

MEDIA RELEASE 14 December 2008 - Immediate Use

GRAVE FEARS HELD FOR ABDUCTED AUSTRALIAN CHILD. Will Andrew be home for Christmas?

In a rare move, the Family Court of Australia has issued a Publication Order enabling the release of information about an international parental child abduction.

Andrew Thompson, now aged four, was illegally abducted by his mother Melinda Thompson (also known as Melinda Stratton) from Australia in April this year.

Melinda boarded a Singapore Airlines flight in Sydney with Andrew and flew to Frankfurt, Germany. This is a criminal offence under the Family Law Act.

They were 'a no show' on a booked return flight to Australia and have since disappeared. Melinda's family has told police and others that they have no idea of their whereabouts and that Melinda had been researching 'safe havens' in the weeks prior to the abduction.

The abduction took place shortly after an investigation by a leading Sydney child and family psychiatrist found Melinda has an underlying mental state that affects her judgement and her ability to parent effectively.

The Court has also ordered that in any publication a warning must be issued stating that no one is to approach Melinda Thompson and that any information should be provided immediately to local police and/or Interpol.

The Court did this because of alarming concerns raised by the psychiatrist about the potential for harm to Andrew or for self-harm to the mother.

The Australian Government has conducted an extensive international search for the last seven months. Interpol has issued alerts in 187 countries and the Hague Convention on International Child Abductions has been activated.

Both Andrew and Melinda are Australian Citizens, travelling on Australian Passports.

Andrew's father Ken Thompson said, "The Family Court of Australia took the unusual step of issuing a Publication Order because of extreme concerns for Andrew and the absence of any information about his whereabouts for such a long time".

"The emotional effects of international parental child abduction are known to be severe and life-long. Andrew needs to be reunited with his family, his friends, his home, and his culture," Andrew's father said today. "I am appealing to the media to raise public awareness in Australia and overseas about his disappearance so that he can be found safe and well and returned home as quickly as possible" he said.

Anyone with information about the whereabouts of Andrew and Melinda should contact the Australian Federal Police on (02) 6126 7777.

**For further information or to arrange an interview with Andrew's father,
contact: Robin Bowles 0418-102-732.**

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