



**ANNUAL REPORT**

**2024-25**



**International  
Social Service**  
AUSTRALIA

**Supporting Children • Connecting Families • Across the World**



# Contents



## Child Safety Statement

ISS Australia is deeply committed to the safety and wellbeing of children. This commitment is underpinned by policies and procedures aimed at fostering an organisational culture of child safeguarding and providing assurance that child harm and abuse are recognised, responded to and reported in line with our legal and moral obligations. All ISS Australia staff, volunteers, students and interns are required to have a working with children check and undertake child safe training. For further information on our detailed child safety policy contact ISS Australia.

## Acknowledgement of Country

ISS Australia acknowledges the Traditional Owners of the land on which our NSW Office stands, the Gadigal People of the Eora Nation and pay our respects to Elders, past and present. We also wish to acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land on which our Victoria Office stands; the Boon Wurrung and Woiwurrung (Wurundjeri) peoples of the Kulin Nation and pay our respects to Elders, past and present. We 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

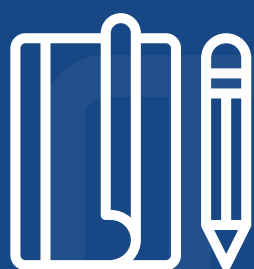
ISS Australia provides intercountry social work, legal and mediation services supporting children and families separated by international borders. We do this with over 140 International Social Service network members around the world.



## 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





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



Dr Fiona McIntosh

## President's Foreword



**It is with great pleasure that I report on behalf of the ISS Australia Board of Directors, reflecting on developments over the 2024/25 financial year, a year marked by stability, growth, and important transitions that position us strongly for the future.**

A major transition was the departure of Peter van Vliet as CEO. On behalf of the Board, I extend our heartfelt thanks to Peter for his years of dedicated service, during which ISS Australia strengthened its national reputation and laid the groundwork for continued growth. We wish him every success in his next chapter.

We are delighted to welcome Megan Mitchell as our new CEO. Megan brings a wealth of experience, particularly from her role as Australia's inaugural National Children's Commissioner. Her deep understanding of systems affecting vulnerable children and her strong advocacy for their wellbeing make her ideally suited to lead ISS Australia going forward. Her strategic vision and collaborative leadership are already delivering results.

This year, we proudly commemorated the ISS network's centenary at NSW Parliament House—an occasion that brought together partners, policymakers, and supporters to reflect on 100 years of impact. The event highlighted the enduring importance of our mission, brought to life by the passion and professionalism of our current staff and alumni.

Our connection to the global ISS network was further strengthened through active participation in centenary celebrations in Geneva, reaffirming our shared commitment to cross-border child welfare, family reunification, mediation and international cooperation. ISS Australia staff and Board members contributed to discussions under three themes:

- **100 Years of Women Explorers**, honouring pioneering women such as prominent Australians Neilma Gantner and Ann Cordner, foundational leaders of ISS Australia
- **100 Years of Restoring Links**, recognising our role in family reunification
- **100 Years of Pioneer Advocacy**, showcasing ISS's contributions globally over time.

A particularly reassuring development was the continued stability of our investment portfolio. In a volatile economic climate, this has enabled us to maintain our services and plan sustainably for the future.

To our staff, your skill and dedication in supporting vulnerable children and families through complex challenges continues to inspire. To my fellow Board members, thank you for your insight, commitment, and support throughout the year—especially Treasurer Richard Giles and Deputy President Nina Brooks.

Looking ahead, the ISS Australia Board is embarking on a refresh of our strategic plan while remaining true to our mission: promoting the rights and best interests of children and families navigating complex domestic and international systems. I am confident that with our strong team, clear direction, and enduring partnerships, we will continue to make a lasting and positive difference.

**Dr Fiona McIntosh**  
President, ISS Australia Board



Megan Mitchell AM

# CEO's Report



It is a privilege to present my first annual report for ISS Australia, having joined the organisation in November 2024. These past months have been a remarkable journey as I've taken time to listen, learn, and understand the breadth of our work and the people who make it possible.

The learning curve has been steep but energising. I've met many stakeholders across government, community, legal and social work sectors. These conversations reaffirmed the trust placed in ISS Australia and the importance of our work in child welfare and international cooperation. This work would not be possible without the support of our major funders – the Federal Attorney General's Department, and the NSW Department of Communities and Justice.

I sincerely thank former CEO Peter van Vliet, whose leadership left ISS Australia in a strong financial position, scaffolded by sound governance, policies and systems.

Getting to know our committed and highly skilled staff has been a particular highlight, and strengthening staff wellbeing and collaboration in a challenging and evolving environment remains an ongoing priority.

