



Media Release

When someone goes missing, more than one person is lost

Approximately 420,000 Australians will be affected by a missing person this year, according to statistics released as part of National Missing Persons Week.

The 2011 National Missing Persons Week will be launched at Brisbane's Suncorp Stadium this morning. The theme for the week is *the impact of missing persons on family, friends and the community*.

On average, 35,000 people are reported missing in Australia every year – equivalent to one person every 15 minutes.

Statistics also indicate that for every person reported missing, 12 people – including family members, friends and work colleagues – are directly affected and feel the emotional and physical impacts of a missing person each year.

This year's campaign, *'when someone goes missing more than one person is lost'*, asks people to think about how they would feel if someone they knew went missing.

AFP Deputy Commissioner Michael Phelan said missing persons is a serious issue, which not only affects those directly involved, but the community as a whole.

"Uncertainty about the whereabouts and safety of a loved one can be a traumatic experience, that can last for weeks, months and sadly, years," Deputy Commissioner Phelan said.

"This emotional cost for loved ones cannot be estimated, and the impact on families, friends and even work colleagues can be significant.

"There was a public misconception that someone needed to be missing for 24 hours before they could be reported as missing. This is not the case, and we urge people who are concerned about the welfare and whereabouts of a possible missing loved one or acquaintance to report it to their local police."

Kevin Devitt will share his personal story at the launch, including how he and his family members have dealt with the disappearance of his brother, Michael.

Michael Devitt has not been seen since February 2010, which is considered to be out of character. At the time of his disappearance, he was living in Cannonvale, near Airlie Beach in Queensland.

"We hold concerns for the welfare of Mr Devitt as it is very unusual for him not to contact his family," Queensland Homicide Group's Acting Detective Superintendent Darryl Charleson said.

"Each person in his extended family has been touched in a different way and we are working hard to locate Mr Devitt to give his family some relief from the anguish of not knowing."

More than 95 per cent of people reported missing in Australia are located within a short period of time, but some 1,600 people still remain missing in Australia.

To report information on a missing person, or are interested in learning more about missing persons visit www.missingpersons.gov.au

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