



Annual Report



2021-22

Supporting Children • Connecting Families • Across the World



Helping children, young people and adults be safely connected to family anywhere in the world.



# Contents

04  
06  
07  
09  
10  
12  
14  
15  
16  
17  
18  
19  
20  
23

## Child Safety Statement

ISS Australia is absolutely committed to the safety of children. We have in place policies to develop and foster an organisational culture of child safety and provide assurance regarding recognising and reporting any child abuse. All ISS Australia staff, volunteers, students and interns are required to have a working with children check. For further information on our more detailed child safety policy contact ISS Australia.

## Acknowledgement of Country

ISS Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners and pay our respect to Elders past present and emerging of the land on which our NSW Office stands, the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation. We also wish to acknowledge the Traditional Owners and pay our respects to the Elders past, present and emerging of the land on which our Victoria Office stands; the Boon Wurrung and Woiwurrung (Wurundjeri) peoples of the Kulin Nation. We also offer this respect to the Traditional Owners of the land throughout Australia. ISS Australia acknowledges the importance that connection to land and culture has to identity and the wellbeing of children, families and communities.



# Who we are

ISS Australia is a leading agency in Australia providing social work, legal and family mediation services.

We are a national not-for-profit service provider and registered as a charity with the Australian Charities and Not-for-profits Commission (ACNC).



## What we do

ISS Australia provides intercountry social work, legal and mediation services supporting children and families separated by international borders. We do this with around 130 International Social Service network partners around the world.

## Why we exist

ISS Australia believes children and families should be connected wherever they are in the world. **We believe that everyone needs to belong and know who they are.**

## Our services and international focus

- International parental child abduction legal and social work service
- International child welfare and kinship care
- International post adoption tracing and reunification
- International family mediation and child consultation
- NSW Special Search Service
- International family tracing and reunification



## Our Vision

Is for children and families to be connected wherever they are in the world.

## Our Mission

Is to support, protect and reunite children and families who have been separated by international borders.

## Our Strategy

Is to grow our services supporting and protecting children and families separated by international borders. We will do this through service excellence and organisational and staff capacity.





## President's Report

Dr Fiona McIntosh

**On behalf of the ISS Australia Board of Directors, I am pleased to share our 2021 – 22 Annual Report. While the impact of the global pandemic has been felt in every aspect of ISS Australia's work, our dedicated team of social workers, lawyers and mediators continue to provide exceptional, professional services to children and families impacted by international borders.**

**In June 2022 at the Board Strategy Day, Jennifer Coate AO provided a powerful presentation on learnings from the Royal Commission of child sexual abuse in institutions, being highly relevant to our 'Care Leaver' clients who access support from our NSW Special Search Service. We also explored future service options to grow and diversify ISS Australia's income to better support our clients, this included a specialist therapeutic counselling service for donor conceived people and people born via surrogacy.**

It was also pleasing to deliver a small surplus for the third straight year in a row, demonstrating good financial governance even when the COVID-19 crisis has seen a lot of philanthropic funds subside. I would like to thank all the ISS Australia staff who continue to conduct their work with both dignity and empathy, and the leadership of the ISS Australia Management Team.

I look forward to supporting ISS Australia's clients and our Board, guided by our purpose that 'everyone needs to belong and know who they are'. Lastly, I invite you to reflect with us on the past year and all that ISS Australia has achieved.



## Acting CEO's Report

Damon Martin

**Despite the unprecedented challenges of COVID, 2021 – 22 was another busy year for ISS Australia with great outcomes for clients.**

**Whilst staff continue to conduct the majority of their casework while working from home and utilising our remote information technology system, we have consistently met the niche demand of social work, legal and mediation services for children and families affected by cross-border issues.**

As global travel began to resume, the demand for our cross-border services increased. Many 'global families' utilised our international family medication services. After some reductions in international parental child abductions due to travel restrictions, the need for our legal and social work services also grew substantially.

Similarly, there has been an increased demand in our search for origins cases, particularly for those separated by adoption. Anecdotally the forced lockdowns and isolations triggered many adoptees and birth family members to instigate their search because there was now the necessary time and space to focus on it.

Our casework continues to be supported by the generous funding of the Commonwealth and NSW Governments,

in addition to our project work with grants from the Alfred Felton Bequest, UNICEF Cambodia, Yugilbar and Aranday Foundations. We also received generous funding from our new exclusive corporate partner, Rafton Family Lawyers.

In 2021 -22, we farewelled our Managing Lawyer Rebecca Chapman, who was instrumental in our Community Legal Centre accreditation and developing our Reconciliation Action Plan.

Finally, I offer my heartfelt thanks to my dedicated and passionate ISS Australia colleagues who remain highly committed to providing quality services and achieving positive outcomes for our clients. I also extend my thanks to all those who have worked with us, including our clients who gave us the opportunity to support them, our national stakeholders and our ISS members around the world.