A special moment during my onboarding was attending the ISS Centennial celebrations in Geneva with Deputy President Nina Brooks. This global gathering celebrated 100 years of service in child protection and reunification. A highpoint was the international conference, *"Throughout Time, Across Borders,"* where contributions by Deputy CEO Damon Martin and Senior Social Worker Eleni Bailey were greatly appreciated.

As part of these celebrations, ISS Australia hosted its own centenary event at NSW Parliament House. The gathering honoured past and present staff, board members, and supporters, with special guests including Minister Jodie Harrison, Department of Communities and Justice Secretary, Michael Tidball, and Michael West from the Metropolitan Aboriginal Land Council.

Staff professional development continues to be a key priority, including participation in training, conferences and forums. Our staff conference held in Melbourne in March provided an opportunity to reflect on achievements and plan for the future. Many thanks to Sally Nicholes for providing space at Nicholes Family Lawyers.

This year, our staff expanded their educational outreach in areas such as international kinship care, cultural

rights of children, and domestic violence in cross-border parental child abduction. We also launched new online practitioner-focused training modules on International Parental Child Abduction, addressing legal and other complexities, the 1980 Hague Convention, and children's rights.

Damon continues to champion Equity in Permanency, promoting non-discriminatory family placements and highlighting gaps for children with international family connections.

We remain active in the global ISS network. Damon recently stepped down as Chair of the ISS Caseworker Coordinator Committee, with Managing Social Worker Kay Hardefelt now a member. I participate in the network's Professional Advisory Committee and Commonwealth subgroup, while Managing Lawyer Jessica Raffal continues her work addressing domestic violence in international contexts and across borders.

My sincere thanks to our staff for their dedication. Special thanks to our Management Team—Jessica Raffal, Kay Hardefelt, Ann Freilich, and Damon Martin—for their exceptional leadership. I also acknowledge the contributions of departing staff: Lizzie Gray, Zoe Patterson Ross, Matt Georgevits, and Eric Burnet.

We are very grateful to our many supporters, including Nicholes Family Lawyers, Rafton's Family Lawyers, the Gandel Foundation, and the Myer Foundation.

Finally, I wish to thank our Board of Directors, and especially President Dr Fiona McIntosh, for their wisdom and support during this leadership transition.

As we navigate significant social, political and economic changes around the world, our aim is to stay grounded in our values of service, justice, and cooperation. Our impact relies not only on what we do but how we do it—with trauma-informed practice, strong partnerships, and an unwavering commitment to vulnerable children and families. It is an honour to lead ISS Australia at this time, and I look forward to working with our staff, Board, partners, and the global ISS network to continue to deliver meaningful outcomes for those we serve.

**Megan Mitchell AM**  
Chief Executive Officer, ISS Australia

## ISS Australia – Reconciliation Action Plan (RAP)

This year saw ISS Australia develop its second Reconciliation Action Plan (Innovate RAP). This plan builds on our first (Reflect) plan by articulating a commitment to sustained actions designed to meaningfully advance reconciliation with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Peoples.

The Plan is based around the core pillars of **relationships**, **respect** and **opportunities**, helping us to move from foundational learning and relationship building to creating innovative solutions alongside our First Nations colleagues. We thank Reconciliation Australia for its support and guidance through this important process.





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



## Our Impact

2024-25 ISS Australia Service Data



Donate now to  
support our work

In 2024-25 ISS Australia  
worked extensively on

**547** cases

International  
Child Welfare  
and Kinship Care

**10067**

International Post  
Adoption Tracing  
Service

**105**

International Parental Child  
Abduction Legal Service

International  
Parental Child  
Abduction  
Social Work

**155**

NSW  
Special  
Search  
Service

**76**

**37**

International Family  
Mediation

**7**

General Family  
Tracing and Reunification

We also handled **850 enquiries** where  
advice was given without case management.



# International Parental Child Abduction Service

## Service Annual Report

The International Parental Child Abduction (IPCA) Service continues to provide integrated Legal and Social Work Support Services to families experiencing or affected by IPCA. This socio-legal model ensures that clients' legal, emotional, and practical needs are met during what is often an extraordinarily challenging and traumatic period.

With more than three decades of combined expertise, the IPCA Service continues to deliver high-quality casework, wide-reaching community education, expert consultation to professional organisations, and accessible resources on all aspects of IPCA. Through our international network, we work across borders to ensure children and families are safe, supported, and connected.

In 2024–25, demand for the IPCA Service remained strong, with case numbers reaching among the highest levels since the program began.

