



JOINT MEDIA RELEASE

25 May 2009

Global effort commemorates International Missing Children's Day

For the first time a consolidated global effort has been mounted to raise awareness of the plight of missing children around the world and its tragic consequences.

Nine countries from four continents will launch an international campaign on 25 May - International Missing Children's Day - to educate the global community about the issues associated with missing children and strengthen global efforts to find them.

These nine countries are part of the Global Missing Children's Network run by the International Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (ICMEC).

The main purpose of this special day is to encourage everyone around the world to think about all the children still missing and to spread a message of hope and solidarity to parents who have no news about their children and do not know where they are or what has become of them.

In many countries 25 May has been recognised as a national day for missing children since the disappearance of Etan Patz from a New York street corner on his way to school in 1979.

The problem of missing children is complex and knows no boundaries. The exact number of children missing at any one time internationally is unknown. However, to give an indication on the extent of the problem, in Australia, approximately 20,000 people under the age of 18 are reported missing every year (*Australian Institute of Criminology, 2008*). This equates to one young person reported missing every hour of every day.

Australian Federal Police Commissioner Mick Keelty said that while 95 per cent of missing persons are found within a short period of time, the lasting impact, whether it be emotional, physical, financial or psychological, particularly on families is devastating.

"The Australian Federal Police has been working with State and Territory police on missing children's issues for more than nine years and has been working with the ICMEC and the Global Missing Children's Network since 2000."

To commemorate International Missing Children's Day on 25 May, participating countries will release balloons displaying photos of missing children from around the world in the hope that someone, somewhere, will recognise them.

"We are very proud to be leading this global movement together with ICMEC," Commissioner Keelty said.

Nancy Dube, ICMEC Executive Vice President and Chief Operating Officer said the remarkable events taking place around the world to commemorate this special day serve as an inspiration to us all. This is an important day for all children and for all families, and we commend all those taking part. Together, we will make a difference. Together, we will find them.

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Media opportunity

Commissioner Keelty, along with the Minister for Home Affairs Bob Debus MP, will launch International Missing Children's Day at 10.00am at the Parliament House, Canberra.

Where Parliament House, Front lawns (Authorised Assembly Area)

When Monday, 25 May 2009 at 10.00am

Special Note Launch will commence at 10.00am
Release of balloons will commence at 10.20am

Media packs Images and video will be available in media packs at the launch along with information on other countries' activities.

The National Missing Persons Coordination Centre was established in 2006 to provide a coordinated approach to the response to missing persons in Australia. It's funded by the Federal Government through the Australian Federal Police. Its mission is to reduce the incidence and impact of missing persons and to educate the Australian community about this significant issue. For more information, visit www.missingpersons.gov.au.

The International Centre for Missing & Exploited Children is a private, non-profit 501(c)(3) non-governmental organization. It is the leading agency working on a global basis to combat child abduction and exploitation. It is the sister organization of the National Center for Missing & Exploited Children. Global Missing Children's Network is a program part of ICMEC and is comprised of 17 websites that feed into a central multilingual database featuring information about and photographs of missing children from around the world. For more information, visit www.icmec.org.