**Note:** Peter van Vliet returned as CEO in October 2022 after a short stint with the Australian Government in mid-2022.





We believe that everyone needs to belong and know who they are.

# Our Impact

2021-22 ISS Australia Service Data

## Service Areas: Total Cases

In 2021-22 ISS Australia worked extensively on **358 cases**

International Child Welfare and Kinship Care

76

66

International Post Adoption Tracing Services

58

International Parental Child Abduction Legal

50

International Parental Child Abduction Social Work

NSW Special Search Service

76

28

International Family Mediation

General Family Tracing and Reunification

4

We also handled **730 inquiries** where advice was given without case management.



# International Parental Child Abduction Service

## Our Critical Work

International Social Service (ISS) Australia continues to provide timely and high quality legal and social work assistance to people impacted by International Parental Child Abduction (IPCA). Our comprehensive national service can support clients from both a legal perspective and psychological perspective, providing counselling support and a holistic service delivery model.

As the world adjusts to living through and beyond the COVID-19 pandemic, changes to restrictions on global travel and movement have continued to impact many families separated by international borders. Our social workers continue to provide critical and specialist support to families and whilst the demand for legal services remains consistent, there have been increased complexities in the nature of our casework.

## Preventing International Parental Child Abduction Webinar:

In October 2021, ISS Australia hosted a free online webinar titled 'Preventing International Parental Child Abduction'. The webinar acknowledged the reality that each year in Australia hundreds of children are abducted by a parent from their usual place of residence and taken overseas. The [webinar](#) covered information regarding the Australian Federal Police's Family Law Watchlist for airport checks, the Child Alert Request System for passport applications, and ISS Australia's social work and legal support available for families impacted by IPCA. The session had almost 200 registrations and the webinar's online recording has been accessed by over 200 people.

## Project prevent

ISS Australia was grateful to receive a grant from the NSW Government's Social Sector Transformation Fund to create an online campaign, titled **"Project Prevent"**. Project Prevent is designed to raise awareness surrounding the significant and far-reaching effects of IPCA. The context in which IPCA occurs can be complex and involve many different factors. ISS Australia recognises the importance of understanding and addressing underlying causes and triggers of IPCA. The first published video describes IPCA and shows support is available for those impacted through ISS Australia's services.

By raising community awareness, ISS Australia hopes to provide even more effective, timely and holistic solutions to families and children.

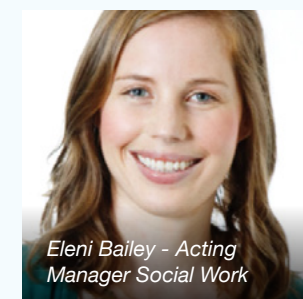


## Community education and engagement:

Over the past year, ISS Australia IPCA legal team embarked on an awareness raising campaign for the legal profession about the 1980 Hague Child Abduction Convention, its application, and the issues surrounding IPCA more broadly. We aimed to share ISS Australia's specialised knowledge in IPCA related matters, to ensure clients affected by IPCA are provided with timely and accurate advice, and to increase awareness of services available at ISS Australia.

ISS Australia delivered community legal education and engagement to the following services:

- Catholic Care Victoria
- United Care NSW
- Family Relationship Centre Victoria – Catholic Care
- Legal Aid Western Australia
- Women's Legal Service NSW (Ask LOIS series)
- Victoria Legal Aid
- Hearsay: The Legal Podcast
- Central Coast Family Law Pathways Network Annual event



Eleni Bailey - Acting Manager Social Work



Belinda Li - Managing Lawyer

The IPCA service has, and now continues to deliver community legal education on a regular basis as a result of this awareness raising project. We have had a positive and high response rate from various legal profession peak bodies and Legal Aid services to our messaging



## Rafton Family Lawyers "Reflections in Law" Conference

On 28-30 March 2022, ISS Australia representatives attended a legal conference in Huskisson hosted by ISS Australia's exclusive corporate sponsor, Rafton Family Lawyers. Belinda Li – Managing Lawyer and Damon Martin – Deputy CEO presented alongside colleagues from the NSW Central Authority on the 1980 and 1996 Hague Conventions in relation to IPCA matters and the protection of children. All participants enjoyed a vibrant and collegiate atmosphere with many attending their first in-person conference since the pandemic.