### Client Services

The IPCA Service provided support in **260 cases** in the 2024/25 financial year and handled **462 inquiries** involving children taken to more than **90 different countries**. The most highly represented countries in new enquiries and cases were **New Zealand (22%)**, the **United States of America (12%)**, **India (11%)**, the **United Kingdom (9%)**, and **Japan (9%)**.

The IPCA Legal Service worked on **105 case files** and provided advice or limited assistance in an additional **287 matters**.

The Social Work Service provided support in **155 new and existing case files**, as well as advice or limited assistance in an additional **175 matters**.

### Highlights

The IPCA Service sponsored an exhibitor booth at the 2025 [Family and Relationship Services Australia Conference](#). This conference provided a valuable opportunity to showcase and learn from on-the-ground practices, policies, and research that meet the evolving needs of children, families, and communities.

The IPCA Service's inaugural online [International Parental Child Abduction Fundamentals](#) training was launched in mid-2025. The training empowers social workers, family mediators, and other professionals with the skills and knowledge to effectively navigate and address these challenging situations. It provides two hours of professional accreditation maintenance for bodies such as AASW or FDRP.

The IPCA Legal Service presented at Rafton Family Lawyers' [Reflections in Law 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference](#), contributing insights into international family law and practice.

**The 2024–25 year has been one of growth and consolidation. With 260 case files and 462 enquiries, the IPCA Service continues to play a critical role in supporting families affected by international parental child abduction. Through community education, international collaboration, and wraparound casework, the IPCA Service remains a vital lifeline for families across the world. We acknowledge the ongoing funding from the Attorney-General's Department in supporting this critical work.**

**Jesscia Raffal – Managing Lawyer and Kay Hardefeldt – Manager, IPCA Service**



# NSW Government Funded Services



In 2024/25, ISS Australia proudly delivered three NSW Government-funded services: the **Intercountry Casework Project**, the **International Post Adoption Tracing Service (IPATS)**, and the **NSW Special Search Service**. Together, these programs demonstrate our expertise in connecting children and families across borders and cultures.

### Intercountry Casework Service

The Intercountry Casework Project supports the NSW Government's Department of Communities and Justice and non-government organisations in complex child welfare matters with overseas components. In 2024/25, we managed **90 cases**, underscoring the ongoing need for specialist expertise to support complex cross-border casework matters.

A core focus is ensuring children in Out-of-Home Care (OOHC) stay connected to their family overseas and their culture. Guided by the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child, we work to embed cultural identity in child protection practice and strengthen cultural planning and practice for children from diverse backgrounds. Our team deepened this commitment by undertaking training on kinship and culture, learning from leaders such as Isaiah Dawe (ID Know Yourself), Professor Jioji Ravulo (University of Sydney), and Kathy Karatasas (Cultural Works), who reinforced that culture is not an 'add-on' but a fundamental element of care planning for all children in OOHC.

Of the more than 45,000 children in OOHC in Australia, we strongly advocate that when children cannot remain with their parents, the first and preferred option should be safe care within their extended family, whether that family is in Australia or overseas. Exploring family

placements both locally and internationally gives children the best chance to grow up with a strong sense of identity, belonging, roots, and culture.

### International Post Adoption Tracing Service (IPATS) & NSW Special Search Service

For over 60 years, ISS Australia has been reuniting families separated by adoption and care. Since 2008, IPATS has supported more than **2,000 NSW residents** affected by adoption with a **64% success rate** in tracing relatives overseas. These reunions, whether with parents, grandparents, siblings, or extended kin, address questions about identity, build belonging, and restore lifelong family ties.

Our NSW Special Search Service assists people separated by government intervention, including adoption, foster care, or placement in children's homes. With just funding for one full-time social worker, the Service managed **76 cases in 2024/25**, achieving a **75% success rate**. Access to LifeSearch, the online NSW Births, Deaths and Marriages database, continues to be an invaluable tool in achieving these outcomes.

**ISS Australia acknowledges the ongoing funding and support of the NSW Department of Communities and Justice, which enables us to continue delivering these vital services and strengthening connections for children, families, and communities across international borders.**

**Damon Martin, Deputy CEO and Manager, NSW Government Funded Services**





# International Family Mediation Service

**ISS Australia's International Family Mediation (IFM) service has continued to support families impacted by cross-border disputes involving children.**

Our professional mediation service assists parents and caregivers on issues such as living arrangements, parent-child communication, contact arrangements, relocation, and cases of child abduction.

Over the past year we provided **37 mediation cases** and **89 enquires**, offering a neutral platform to facilitate cooperation and agreements in the best interests of children.

During 2024-25, the IFM service was supported by a generous grant from the Gandel Foundation, enabling a part-time staff member to maintain a quality, stand-alone service, including thorough risk assessments and effective mediation processes.

