meeting provided by the Regional Coordination office, ISS Hong Kong.

3. Branch profile: International Social Service Japan



International Social Service Japan (ISSJ) was founded in 1959, when it was formally approved by the Ministry of Health and Welfare to engage in social welfare work as a successor organisation to the American Joint Committee for Assisting Japanese-American Orphans, which was inaugurated in 1952 for the purposes of assisting war orphans and children of interracial origins after World War II. Concurrently, ISSJ joined the International Social Service network and also became an advisory agency of the United Nations. ISSJ's headquarters is located in Tokyo and professionally trained social workers provide more than 2000 counselling services and assistances per year.

We conduct various activities such as assistance for intercountry adoption for children who are not in the custody of their birth parents, assistance for family reunion

over national boundaries, assistance for stateless children by obtaining nationality, assistance for various problems related to international marriage and divorce, and counselling for refugees and refugee status applicants in Japan. In Cambodia, we supply street children with literacy education and food. We tackle issues in cooperation with government agencies, the United Nations, courts, hospitals, welfare institutions and so on and in particular have entered into a contract with the Philippines ICAB (Intercountry Adoption Board).

With ISS Australia, we work together on cases of internationally abducted children and also for Australian-Japanese children born after World War II, known as the "Kure Kids". These are the children of Australian military men who were stationed in Kure, Hiroshima after the war. The Kure Kids visited their fathers' country from October 9 to 15, 2006, with the help of ISS Australia.

4. New team member: Rebecca (Bec) Carleton, NSW Office

My name is Rebecca Carleton and I am a new Intercountry Social Worker at ISS Australia in the NSW Office. I graduated with a Bachelor of Social Work from the University of New South Wales in 2008 where I completed field placements in a psychiatric hospital and in the Barnardos foster care program. Since graduating, I have worked for

Anglicare and for The Benevolent Society in their Out of Home Care programs where I was involved in training, assessing and supporting general foster carers and kinship carers as well as case management of children in Out of Home Care.

My professional experience as a social worker has given me a passion for working and

advocating for the rights of children. I was fortunate to spend the majority of my childhood growing up in Africa which has led me to be interested in cross-cultural and

international Social Work. I am very excited to be part of the team at ISS Australia and look forward to developing my skills and knowledge in this important area.

5. Case Study: International Kinship Assessment

Vincent lives in Western Australia, and his 2 year old grandson, Emanuel, is living in foster care in the United Kingdom. Emanuel was removed from his parents' care days after birth due to their lack of readiness to care for a child.

A referral was received from the UK authorities requesting the coordination and facilitation of a Kinship Assessment. To be included in this report was an assessment of Vincent's current living circumstances and parental capacity.

ISS Australia organised a private assessor in Western Australia to visit Vincent's home on multiple occasions, and prepare the assessment report in line with ISS kinship reporting guidelines and the 'best interests of the child' principle.

Concurrently, ISS Australia provided a range of services to Vincent and his wife throughout the process. These services included counselling and support, the circulation of

information pertaining to Emanuel's health and development, and acquiring child protection background checks.



It was recommended that Emanuel be placed in Vincent's care; however, the family currently await the decision of the UK authorities. ISS Australia continues to support Vincent and his wife, and if requested, will facilitate the provision of further information to ensure the possibility of the child being placed with the family is fully explored.

Note: all identifying information has been changed to protect the privacy of those involved.

Tiana Boyd
Intercountry Social Worker

6. NSW Forum on International Parental Child Abduction

On 24 May the NSW Office of ISS Australia held an International Parental Child Abduction Forum in Ingleburn, Sydney. This was the third free annual forum held by ISS Australia in Sydney. The forum provided professionals from the south-western suburbs of Sydney with the necessary knowledge and awareness to prevent abduction occurring within their client groups and to understand what supports and services are available when abduction occurs,

plus information about the Court procedures of the 1980 Hague Convention on the Civil

Aspects of International Child Abduction. Once again feedback indicated the event, attended by over 25 professionals, was a great success.

