

Intercountry Adoption Tracing and Reunification Service Review

JUNE 2018

THE SERVICE

International Social Service (ISS) Australia is a not-for-profit organisation with over 50 years' experience defending children and connecting families across the world. This review was conducted on the Intercountry Adoption Tracing and Reunification Service (ICATRS). This service primarily provides information, support and counselling to intercountry adoptees and adoptive parents to access their records and information overseas, and undertakes the tracing of birth family through overseas searching partners. Since becoming fully operational in September 2016 this service has had a total of 226 cases. Majority of clients were born in South Korea, Ethiopia and Sri Lanka.

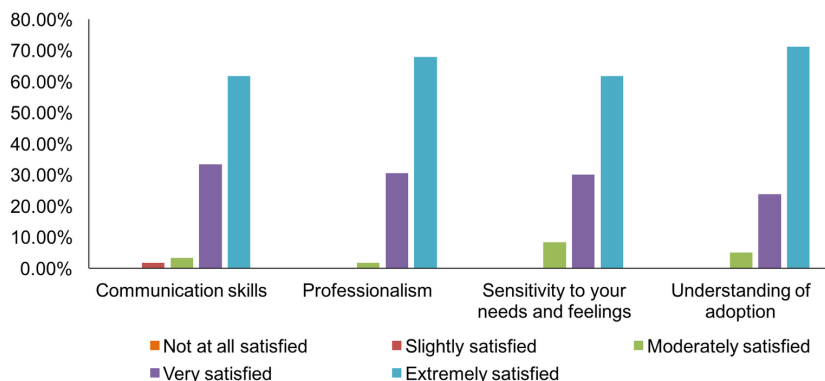
THE REVIEW

This review was conducted in two parts between February to April 2018. The purpose of this review was to provide ISS Australia with a snapshot of their clients' engagement and satisfaction with ICATRS. Part A consisted of inviting ICATRS clients to complete a short online survey via Survey Monkey. Through this survey, they had an opportunity to indicate whether they would like to take part in Part B of the review, semi-structured interviews. 64 clients completed the survey and 6 clients were interviewed.

KEY SURVEY FINDINGS

- The majority of respondents indicated that what prompted them to start searching is that they had a natural curiosity to trace (33%)
- 75% of respondents indicated that the service had a positive impact on their overall wellbeing: no respondents indicated that the service had a negative impact on their overall wellbeing.
- Majority of respondents were very satisfied to extremely satisfied with the service delivery of ICATRS (80%) and their social worker (95%)
- Respondents indicated they would recommend the service due to the accessibility and appropriateness of the service, the indispensable need for the service and the high level of expertise of the social workers.

Satisfaction with social worker



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KEY INTERVIEW FINDINGS

- **Timing:** Participants indicated that the staff at ISS Australia worked in a professional and timely manner. The three important factors that impacted the length of time associated with the tracing process were: the amount of information the adoptee already has, the adoptees country of origin and when they were adopted.
- **Impact of service:** ICATRS was seen as a pioneering service as it is able to overcome various issues clients encountered searching privately. This is due to their access to technology, overseas partners and other resources individuals do not have access to.
- **Global picture:** Participants indicated that historical events and media have had a negative impact on how intercountry adoption is portrayed in society and as a result the services available to intercountry adoptees.
- **Impact on individual:** Information about their culture and birth family was important for their identity and had a positive impact on their mental health and wellbeing.
- **Accountability to all parties:** Participants acknowledged that ISS Australia takes into account the perspective of all parties (adoptive parents, intercountry adoptee and birth family) and played an important role in facilitating communication between the intercountry adoptee and their birth family member(s) overseas.
- **Addressing the gap:** Participants felt a strong need for the service to continue and wished for an expansion of the service through additional funding.

"I have always had a longing to know and find out. I came with memories and I came with a language. When you are forced to forget, that makes it very difficult. I lost my identity so I am trying to reclaim it." (Adult Adoptee)

"We are very thankful to ISS for their guidance and support during the process of finding our child's birth mother. The social worker's advice on how to approach delivering information to our child, and how to communicate with other parties involved in the search was extremely helpful. Our goal was to find our child's birth mother and ISS achieved this goal, handling all relationships along the way with respect and care." (Adoptive Parent)

Satisfaction with service delivery