The IFM team has kept abreast of changes to the family law system, including the Family Law Act 1975 (Cth), the Family Law Amendment Act 2024 (Cth), and the Family Law (Family Dispute Resolution Practitioners) Regulations 2025 (Cth). The team are meeting their ongoing professional development obligations through regular training, peer and external supervision.

**ISS 100-year Anniversary Conference - Throughout time, across borders: Navigating child protection and restoring family links and Casework Coordinators Meeting**

In October 2024, Eleni Bailey, Senior Social Worker and IFM Coordinator, represented ISS Australia at the ISS 100-Year Anniversary Conference and Casework Coordinators Meeting in Geneva. She presented our IFM service model at both the conference and the Coordinators Meeting, highlighting the value of international family mediation within the ISS network, and addressing concerns around domestic and family violence in mediation matters.

## Child Inclusive Practice Forum

In February 2025, ISS Australia Child Consultants and Family Mediators attended the Child Inclusive Practice (CIP) Forum, themed '*Children at the Centre*', in Canberra. The forum brought together practitioners to share research, explore best practice models, and strengthen networks. A key focus was reinforcing the vital role of professionals in ensuring children's and young people's views, ideas, and experiences are heard and considered in decision-making and therapeutic processes.

## Central Coast Family Law Pathway Network Steering Committee

Eleni continues to play an active role on the Central Coast Family Law Pathway Network Steering Committee, this year as the Vice-Chair. This group ensures professionals in the NSW Central Coast have access to networking opportunities, high quality professional development and educational content throughout the year.

**Eleni Bailey – Coordinator, International Family Mediation Service**



# Staff Spotlight 2025 Kay Hardefeldt

**Kay Hardefeldt has spent the past 15 years working with International Social Service (ISS) Australia, contributing to almost every program the organisation offers.**

She began her career as a social worker and, in 2012, completed a Graduate Diploma in Family Dispute Resolution, enabling her to provide accredited family mediation services.

Over time, Kay has found her professional home in the two areas she is most passionate about: International Parental Child Abduction support and International Family Mediation. Both services are deeply focused on the impacts of family breakdown and parental separation, helping families navigate the legal, emotional, and relational complexities that arise when children are caught in cross-border disputes. These programs aim to provide child-focused, compassionate pathways through conflict, prioritising the well-being and stability of children during times of significant upheaval.

Kay's personal experience of parental separation and growing up in a blended family has given her a deep understanding of how family transitions can affect a young person's sense of identity and security. This insight continues to shape her professional approach, driving her commitment to supporting families in crisis with empathy, clarity, and care.

Among her notable achievements is the founding of ISS Australia's inaugural online training course, International Parental Child Abduction Fundamentals, as well as her role in representing ISS Australia in both national and international contexts. Finally, Kay's interest in strategy, employee engagement, and leading people with purpose led her to complete a Master of Business Administration with a specialisation in Human Resource Management at the Australian Institute of Business. Kay looks forward to her graduation ceremony next year.





# Our People

## Board of Directors

**Dr Fiona McIntosh – President**

**Nina Brooks – Vice President**

**Richard Giles – Treasurer**

Peter Arnaudo

Deborah Fry

Mary Griffin

Susan Wnukowska-Mtonga

Nicole Baker (from Feb 2025)

## 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 (to October 2024)**

**Megan Mitchell AM, CEO (from November 2024)**

Ann Freilich – Accountant

Nadeene Jones – Bookkeeper / Admin Assistant

### NSW Government Funded Services

**Damon Martin – Deputy CEO**

Phoebe Peters – Senior Intercountry Social Worker

Anjali Prabhu – Senior Intercountry Social Worker

Janet Henegan – Senior Intercountry Social Worker

Lizzie Gray – Senior Intercountry Social Worker (to  
September 2024)

Casey Bush – Senior Intercountry Caseworker (from  
November 2024)

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

Kay Hardefeldt – Manager

Eleni Bailey – Senior Social Worker / International Family  
Mediation Coordinator / Child Consultant

Amelia – Senior Social Worker / Child Consultant

Zanna – Family Violence Social Worker (from May 2024)

Bettina Twyman – Senior Family Violence Specialist

Eric Brunet – Intercountry Case Worker (to June 2025)

### International Parental Child Abduction Legal Service

Jessica Raffal – Managing Lawyer

Charissa Chong – Senior Lawyer

Emily Collins – Lawyer

Erika Orenstein – Lawyer

Matt Georgevits – Lawyer

Zoe Patterson Ross – Paralegal (to Jan 2025)

Imogen Randazzo – Paralegal (from Feb 2025)