## Positive feedback from community education events and seminars:

*"Excellent speakers. Completely informative and I will take away a lot of useful/helpful information for my practice. Thank you."*

*"Great topic, fantastic presenters."*

*"Excellent presenters, both of them detailed and very informative speakers."*

*"Very interesting speakers."*

*"Good speakers, enjoyable evening."*

*"Great speakers!! It was a lovely presentation"*

*"It was fantastic!"*

## Central Coast Family Law Pathway Network Annual Event

On 19 May 2022, Eleni Bailey – Acting Manager of the IPCA Social Work and IFM team and Belinda Li – Managing Lawyer were invited as guest presenters for the Central Coast Family Law Pathway Network (FLPN) annual dinner. The theme of the evening was "Connecting Children and Families Across Borders". It was an engaging event full of enthusiasm and connection between professionals, with many participants attending an in-person event for the first time since the pandemic.

Eleni presented on ISS Australia's services including IPCA Social Work support, International Mediation Services and Child Inclusive Practice. Belinda presented on IPCA legal support and the legal aspects of the 1980 Hague Convention. The engaged audience asked many interesting questions. A huge thank you to the Central Coast FLPN Steering Committee for arranging a successful event.



ISS Australia gratefully acknowledges the continued funding and support from the Australian Government's Attorney-General's Department for our IPCA service.



# NSW Government Funded Services

## 1. International Kinship Care

Ten years ago, baby Joshua was in a precarious situation. This changed however when a proactive caseworker contacted ISS Australia, seeking assistance to locate Joshua's family members in Borneo.

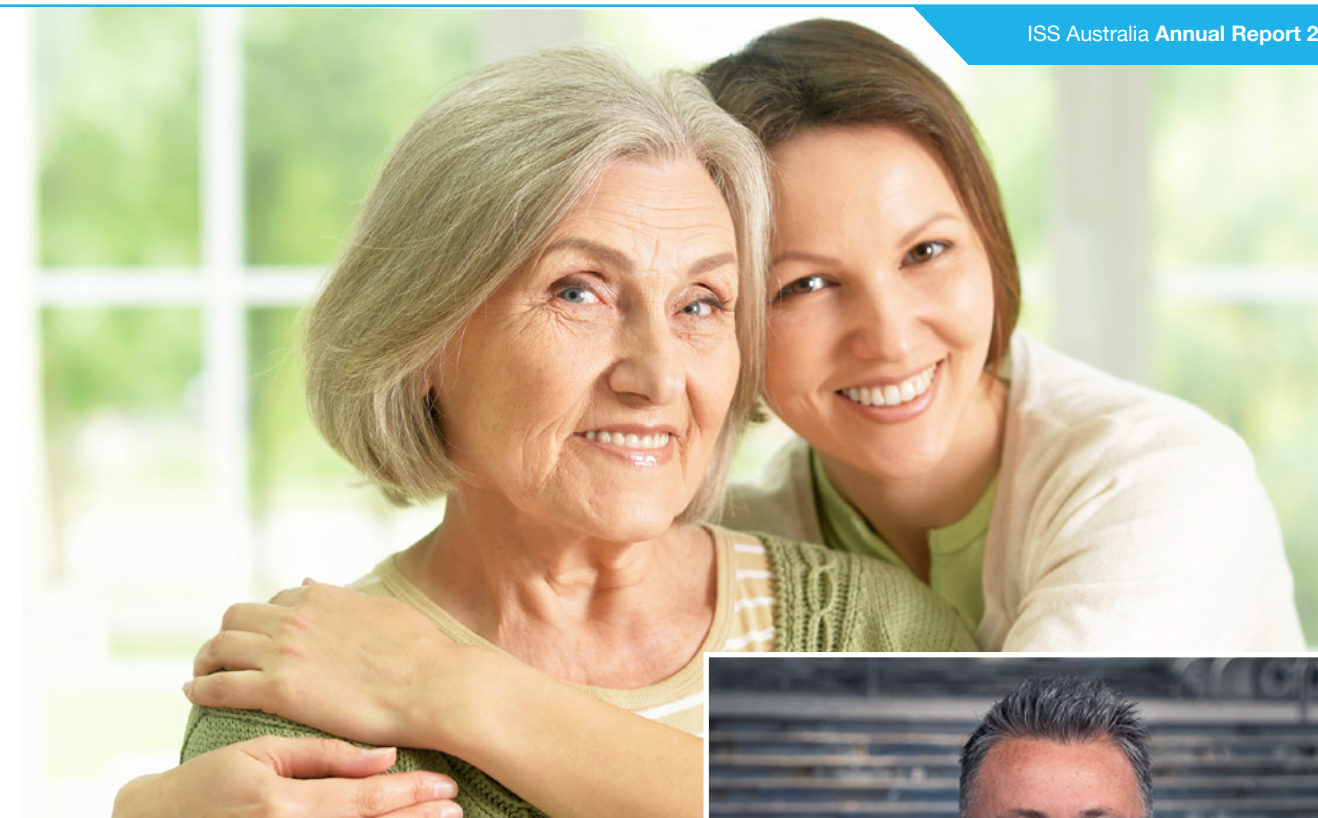
Through the assistance of our ISS member in Malaysia, Joshua's maternal grandparents were located and advised of their grandson's existence and situation. They expressed their desire to care for Joshua and a comprehensive assessment was completed, recommending the grandparents as a viable placement option for Joshua. The Children's Court Judge then recommended Joshua be transitioned into his grandparent's long-term care, a process which began with 8-month-old Joshua being escorted to Borneo with the assistance of ISS Australia.

