

About International Social Service Australia

International Social Service (ISS) Australia is a national charity with 50 years' experience defending children's rights and connecting families across the world. ISS Australia provides social work services to families and children separated by international borders, with an emphasis on the rights of children. Circumstances in which family members may be separated by international borders include parental abduction, adoption, migration, asylum seeking, family separation and others.

ISS Australia is a leader in its field and the only Australian non-government organisation with a unique focus on providing international social work services. ISS Australia is a registered charity with its National Office in Melbourne and a NSW Office in Sydney.

ISS Worldwide

ISS Australia forms part of the ISS international network, founded in 1924 in Switzerland. Today ISS operates in more than 140 countries worldwide and has Consultative Status with the UN. ISS Australia's network membership gives us the unique capacity to refer cases to our trained and experienced colleagues virtually anywhere in the world.

ISS network members are familiar with their local social service systems, administration and language, and work to common methods and high professional standards. ISS Australia regularly draws upon their expertise in resolving cross-border issues.

Working with families and children

Our casework focuses on the care, protection and support of children and families across two or more countries. Our services include:

- Casework and assessment relating to the well-being and protection of children, including kinship placement assessments
- International post-adoption and general family tracing services including information and advice, searching, mediation and family reunification
- Mediation, conciliation and counselling for families across countries
- Cross-border adult welfare

National Office:

Level 2, 313-315 Flinders Lane,
Melbourne VIC 3000 Australia
T: +61 3 9614 8755
F: +61 3 9614 8766
Toll free: 1300 657 843

NSW Office:

Level 1, 518 Kent St,
Sydney NSW 2000 Australia
T: +61 2 9267 0300
F: +61 2 9267 3886

www.iss.org.au

What is International Parental Child Abduction?

International Parental Child Abduction (IPCA) occurs when a parent takes a child to another country without the other parent's consent.

It also occurs when a parent takes a child on holiday to another country, with the other parent's consent, but then refuses to return the child.

Cases of IPCA occur regularly across Australia and the rest of the world. In Australia, an estimated **2 – 3 children each week** are abducted by a parent out of or into the country.

What can ISS Australia do in these cases?

ISS Australia offers help to left-behind parents seeking the return of an abducted child and also to parents who have abducted their own child. Our focus is always on the best interests of the child.

ISS Australia's IPCA Service

ISS Australia's IPCA Service is a free national service funded by the Commonwealth Attorney-General's Department and in New South Wales by the State Government.

Information, Advice, Support and Referral

Our IPCA Service is available to people concerned about IPCA and to professionals and agencies seeking assistance.

Our trained Social Workers offer non-judgemental and confidential support, information and advice. The service focuses on achieving the best outcomes for the child/ children involved, and works in accordance with the Hague Convention's principles. Our Social Workers offer a comprehensive service including:

- Emotional support and counselling in dealing with feelings and reactions
- Practical support and information on who to contact for further advice and assistance
- Mediation-based interventions to try to improve communication between parents and to facilitate relationships between parents and children
- Referrals to assist with specific issues
- A coordination point for services involved in an IPCA matter
- Information on lawyers with experience in IPCA matters.

Community Education and Training

The IPCA Service provides community education and training to agencies and community groups wanting to know more about IPCA.

Advocacy and Research

ISS Australia uses statistical data from our casework to assist in research on the needs and concerns of families experiencing IPCA.

Protection under International Law: *the Hague Convention on the Civil Aspects of International Child Abduction*

The Convention is an international treaty which aims to assist with the prompt return of children who have been wrongfully removed from, or retained outside, their country of habitual residence. The Convention only applies between those countries that have signed it (including Australia).

If a child has been taken to another country without your consent

In the case of an abduction to a Hague Convention country, there is a specific process to be undertaken through the Attorney-General's Department to seek the return of the child. If your child has been taken to a country which has not signed the Convention, a different process will be required to seek return. ISS's international network can advise on the approach with the best chance of success in a particular country.

Domestic Violence

One of the reasons a parent might want to leave Australia with their child is domestic violence. If you find yourself in this situation, there is significant support available for you and your children to remain safe, and to assist you to leave the relationship and remain in the country.

**For more information, contact the IPCA Service
Toll free on 1300 657 843**