### Casuals, Students and Volunteers

Breanna Worthington (Marketing and Design Volunteer)

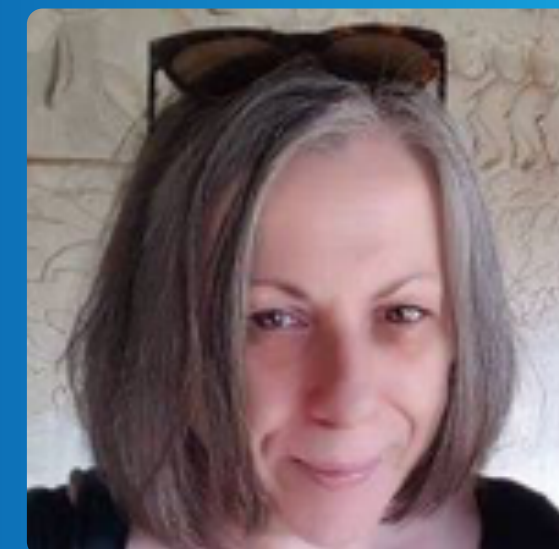


### VALE Patricia Fronek

In July 2024, we mourned the passing of Associate Professor Patricia Fronek, after a long illness. Tricia was a distinguished social work academic in Australia, renowned for her expertise in adoption and surrogacy issues, including intercountry adoption, as well as in public health. Her deep commitment to social justice and strong advocacy for the rights of adoptees and intercountry adoptees made a significant impact.

Since 2020, Tricia served with great distinction on ISS Australia's Policy Committee, bringing clarity and insight to our discussions, always with a strong focus on human rights. She was also an invaluable member of the ISS Australia Intercountry Adoption Tracing Service Advisory Group from 2016 to 2019, providing vital support and consultation for our service delivery.

Tricia will be greatly missed, but her legacy will continue to inspire and guide our work.





# Casework in Action

Every day, ISS Australia works with families across borders, helping to navigate complex situations involving adoption, child protection, abduction, and family separation. The following anonymised case studies highlight the diversity of our work and the shared goal of ensuring children's rights to safety, family, and identity are upheld.

## Adoptive Loyalty

ISS Australia was asked by ISS New Zealand to help locate *Aroha*, an adoptee born in 1990 to a Pākehā mother and Māori father. After her father's passing, her whānau sought to include her in their Māori land shares.

Through a traced cousin, Aroha received a letter from her paternal aunt sharing news of her whakapapa and inheritance. While she accepted the letter, she chose not to engage further, saying, "I'll run it through Mum."

Her story reflects the powerful "adoptive loyalty" of many adoptees, where they may feel that reconnecting with 'birth families' is disrespectful to their adoptive parents.

## Finding Common Ground

Nathan was referred to ISS Australia's IPCA Social Work Service after his three-year-old son was taken to New Zealand by his mother. Unsure at first how social work could help, he engaged in the hope of improving communication and maintaining contact with his son.

Support focused on reducing conflict, prioritising the child's wellbeing, and considering when involvement of New Zealand child welfare services might be needed. Nathan valued the consistent emotional support during a stressful time.

Ultimately, his son was returned to Australia under the 1980 Hague Convention. Communication between the parents has since improved, with both moving toward a more constructive co-parenting relationship.

## Legal Support for a Mother's Children's Return

Margot contacted ISS Australia's Legal Service when her two children were retained by their father in his new country of residence. The father had perpetrated domestic violence over many years, against both Margot and the children. Margot was the primary carer of the children and she was very concerned for their welfare in the father's care.

The children had been retained in a country which does not cover the legal fees of applicant parents, and Margot was very concerned about how she was going to pay for the legal fees to fight for the return of her children. Our ISS Legal Service gave Margot comprehensive advice, assisted her to prepare a return application and connected her with a law firm in the overseas country that was willing to act for her pro

bono. Margot was successful in her application and now has the children back in her care in Australia.

## Finding Family

ISS Australia's Special Search Service was contacted by Jess on behalf of her stepfather Jack, who was adopted in Sydney in 1952. Long isolated, Jack hoped to find his biological family. Records revealed his mother had placed a second son for adoption.

While his mother could not be traced, ISS Australia located Jack's brother Mick, living only 100km away. A discreet letter led to a quick response, and within days the brothers spoke for hours before arranging to meet.

They have since formed a close bond, spending time together with their families. Both expressed gratitude to ISS Australia's Special Search Service, saying the reunion has made them feel "complete."

## Bridging Distance

ISS Australia's Family Mediation Service was contacted by Tom, a father in Scotland, seeking to reconnect with his 6-year-old daughter Emily in Australia. After several years of absence due to incarceration, Tom was unsure how to re-establish contact without overwhelming her.

