

MEDIA INFORMATION FOR IMMEDIATE USE

Abducted child, Andrew John Thompson safe in Dutch child care facility.

Father Ken Thompson meets yesterday with authorities.

Reunion between father and son still some days away.

The past 48 hours have been the toughest of Ken Thompson's life. Worse than the endless hoping and searching over the past two and a half years is the knowledge that his son, whilst safe, could be in the next Amsterdam suburb, or even the next block, away from where he is staying with friends after his long search for Andrew.

'One part of my mind still does not believe he's been found,' Ken said today. . 'I know he has, but until I see him I can't quite process it. So much of my life since April 2008 has been focussed on finding Andrew that now, even with the huge amount of support and public interest in his recovery, I feel a bit surreal.'

Ken met yesterday with Dutch police and other authorities to discuss how and when he might be reunited with Andrew. He said today that he is extremely reassured by the care and attention Andrew is receiving from carers and psychologists assigned to ensure that the eventual reunion is positive and the first step on the way to re-establishing the former close relationship between father and son.

'We need to be reunited carefully,' Ken said. 'I don't know quite how he will react. He may be quite frightened of me, depending on what he has been told about why he was suddenly taken from home to a vastly different life.'

Psychologist Freda Briggs was quoted in the Sydney Morning Herald in Australia today without any inquiries being cited by the reporter as to the accuracy of Ms Briggs's assumptions/predictions about the way Andrew will be repatriated under the Hague Convention agreement. Uninformed comments are very unhelpful in such a delicate situation. Ken Thompson has been advised that he will be 'reunited carefully and with great consideration given to Andrew's sensitivities' in relation to what his mother may have told Andrew about their flight from Australia. Ken recognises that Andrew may be quite frightened of him at first. But he is confident that he will eventually have an important role to play as Andrew's dad'.

Ken's research while searching for Andrew has shown that during the first four years of a child's life the child forms lasting memories and impressions. He is confident Andrew will remember his Dad. 'I now have to make formal application to the Dutch authorities and the Hague officials to have Andrew returned to Australia. I am confident that when Andrew is older he will know how much I love him and will understand what I have been through to find him. My sincere thanks go to the member of the public who has made this reunion with my son a reality. I have dreamed of this day since the day I stood in the Family Court of Australia and was told by the judge that Melinda was not present because she and Andrew had left Australia 4 days earlier.'

In spite of the heartache caused by Melinda, Ken does not condemn his wife.

"I will do whatever I can to help her,' he said. 'I never wanted it to come to this, but now it has, I will support her wherever I can.'

Further info: Robin Bowles robinbowles@bigpond.com

03 94156396 or 0418102732

International

613 94156396 or 61418102732

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