Fast forward 10 years and Joshua continues to thrive in his family placement in Borneo, which in turn has enhanced his sense of identity and cultural needs as well as his family connections. ISS Australia encourages child protection caseworkers to explore all options that might allow a child to remain within their extended family, including identifying any potential family placement overseas.

In 2022 we developed a 4 minute [International Kinship Care video](#) that highlights Joshua's story. The aim was to raise awareness and promote international kinship care as an important and viable alternative care option for children.

There are over 45,000 children in out-of-home care in Australia, and almost half of these children are cared for by people whom they are not related to. When a child cannot be cared for by their parents, the preferred means of care should be within their extended family, regardless of whether the extended family resides overseas. Family placements like Joshua's, allow children to know their family and medical history, cultural identity and language.

ISS Australia will continue to promote international kinship care as a viable placement option for children. We can assist Australian Child Protection Authorities and OOHC providers with the international element of their casework, including thorough background checks of prospective carers, the exploration and facilitation of family connections, and assessments of extended family placement options overseas.



## 2. NSW Special Search Service

ISS Australia's first largely domestic service has now entered its fourth year of service. This NSW Government funded service provides free and specialised search and reunion services to people separated by NSW Government intervention. This includes separation through adoption, being under the care of the Minister, foster care, or being placed in a children's home.

Since successfully winning this tender in 2018, ISS Australia has assisted over 150 clients, and our success rate at locating and reuniting family members is a remarkable 65%. Undoubtedly our greatest search tool is our access to LifeSearch, an online database of NSW Births Deaths and Marriages records. We are the only NGO with access to these NSW BDM records.



**Damon Martin, A/CEO / Manager,  
NSW Government Funded Services**

We have also developed two Search Guides, one tailored to [people separated by adoption](#) and one for [Care Leavers](#). The guides provide user friendly, concise information on the stages of search and reunion, such as preparing for the search, searching, making contact and reunion. There is also information on the types of DNA tests and providers, as well as important things to consider when pursuing DNA testing.

## 3. International Post Adoption Tracing Service (IPATS)

IPATS provides free tracing and reunion support to NSW residents who have been separated by adoption, and where one party is thought to be overseas. The majority of our cases involve searching in the UK and New Zealand, which highlights the widespread past adoption practices in Britain and the colonies, as well as the significant English and New Zealand population in Australia.

We will soon mark 10 years since the former-Prime Minister Julia Gillard delivered a formal National Apology on behalf of the Australian Government to people impacted by past forced adoption policies and practices. We know more than a quarter of million babies in Australia were subject to forced adoption practices, and many of our IPATS clients (particularly the mothers) continue to be impacted by their

past experiences and the significant ongoing effects.

One of the most significant effects is loss. A profound sense of loss can be experienced both by those who are adopted, as well as those who lost children to adoption. Many adopted people we support describe dealing with emotional trauma and struggles with their identity for their entire lives. We also know the effects of forced adoption have a severe and continuing effect on the lives of many mothers we support, including those experiencing depression and PTSD.

Our 'adoption-competent' IPATS social workers aim to locate and reunite family members and facilitate contact (where appropriate) in a supportive, respectful, and empathetic manner.





Eleni Bailey - Acting Manager International Family Mediation Service



# International Family Mediation

**Our vision is to provide Australia's best international family mediation service by focusing on the needs of children and reducing cross border family conflict.**

**ISS Australia provides an International Family Mediation (IFM) service, which focuses on the best interests of children and reducing cross border parental conflict.**

Since 2012, our IFM service has assisted hundreds of families in over 30 countries. We support families where one parent or carer is in Australia, and the other parent or carer is overseas, focusing on the best outcomes for children. The service has continued to grow in its reach and impact each year, with a significant increase in enquiries and cases over the last year.

Through a generous multi-year grant from the Alfred Felton Bequest (Equity Trustees), ISS Australia has been able to significantly build the capacity of the IFM service. Over the past year growth has included the training and future accreditation of one additional Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner, the training of one additional Child Consultant, marketing of the IFM service through online promotion and advertising, and improving accessibility of the service through the design and implementation of an [online contact form](#).

Online community education promoting the IFM service, increasing community and professional knowledge, and evaluation of the IFM service has also taken place. ISS Australia is committed to providing an accessible, specialised mediation services to families separated across international borders. ISS Australia is grateful for the generous funding and support of the Alfred Felton Bequest – Equity Trustees for this project.