Shuttle mediation, where mediators speak separately with each parent and relay messages, was used to manage the high emotions between Tom and Emily's mother, Sarah. The process helped both parents focus on Emily's need for safe, meaningful relationships with both parents.

An agreement was reached to begin with letter exchanges between Tom and Emily, progressing gradually toward online contact. The case shows how international mediation can create safe, child-focused pathways to rebuilding relationships.

## Restoring Home

ISS Australia was referred a case by DCJ involving three children in care after being removed from their father due to neglect and abuse. Their mother, Kyra, had returned to her home country in the Middle East following domestic violence in Australia and wished to have the children restored to her care.

Working with our local ISS partner and child protection authorities, a culturally appropriate assessment of Kyra's situation was undertaken, including interviews, home visits, and planning for support services and transition arrangements.

The assessment concluded Kyra could provide a safe and stable home. The Children's Court accepted these findings, and the children's restoration into their mother's care occurred, ensuring the children's right to family, culture, and identity is upheld.

# Support ISS Australia

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

## Government and related bodies

Commonwealth Attorney  
General's Department



NSW Department of  
Communities and Justice



## Philanthropic Foundations and Trusts

The Myer Foundation



The Gandel Foundation



## Corporate Sponsor

Rafton Family Lawyers



Nicholes Family Lawyers



## Supporters and Friends

Adopt Change  
Asia Family First  
The Benevolent Society  
Community Legal Centres NSW  
Community Legal Centres Australia  
Cynch Security  
E-Nerds  
Inter Country Adoptee Voices  
Lumenia  
Reconciliation Australia  
Stories in Motion

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. Sign up to our quarterly newsletter. Volunteer for us. 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

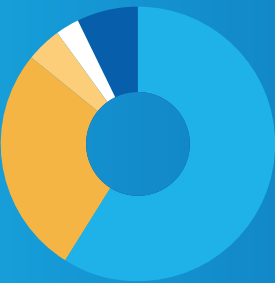
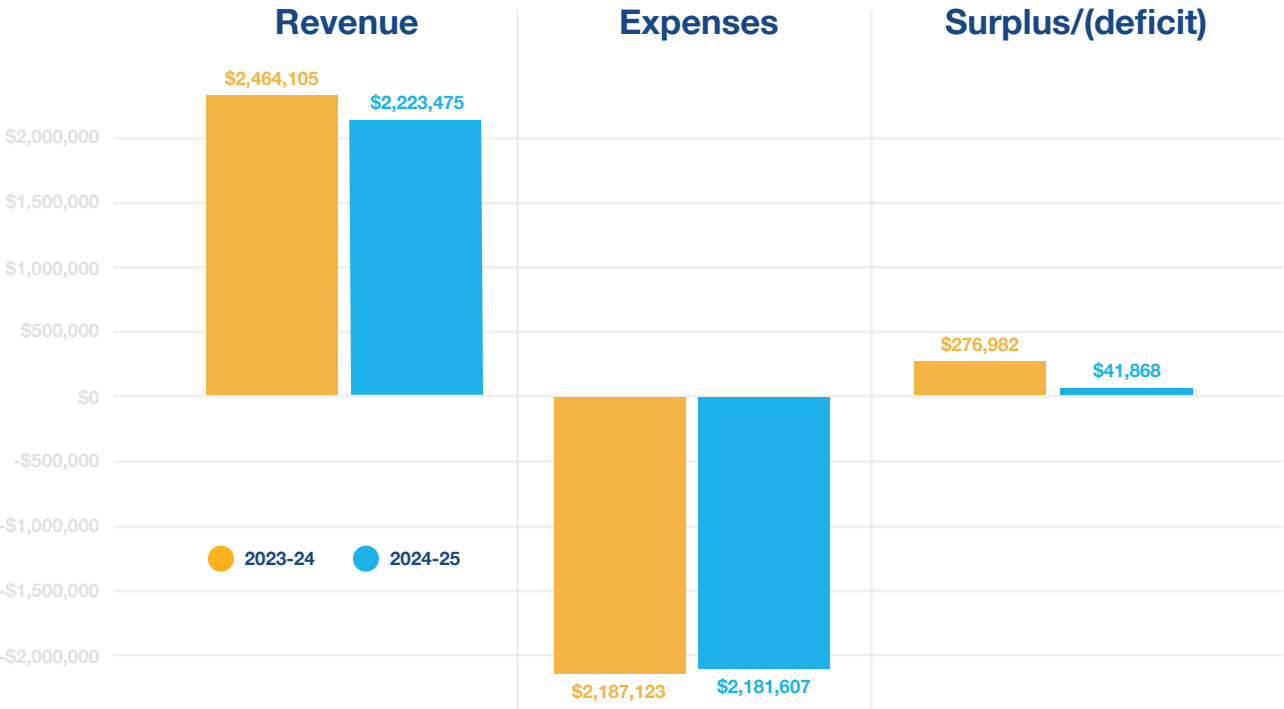