ISS Australia acknowledges the other key speakers at the forum, without whom such forums would not be possible: Deborah Fry – Child Dispute Services, Family Law Courts; Audrey Pereira – NSW Central Authority; and Sharon Parker – Virtual Services, Relationships Australia.

Damon Martin
Manager, NSW Office



7. International Family Mediation

The mediation-based services of ISS Australia have often been mentioned in this newsletter, and form an important part of ISS Australia's work defending children and connecting families across the world. A recent exciting development means that ISS Australia can make improvements to our mediation-based services.

ISS Australia has secured funded places for a National Office social worker and I to complete the Vocational Graduate Diploma in Family Dispute Resolution offered by the Family Mediation Centre in Melbourne. Once completed, this qualification will allow us to receive accreditation from the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department as registered providers of family dispute resolution, and is the only Australian qualification leading to such accreditation. It is expected that ISS Australia's social workers will have completed the course by the end of 2011 and will seek accreditation as soon as possible after that.

The registration of ISS Australia staff as family dispute resolution practitioners is expected to offer many benefits to us:

- ISS Australia will be able to offer family mediation services under the provisions and guidelines of the Australian Family Law Act
- Mediators can offer mediation services in international disputes which fulfil parents' obligations to attend compulsory mediation before attending the Australian Family Court
- Mediation service delivery will be improved in order to meet the requirements of family mediation services as stipulated under this legislation, including requirements to respond to child protection concerns

8. Membership Renewal and Donor Appeal 2011

ISS Australia is once again appealing to all current and former members to renew their organisational membership for the 2011-12 year. We also invite our supporters to consider joining ISS Australia as a tangible way of helping us to continue providing our unique intercountry social work services and defending children and connecting families across the world. Membership brings the right to vote at ISS Australia's Annual General Meeting and other benefits.

- Mediators can issue Certificates recognised under the Australian Family Law Act, which recognise that mediation has occurred or has been assessed as unsuitable, allowing a pathway to legal proceedings if clients wish

- Clients and other stakeholders of ISS Australia can feel confident that our mediation services meet all the guidelines required of family mediation



services under Australian law, including requirements for maintenance of confidentiality, protection of material disclosed in mediation from being used as evidence in later Court proceedings and access to transparent complaints procedures

I look forward to reporting on developments to ISS Australia's international family mediation service once our accreditation as family dispute resolution practitioners is received.

ISS Australia gratefully acknowledges the assistance of the Family Mediation Centre and the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department in allowing staff to complete the Vocational Graduate Diploma course.

Helen Freris
National Services Manager

Donations from renewing members and supporters are also most welcome at this time of year. No donation is too small and any amount will be of benefit to our unfunded general casework services. All donations are fully tax deductible.

For all memberships and donations please use the 2011-2012 form in this newsletter.

DONATION AND MEMBERSHIP FORM 2011-2012



A My details (Please complete with BLOCK letters)

Title..... Name.....

Organisation.....

Address.....

Suburb State Postcode.....

Phone..... Email.....

B I would like to make a donation to International Social Service Australia:

\$50 \$100 \$250 \$500 Other Amount \$.....

Donations over \$2.00 are tax deductible

C I would like to apply for / renew membership (please circle) **with International Social Service Australia for 2011/2012**

Individual Membership.....	\$ 35.00 <input type="checkbox"/>
Individual Membership (Concession).....	\$ 20.00 <input type="checkbox"/>
Organisational Membership (Income > \$300,000).....	\$100.00 <input type="checkbox"/>
Organisational Membership (Income < \$300,000).....	\$ 45.00 <input type="checkbox"/>

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D I would like to pay by:

MasterCard Visa Cheque (to International Social Service Australia) Money Order

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E Please send me information about leaving a bequest to ISS Australia in my will.

Thank you

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