

Vivian family: 2.30minute segment transcript

Martin: I'm Martin Vivian. My mum is Cynthia.

At the age of about 78 she was officially diagnosed with dementia and there was this sudden deterioration in short term memory and the wandering started almost immediately, where she would have this need to go to town.

[Older people with dementia or memory loss are at risk of going missing]

Lou: She just decides on some imaginary appointment and then heads off.

Martin: In the end dad worked out a system where he would let her go instead of trying to stop her.

Lou: And after she has walked for about a kilometre, I go and pick her up and take her home and drive around for about half an hour.

Martin: We had an incident a couple of months ago where mum went off on one of her walks that she does everyday and she took a slightly different route

Lou: Anyway I went out after about 20 minutes and I couldn't find her. She wasn't south and she wasn't north.

Martin: At one stage we found some foot prints and thought she can't be far away but still no sign. And then it got dark and we started to worry. A cool wind came up, visibility was low. She would be starting to get cold.

[Not knowing is like living in darkness]

You'd think it would be impossible for anybody to go missing in such a small community like King Island.

By 11 we were pretty well ready to call it quits.

One of my neighbours sons, Brent, turned up in his car, stuck his head out the window and said 'I found her'!

So we got her back. She'd been walking for 7 hours, nothing to eat or drink. She was cold and tired but of course, because of her short term memory loss most of the unpleasant memory of what she'd gone through was gone.

But she has never lost that sense of humour, sense of fun. We're lucky in that way.

She was quite happy. And the rest of us breathed a sigh of relief. Fortunately we got away with it, I guess because we are a small community.

Public vigilance makes a big difference.

Just keeping an eye out. Recognising something's not quiet right. Putting two and two together instead of just ignoring it.

National Missing Persons Week: 2 – 8 August

You can help by keeping an eye out.

www.australia.gov.au/missingpersons

Free call 1800 000 634