# A Better Future is Possible – ISS Australia's Children with Disabilities Project in Cambodia

**Coordinated by Damon Martin – Deputy CEO**

Since 2016, ISS Australia has delivered an UNICEF Cambodia funded project to promote family-based care for children with disabilities living in residential care institutions in Cambodia. The project's rationale comes from knowing most children residing in residential care institutions are not orphans and have at least one living parent.

We also know that residential care can have a devastating impact on a child's brain development leading to life-long negative implications, and children with disabilities are often the last to benefit from family-based care and are more likely to be left behind in orphanages.

In 2021-22, one of ISS Australia's priorities was to build the capacity of Cambodian professionals' knowledge when working with children with disabilities. As such, ISS Australia developed Level 1 of the Children with Disabilities (CWD) training module for delivery through Cambodian Government's National Institute of Social Affairs (NISA).

In September 2021, this training module was piloted online with approximately 50 government and NGO professionals. The Level 1 module consists of the following sessions:

1. Awareness of Disability Inclusion for Children
2. Barriers and Inclusion
3. Identification and Assessment – Part 1
4. Identification and Assessment – Part 2
5. Support and Referral to Services

In order to ensure Level 1 of the Children with Disabilities training module is sustainable and appropriate to the Cambodian's professional and cultural needs, ISS Australia facilitated an inclusive small-scale Training of Trainers workshop in Phnom Penh in 2022. A group of National

Trainers will now disseminate the training to Cambodian professionals from many levels, including commune, district, province, government and NGO.

Another ISS Australia priority in 2021-22 focused on the deinstitutionalisation of children with disabilities. Online and in-person workshops took place in 2021 to bring together the collective knowledge of the government, key NGOs and residential care institutions (RCI) with the aim to develop an effective deinstitutionalisation framework for children with disabilities living in residential care institutions in Cambodia.

The objective of the workshops was to learn from past experiences and consolidate best practice in order to begin formulating a clear policy and guidelines for the deinstitutionalisation process for children with disabilities living in residential care institutions through promoting family reintegration and other forms of family based care such as kinship care, foster care and adoption.





# Our People

## Our Board

**Dr Fiona McIntosh - President (Melbourne)**  
**Nina Brooks - Vice President (Melbourne)**  
**Richard Giles - Treasurer (Melbourne)**  
 Peter Arnaudo (Canberra)  
 Rebecca Cowan (Melbourne)  
 Deborah Fry (Sydney)  
 Mary Griffin (Armidale)  
 Susan Wnukowska-Mtonga (Melbourne)  
 Barbara Lane (Sydney)

## Our Patron and Ambassadors

### PATRON

**The Hon Alastair Nicholson AO RFD QC**  
 Former Chief Justice of the Family Court of Australia;  
 Chair, Children's Rights International

### AMBASSADORS

Ra Chapman  
 Professor Felicity Gerry QC  
 Dr Sue Packer AM

## Our Staff

### CORPORATE

**Peter van Vliet – CEO (Melbourne)**  
 Ann Freilich – Accountant (Melbourne)

### NSW Government Funded Services

**Damon Martin - Deputy CEO / (Acting CEO mid-2022)**  
 Phoebe Lewis - Senior Social Worker (Sydney)  
 Phoebe Peters - Intercountry Social Worker  
 Meredith Gantt - Intercountry Social Worker  
 Lizzie Gray - Intercountry Social Worker

### International Parental Child Abduction and International Family Mediation Team

Kay Hardefeldt – Manager (to April 2022, then Parental Leave)  
 Eleni Bailey – Intercountry Social Worker (to April 2022) / Acting Manager (from April 2022)  
 Feray Ergun – Senior Social Worker (from April 2022)  
 Aga Duc – Intercountry Social Worker (to March 2022)  
 Amelia McDermott – Coordinator, National Child Protection Services

### International Parental Child Abduction Legal Service

Rebecca Chapman – Managing Lawyer (to October 2021)  
 Belinda Li – Lawyer (to February 2022) / Acting Manager (March 2022 – June 2022)  
 Jenny Tam – Senior Lawyer / Acting Manager (October 2021 – February 2022)  
 Ben Hughes – Lawyer (to September 2021)  
 Jessica Raffal – Lawyer (from November 2021)  
 Corinne Kew – Lawyer (from October 2021)  
 Monique Angeleri – Paralegal (from October 2021)

### Casuals, Students and Volunteers

Breanna Worthington (Marketing and Design Contractor)  
 Deniz Gok (Social Work Student)

# Staff Spotlight

## Feray Ergun – Senior Social Worker

**My association with International Social Service Australia has come a full circle since first my stepping foot through the National Office doors in February 2007.**

**Hungry for knowledge and the opportunity to put my learnings to use, my journey started as a bright-eyed social work student on placement at ISS Australia.**

