

International Press Release

Runaway mother Melinda Margaret Thompson (nee Stratton) arrested in Amsterdam on Interpol Arrest Warrant.

Abducted child Andrew Thompson (now aged 6) in safe custody at an Amsterdam Government childcare home.

Extradition proceedings to Australia commenced.

Andrew Thompson was covertly taken from Australia on 24th April 2008 by his mother Melinda Margaret THOMPSON (nee Melinda Margaret STRATTON) whilst a child custody hearing was underway before the Family Court of Australia. An Australian warrant was issued for her arrest and circulated by Interpol in 187 countries worldwide.

Background - The mother and son flew from Sydney to Frankfurt on a Singapore Airlines flight on 24th April 2008 and were not seen or heard from since then. Both are Australian Citizens travelling on Australian passports. German police stated they had no knowledge of them leaving the country after their arrival under their given names.

Despite assistance from expert private detectives and follow-up leads by AFP overseas liaison officers no trace could be found in Europe of the missing duo under their legal names. It was therefore believed that they might have somehow obtained false identities and were still resident in Europe since the mother spoke European languages.

The father of the abducted child Ken Thompson, under tremendous mental and physical stress, resigned from his job as Deputy Commissioner of the NSW Fire Brigade to devote additional time and effort to locating his abducted child.

Ken decided that he had done all he could from Australia to find Andrew and having setup a website www.findandrew.com and a Facebook page in April 2009, he made the decision in May 2010 to get on his bike to Europe - literally.

An additional website was set up <http://findandrewthompsonseurope2010.blogspot.com/> to document Ken's journey and he set off on a multi country cycle crusade to publicise not only his missing child (whose face was emblazoned on the back of his cycle shirt) but also the plight of other single parents whose children had been abducted to other countries by their partners and who are still missing.

Ken cycled more than 6,000 kilometres in 3 months across 9 countries in UK and Europe wearing a picture of Andrew on his cycle shirt and handing out bumper stickers of Andrew's picture to people he met in order to raise awareness of parental abductions and the lack of adequate legislation and preventative enforcement worldwide.

The website and Facebook page received many expressions of help and support from well-wishers and also numerous possible sightings' information. Many of the sightings from Singapore, Vietnam, Spain, Germany and elsewhere were expertly and patiently followed up, along with other investigative means by professional volunteers.

On 5 September 2010, ironically Father's Day in Australia, another lead from the public emanated from Amsterdam Holland with the result that Melinda Thompson was arrested by the Amsterdam police the following day, 865 days after removing Andrew from the jurisdiction of the Family Court and overseas to avoid complying with Court orders. Andrew Thompson was placed under protection in a childcare institution awaiting the arrival of his father from Stuttgart. Extradition proceedings may be commenced to return the mother to Australia.

Ken was notified by the informant of the arrest. She had seen the www.findandrew.com website, and media coverage Ken obtained in Holland whilst taking a letter signed by many 'left-behind' parents to the Hague, where the Convention on the Civil Aspects of Child Abduction (see http://hcch.e-vision.nl/index_en.php?act=conventions.text&cid=24)The informant recognised the mother whom at a school being attended by Andrew in Amsterdam and notified the Dutch police.

Ken is now in Amsterdam to meet with the Dutch police, AFP and Australian consulate representatives and Hague officials. It is hoped he will get to see his little boy later today, and he hopes Andrew will recognize him after the two and a half year search. Ken has carried a stuffed toy of a fireman, left behind by Melinda, tied to his handlebars throughout his search. He hoped that if Andrew did not recognize him, Bernie Cinders would do the trick. Today he might find out..

This happy ending for Ken and Andrew shows that the world is actually quite a small place and that sooner or later, children will be found and returned to their former home country. There are no winners in this tug of love, because the child is always damaged by having his or her home torn apart.

For further information:

Robin Bowles 0418102732 or 03 94156396 Email: robinbowles@bigpond.com or www.robinbowles.com.au

Australian Federal Police Media Unit 02 61316333