



MEDIA RELEASE

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International Kinship Care overlooked as a viable placement option for children in care

In Australia, there are over 45,000 children living in Out-Of-Home Care (OOHC). Many live in placements with carers that they have no biological connection to. International Social Service (ISS) Australia believes many of these children could be placed with family members who reside overseas and encourages Australian State and Territory Child Protection Authorities to consider International Kinship Care as a viable placement option for children in care.

With approximately a quarter of Australians being born overseas, and nearly half having at least one parent born overseas, Australia is a very multicultural society. ISS Australia believe where appropriate, the alternative form of care that should be prioritised is the child remaining within their extended family, as this respects the child's right to family life and maintain family links (Article 3, 8 and 20 of the Convention on the Rights of the Child and in the UN Guidelines for Alternative Care of Children).

When a child can no longer be cared for by their parents, social workers often strive to create kinship care arrangements, meaning the child or children are placed with another member of their family. The less common alternative is International Kinship Care, in which a child is placed with a family member living abroad.

In Australia, 48% of children in OOHC end up in foster care. Research shows that children in foster care often have poor educational, employment, social and psychological outcomes.

International Kinship Care allows a child to be placed with their biological extended family members if they are assessed as suitable. However, there are significant challenges for government caseworkers exploring International Kinship Care placements. Caseworkers often feel overwhelmed by the logistics associated with arranging an overseas assessment and placement. The judicial system can also pose a challenge, as professionals are often unfamiliar or concerned by the cultural and systemic differences of the other country and therefore assume it is in the best interests of the child to be placed locally.

ISS Australia work to reconnect families separated by international borders and can provide expert advice in International Kinship Care. ISS Australia can conduct viability and kinship assessments of overseas family members and help facilitate a safe transition for children entering International Kinship Care arrangements.

ISS Australia's Deputy CEO Damon Martin shared "we want people to know that there are options out there. Keeping children with their families through International Kinship Care placements can have a profoundly positive impact on their life and cultural identity. An international border should not be a barrier in finding the best outcome for a child, so if you know a child who could benefit from an International Kinship Care placement, we can help."

MEDIA: For more information or to arrange interviews please contact Damon Martin on 0416 824 486.