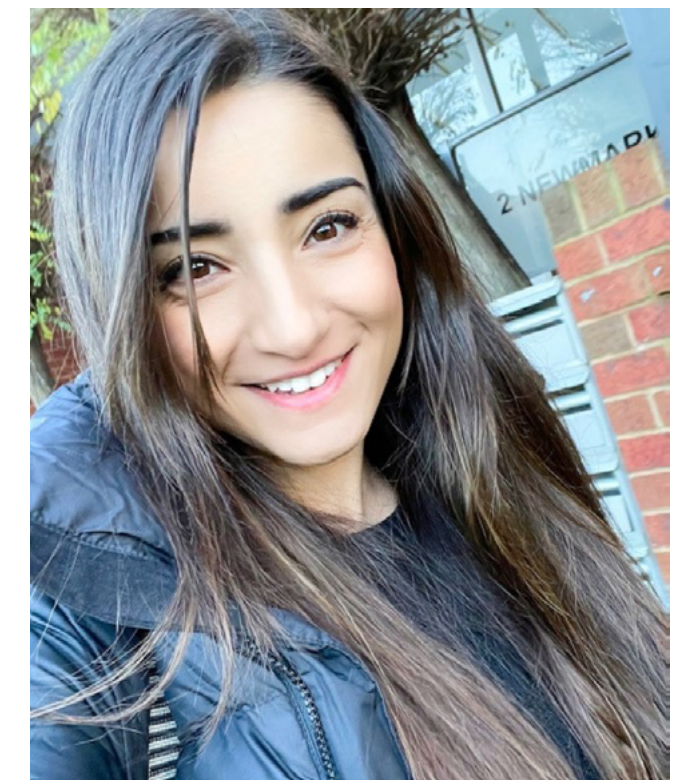
At the completion of my social work student placement, the National Services Manager and I had a discussion that would ultimately shape my professional career in a way that was not known to me at the time. The stars and sun must have been perfectly aligned, for I was asked to stay on at ISS Australia and be employed as an Intercountry Social Worker.

From there, I got exposure to every type of case that ISS Australia handled; from the intercountry kinship placement cases to post adoption tracing cases, from adult welfare cases to the International Parental Child Abduction cases, I case managed them all. As my involvement in these cases increased, so did my passion and hunger to do more. This led to me obtaining a Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner qualification which then subsequently also led to my decision to study and successfully complete a law degree. All three qualifications that I now hold, mirror the three main service areas of ISS Australia.

After almost 10 years working for ISS Australia, I made the decision to relocate overseas. With a fire in my belly and extensive cross-border casework experience, I left Australia and spent 6 years living and working in both Turkey and England. To say this was a period of growth, would be an understatement. The exposure to a wide array of family issues including forced marriages and family breakdowns in remote parts of Turkey, resulted in my decision that while it was nice to be overseas, I had a strong urge to return home to Australia (as soon as the Covid-19 border restrictions had been lifted).

Upon returning to Australia, I was presented with an opportunity to resume working for ISS Australia. I relished the opportunity to again work in an organisation I knew and valued, and who knew and valued me.