Donate now to  
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# Financial Report

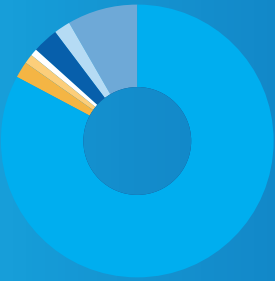
ISS Australia Financial Snapshot 2024-25 operating results



## Revenue 2024-25

\$2,223,475

- Federal Government grants 59%.....\$1,304,122
- State Government grants 27%.....\$599,521
- Philanthropy and Donations 4%.....\$94,940
- Fee for Services 3%.....\$70,261
- Investment income 7%.....\$154,081
- Other 0%.....\$550



## Expenses 2024-25

\$2,181,607

- Employee Benefits 82%.....\$1,796,781
- Occupancy costs 2%.....\$53,048
- General Secretariat membership 1%.....\$30,057
- Depreciation 1%.....\$16,087
- Professional Development 3%.....\$68,347
- Communication costs 2%.....\$36,775
- Other 8%.....\$180,512

## Financial Position at 30 June 2025

### ASSETS

Current Assets	\$550,206
Non-Current Assets	\$2,477,339
<b>Total Assets</b>	<b>\$3,027,545</b>

### LIABILITIES

Current Liabilities	\$225,380
Non-Current Liabilities	\$17,606
<b>Total Liabilities</b>	<b>\$242,986</b>

### NET ASSETS

\$2,784,559

Accumulated Surplus/(Deficit)	\$2,533,025
Reserves	\$251,534
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>\$2,784,559</b>

# An article from ISS Australia's Corporate Sponsor, Nicholes Family Lawyers

By Sally Nicholes, Managing Partner at Nicholes Family Lawyers



Nicholes Family Lawyers (NFL) is proud to continue its longstanding partnership with International Social Services (ISS) Australia.

## World Congress on Family Law & Children's Rights

In my role as Deputy Chair of the World Congress on Family Law & Children's Rights (World Congress), it was an honour to welcome back ISS to this year's World Congress, held in Cambridge, United Kingdom from 27-30 July 2025, where our collaborative efforts highlighted our shared commitment to strengthening the legal and social systems that protect society's most vulnerable.

This year's World Congress, themed "Children Caught in Conflict – Inspiring Positive Change," highlighted the need to address the many challenges affecting children worldwide. Representing ISS Australia, Damon Martin and Jessica Raffal attended and presented at the World Congress, sharing their expertise on key issues impacting children and families. Damon and Jessica were joined by ISS CEO, Megan Mitchell. NFL and ISS Australia have been long time supporters of the World Congress and remain committed to contribute to the dialogue and solutions emerging from global experts advocating for the protection of children's rights.

## Damon Martin – How International Kinship Care Creates Equity in Permanency

Damon participated as a panellist in a session focusing on ISS Equity in Permanency Principles, moderated by Philippe Lortie of the Hague Conference on Private International Law. Co-panellists included Carolyn Housman from Children and Families Across Borders in the United Kingdom, and Hana Davis, an expert by lived experience.

The panel highlighted the critical role of kinship care in supporting children in out-of-home care. Many children have extended family overseas who could provide safe, nurturing placements, and care within the child's extended family should be prioritised whenever possible. This approach respects the child's rights to family life, maintains family connections, and preserves cultural identity, in line with the UN Guidelines for Alternative Care.

Damon emphasised the importance of exploring all potential family-based care options, including international placements, to keep children connected to their families and advance equity in permanency.

## Jessica Raffal – Reinterpreting the 1980 Hague Abduction Convention in Light of 'New Social Realities': How the Hague Conference Should Respond to Domestic Violence and Abuse

Jessica Raffal contributed as a panellist in a session examining the intersection of the 1980 Hague Abduction Convention and domestic violence. The panel was chaired by Philippe Lortie, and included international experts: Dr Adrienne Barnett, Dr Michelle Fernando, Professor Merle Weiner, Associate Professor Miranda Kaye and The Hon. Justice Suzanna Christie.

The session explored the complex challenges of applying the Convention in cases involving domestic and family violence, highlighting the tension between the Convention's goal of ensuring the swift return of children to their country of habitual residence and the urgent need to protect women and children from harm.

