



Hague Mothers Newsletter February 2023

Dear <<First Name>> ,

STOP PRESS!!

Australia takes a lead...

Australia is in the spotlight this month with some really positive news regarding the Attorney-General's commitment to safeguarding Mothers and children.

The Federal Government has introduced [a draft Bill](#) which makes changes to the Family Law Act to provide for safety for children in ALL family matters, including in Hague cases.

Our members are responding to the wider consultation and, on behalf of the HM project, to Hague-specific aspects i.e.

Family Law Amendment Bill 2023 – Attorney-General's consultation

We'll post our response on the HM website shortly. In brief:

- We support the clarification that a child's best interests are paramount in HAC proceedings, and endorse the appointment of an Independent Children's Lawyer (ICL) in these cases without the requirement for 'exceptional circumstances'.
- We have called for ICL training, including education on how the Hague convention can be used as a tool of coercive control.

- We have also raised the issue of inequality of representation in Hague cases which significantly impacts ‘taking mothers’ who are fleeing domestic violence.
- We have proposed that Legal Aid Commissions should have access to an expert sub-panel of lawyers with Hague expertise.

Members of our Australian team have also responded to the consultation in their own right. Their responses include a wider critique of the role played by ICLs and the suggestion that children might be better served by the appointment of a specialist in this area.

Thanks to all of you – you are an inspiration.

Hague Convention roundtable discussion

On behalf of the Attorney-General’s department, the Family Law Council has invited us to send two representatives to a roundtable discussion on the Hague Convention with a particular focus on protecting victims of family violence, including children.

The Council’s terms of reference include a consideration of the ‘grave risk defence’; a review of the implementation of the Convention to ensure it ‘does not result in unsafe returns for women and children fleeing family violence’; and an acknowledgment of children’s right to ‘be heard in any judicial and administrative proceedings affecting them’. There is also a commitment to a more equitable family law system.

Miranda Kaye (University of Technology Sydney) and Jessica Raffal (International Social Service Australia) will represent us at this meeting. We’re also delighted that Gina Masterton has been invited in her own right, and Yvette Cehtel will attend on behalf of Women’s Legal Services Australia.

Our thanks to the Attorney-General and the Family Law Council for the invitation, and for their global leadership in acknowledging both the significance of domestic violence in Hague cases and its impact on children.

[What needs to change? Position paper.](#)

Our ‘What needs to change?’ position paper, authored by Adrienne Barnett, is now available in our resource library. It is based on extensive academic research, legal expertise, professional understanding of the impact of domestic violence on mothers and their children, and the experience of protective mothers who are further abused by the Hague process. When we were first discussing the injustices created and perpetuated by the Hague Abduction Convention, one of our steering group reminded us of the case of Cassie Hasanovic who fled from the UK to Australia with her two sons to

escape her violent husband. In spite of the UK police deeming Cassie and her children at 'high risk', the Hague court ordered the return of the boys to England. Her mother said she was 'unravelling with fear' on her return – convinced that she would be killed. She was right to be fearful. She was murdered by her estranged husband as she and her sons were about to be driven to a women's refuge. The Hague Convention cost Cassie her life.

The position paper is our view of key changes that might have prevented Cassie's death.

On the blog

[Home with my Children](#)

A podcast with filmmaker Jenny Wat, who talks to us about her documentary film which aims to raise awareness of Hague Convention among mothers. And she'd appreciate your help! Here's the powerful [trailer](#).

[Putting child welfare at the heart of Hague policy.](#)

'There is a tragic irony in the fact that a framework designed to *uphold* human rights is often responsible for their violation'

UCL students Haleemah–Sadiya Afolabi, Elizabeth Kay, Eve Lunn, Tiffany Mihardja, Olivia Rix, and Erin Smith report back on research completed for Sonja Ayeb Karlsson's [Humanitarian Policy module](#). Thanks to them, to Sonja, and to Kim Fawcett who provided the guest lecture.

And...

[Shera's formal statement on so-called 'Parental Alienation'](#)

'A dangerous pseudoscientific belief system' used to take children from protective mums, and to force contact with abusive fathers. Powerful, evidence-based insights from Shera's Elizabeth Dalgarno, Adrienne Barnett, Natalie Page, and Arpana Verma.

[Children's thoughts about their domestic violence perpetrating fathers.](#)

The latest addition to Emma Katz's excellent substack which aims to provide accessible information that 'could make a difference to the lives of survivors and those who work with them'.

[Love?](#)

Sam Beckinsale's docudrama is a moving exposé of domestic violence and coercive control, and the gaslighting of women who are told that this is 'love'. Sam is an actress and a UK activist against intimate partner abuse and violence.

STOP PRESS!

We've just heard back from the fabulous women who attended the Family Law Council roundtable in Melbourne that it was a really positive meeting. We'll report back in full in the next Newsletter. We're so grateful to Miranda, Jessica, Gina and Yvette – and to the Hague mothers whose experiences have helped shape their responses. A little bit of history being made here we think...

Thank you for your interest in the Hague Mothers' project.

Together we can, and will, make change happen.

Ruth, Michelle, and the international Hague Mothers' project team.

#SolidarityWithHagueMothers #HagueMothers

Follow us on Twitter: @FiLiAHagueMums



Copyright © 2023 FiLiA, All rights reserved.

Our mailing address is:

FiLiA
C/O Women's Resource Centre
41 North Road London
London, UK N7 9ER
United Kingdom

[Add us to your address book](#)

Want to change how you receive these emails?

You can [update your preferences](#) or [unsubscribe from this list](#).