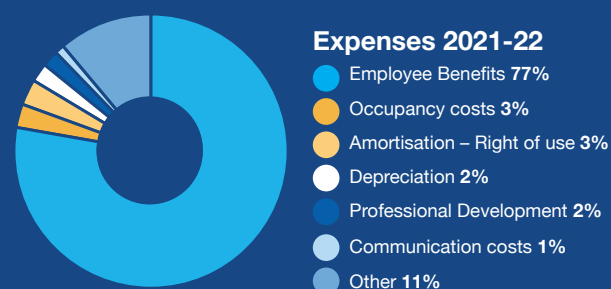
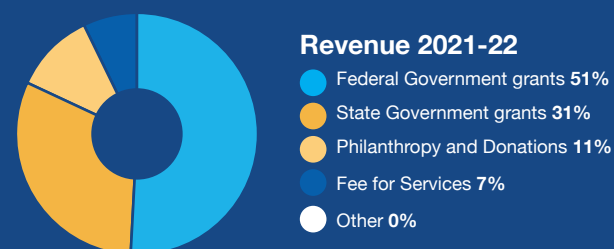
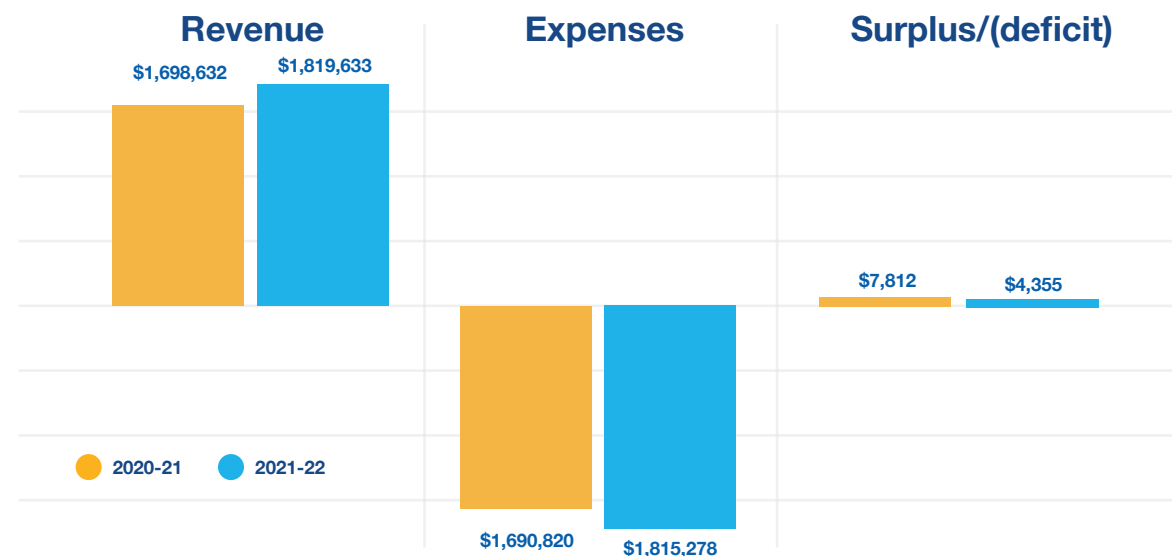
I am now a Senior Social Worker in the International Parental Child Abduction Service as well as an International Family Mediator. My more mature approach and view on life has made my 2nd stint at ISS Australia more captivating. Who knew that what started off as a student placement opportunity would continue to be my line of work 15 years on? I have valued every opportunity that ISS Australia has given me and hope that together, we can continue to make the world a better place, one child, one family, one case at a time.





# Financial Report

## ISS Australia Financial Snapshot 2021-22 operating results



### Financial Position at 30 June 2022

ASSETS	
Current Assets	\$470,439
Non-Current Assets	\$2,147,321
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$2,617,760</b>

LIABILITIES	
Current Liabilities	\$377,277
Non-Current Liabilities	-
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$377,277</b>

NET ASSETS	
Accumulated Surplus/(Deficit)	\$309,704
Reserves	\$1,970,779
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>\$2,280,483</b>

# Support ISS Australia

ISS Australia gratefully acknowledges the support and involvement of the following funders, donors and partners:

#### Gold Sponsor

ISS Australia has confirmed **Rafton Family Lawyers** as our exclusive gold sponsor.



#### Government and related bodies

Commonwealth Attorney General's Department  
NSW Department of Communities and Justice  
UNICEF Cambodia

#### Philanthropic Foundations and Trusts

Alfred Felton Bequest – Equity Trustees  
The Aranday Foundation  
Collier Charitable Fund  
Sidney Myer Fund and the Myer Foundation  
The Yulgilbar Foundation

#### Partners and Supporters

Adopt Change  
Asia Family First  
The Benevolent Society  
Community Legal Centres NSW  
Community Legal Centres Australia  
Creativa  
Inter Country Adoptee Voices  
Sandbox Productions  
Stories in Motion  
VARTA (Victorian Assisted Reproductive Treatment Authority)  
United Aid for Azerbaijan

Finally, we would like to acknowledge our wider ISS global network partners, including our General Secretariat in Switzerland, who contribute so much to our work and to improving the lives of children and families separated by borders.

#### Donate

ISS Australia relies on the generous donations of individuals to support our work with children and families separated by international borders.

Donations over \$2 are tax deductible. Visit our website or call 1300 657 843 to make a donation.

#### Leave a bequest

Make your legacy on that help change the lives of children and families separated by borders. Call 03 9614 8755 to discuss your bequest options in complete confidence.

#### Get involved

Follow us on social media. Become a member to help shape our organisation. Sign up to our quarterly newsletter. Volunteer for our marketing and fundraising or policy subcommittee. Apply to be an intern if you come from the social work, law, media and communications, marketing or international studies disciplines.