Jessica discussed practical approaches for balancing these competing priorities, reinforcing the organisation's commitment to informed, equitable solutions in international family law. Jessica's contributions underscored ISS Australia's ongoing role in advancing child protection and supporting vulnerable children and families in complex cross-border contexts.

On behalf of the Board of the World Congress on Family Law & Children's Rights I thank you once again for the dedication and partnership from ISS Australia. Together, we will continue to promote a safer, more just world for children and families globally.





# An article from ISS Australia's Corporate Sponsor, Rafton Family Lawyers

By Maurice Edwards, Special Counsel at RFL



## The "Family Violence Amendments" to the "Hague Child Abduction Regulations" – A Review Almost 3 Years On

The team at Rafton Family Lawyers feel very privileged to continue to partner International Social Service Australia (ISS) for a fourth consecutive year. ISS's vision, that children and families be connected wherever they are in the world, is shared by the team at Rafton Family Lawyers and particularly by our Arbitration and Mediation Division (RAMP) led by our RAMP leader, Maurice Edwards. Similarly, ISS's mission, to support, protect and reunite children and families who have been separated by international borders, is a mission endorsed by our firm and our team.

The partnership between ISS and Rafton Family Lawyers commenced in late 2021 and was initiated by Kay Hardefeldt, ISS's current manager IPCA Social Work Service and Maurice. Kay and Maurice trained together in the mediation of child abduction matters with judges, lawyers, mediators and social scientists in Japan in 2015. That international mediation training initiative was organised by the International Liaison Judges of the Family Court of Australia, namely the Chief Justice Diana Bryant and Her Honour Justice Bennett. That initiative occurred shortly after Japan became a signatory to the Hague Child Abduction Convention as Japan's government wanted the country to be seen internationally as a good international citizen so far as to the return of abducted children to their place of habitual residence was concerned. Upon their return to Australia, Kay and Maurice convinced management at both ISS and Rafton Family Lawyers to combine intellectual resources so as to better serve their clients.

Maurice has notarised the NSW Department and Community and Justice's, intercountry adoption documents for over 20 years. He is an accredited Family Law Specialist, an accredited Mediator and Arbitrator and a registered Family Dispute Resolution Practitioner (FDRP). Maurice is also a fellow of the International Academy of Family Lawyers and Treasurer and NSW representative of the Australia Institute of Family Law Arbitrators and Mediators (AIFLAM).

Kate Rafton, the principal of Rafton Family Lawyers and a RAMP team member is an accredited family law and

children's law specialist, a trained nurse and accredited Arbitrator and Mediator. Kate has had extensive experience acting in high conflict matters in both the NSW Children's Court and the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia.

Cassandra Youssef is a special counsel at Rafton Family Lawyers and a team member of RAMP, is an accredited family law specialist, an accredited Arbitrator, Mediator and Parenting Coordinator. Cassandra also has extensive experience acting for parties in both the NSW Children's Court and the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia.

Team members from ISS and RAMP have collaborated in the past and ISS's employees have presented at RAMP's Reflections in Law Conferences over the last 5 years. Deputy CEO Damon Martin presented both at RAMP's first Reflections in Law Conference in Huskisson, with Belinda Li and also the second conference in Orange with intercountry adoptee Joel de Carteret. ISS's managing lawyer Jessica Raffal presented at RAMP's most recent Reflections in Law Conference in Wollongong. Another 'friend' of ISS, Emily Hikaiti, now a director, facilitator, ambassador and changemaker will be the special guest speaker at the Reflections in Law Conference to be held in Mudgee in March 2026.

We at RAMP and Rafton's value our partnership with ISS and continue to refer to ISS 'left behind parents' whose children have been abducted from Australia to assist in seeking to return the children to Australia if it is appropriate to do so.

Similarly, we assist clients of ISS in domestic family law matters in Australia to resolve parenting issues when abducted children have been returned to Australia.

We look forward to continuing our valuable partnership with ISS Australia to support, protect and reunite children and families who have been separated by international borders.

## Client Feedback

“The support I have received from ISS Australia has been, by far, the most pivotal and crucial help throughout the traumatic journey of having my children abducted.”

“Having the support of ISS is what had kept me alive and fighting for the return and well-being of my daughter.”

“The NSW Special Search Service was very caring and did everything within their power to help me.”

“From the outset, my social worker demonstrated empathy and understanding, taking the time to truly listen to my concerns and advocate for my son's safety and wellbeing.”

“ISS Australia's Child Welfare and Kinship Services were incredibly supportive, responding quickly and going above and beyond to assist with the request.”

“ISS Australia provided an efficient and professional service that was instrumental in my successful search for my birth mother.”





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