#### Connect with us

ISSAustralia

@iss-aus

International Social Service Australia



# Client Feedback

- “I appreciate your time, support and willingness to help”  
– **IPCA Social Work Service Client**
- “Thank you for all of your help and kind words over the last several months. You’ve helped me more than I could articulate”  
– **IPCA Social Work Service Client**
- “My social worker is an amazing support person and I would recommend her to anyone going through a difficult time. She is very understanding, caring and empathetic”  
– **IPCA Social Work Service Client.**
- “I wish to express appreciation for the level of support I received from you. I feel grateful to know there’s someone out there like you and thinking about my welfare and well-being”  
– **IPCA Social Work Service Client**
- “My lawyer was more than helpful and gave me confidence in my affidavit and sound advice in all legal matters pertaining to my case. I can’t say enough good things about my experience”  
– **IPCA Legal Service Client**
- “My lawyer worked tirelessly. I feel she went over and above to assist me. Empathetic, intelligent, knowledge and highly communicative”  
– **IPCA Legal Service Client**
- “The NSW Special Search Service has exceeded my expectations. I am humbled by an organisation that does what the NSW Special Search Service does. Thank you for restoring my trust.”  
– **NSW Special Search Service Client**
- “My social worker was so compassionate and helpful and made the entire experience easy”  
– **NSW Special Search Service Client**
- “Thank you to my social worker for all her hard work. My mum and her siblings have been apart for 67 years, this reunion would not have been possible without her. We will be forever grateful.”  
– **NSW Special Search Service Client**
- “Thank you. Although my contact was denied, your service really has allowed me to settle my own questions/anxiety about my birth parents. It has been hard, but I feel I am on my way to a fuller and happier life thanks to your help.”  
– **NSW Special Search Service Client**
- “I really cannot speak highly enough of the service provided by ISS Australia, specifically my social worker. She has been an amazing support and sounding board throughout the process, both for me and for my birth mother. She is personable, warm, empathetic and generally gives fantastic advice when needed.”  
– **IPATS Client**
- “ISS Australia’s Child Welfare and Kinship Services have always been very responsive to referrals and enquiries. I have always been updated on searches and asked for input where appropriate. I would recommend the service to my clients without hesitation”  
– **Professional accessing our Child Welfare and Kinship Care Service**







## An article from ISS Australia's exclusive gold corporate sponsor, Rafton Family Lawyers

By Stephanie Azzi and Maurice Edwards

### What is parenting coordination and how can a parenting coordinator help you?

**A divorce or separation can be difficult. It can be more difficult if children are involved. Securing Court Orders or agreeing to a parenting plan with your former partner may require considerable effort and involve significant compromise.**

What happens if there are still difficulties with the other parent after securing Court Orders or agreeing to a Parenting Plan? Maybe parenting coordination through a parenting coordinator is an answer.

#### What is a parenting coordinator?

Parenting Coordination ("PC") is a child centered process for conflicted, separating and separated parents. It is a form of dispute resolution and child development education for parents, to help them implement their Parenting Orders or Parenting Plan.

Conflict does not stop once Parenting Orders have been made or agreement has been reached. Often that's when the really hard work of daily routines and working together begin and the uncertainties about the Court Orders or the Parenting Plan can appear.

Through education, mediation and case management; the family's progress, post-separation, is monitored to assist the parents to ensure the best possible outcomes for their children.

#### Who is and when should you engage a Parenting Coordinator (PC)?

A Parenting Coordinator is a professional (often an experienced family lawyer) trained in dealing with difficult parenting issues involving parents who are or have been involved in a family law dispute.

Parents whose disputes involve high levels of anger, protracted or repetitive litigation or who struggle to comply with Court Orders or Parenting Plans may benefit from the appointment of a PC.

A PC might assist where parents have shown a continued inability or unwillingness to make cooperative parenting decisions, comply with parenting arrangements or Orders or to reduce child-related conflicts.

#### How does it work?

Parents voluntarily engage with or can be ordered to work with a PC for a given period. PC's work with the parents

as and when the issues arise. This may be ad hoc and outside of normal appointment times. The benefit to the family is that the issues are addressed immediately as they occur. The parents have regular sessions with the PC as the needs arise.

The process usually works as follows:

- The parents and the PC sign an Agreement noting the terms, process and the expectations of the engagement.
- The parents each have an individual session in the first instance. These are followed by joint sessions which include both parents and the PC. If there are safety concerns, the "joint sessions" will be done so that parties don't come into contact with each other.
- Parents continue to attend sessions, typically monthly, until the PC advises that the matter can move to an "as needed" basis.
- In addition to the session attendance, either parent can contact the PC with a concern or difficulty and the PC will communicate with the other parent about these issues in an attempt to reach timely resolution.
- The PC will educate the parents on how to begin to manage this process themselves so that eventually the parents can disengage the PC and manage their co-parenting themselves.
- The parents will usually share equally in the cost of all communications with the PC.

#### What are the goals?

Parents that engage in PC can achieve the following:

- Reduce Child Stress.
- Improve Co-Parent Relationship.
- Increase Parenting Cooperation and Respect.
- Reduce Future Litigation.

#### PC Benefits Children by:

- Enhancing the child's confidence and self-esteem by creating an optimal environment for growth.
- Reducing the child's symptoms of stress as parental conflict decreases.
- Increasing the likelihood of keeping two active parents in the child's life.
- Creating a more relaxed home atmosphere allowing the child to adjust more effectively.



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