



In Australia someone is reported missing every 18 minutes by someone else who cares

National Missing Persons Week

How do you find someone when they struggle to find themselves?

NATIONAL MISSING PERSONS COORDINATION CENTRE



National Missing Persons Week
5 August – 11 August 2007

www.afp.gov.au/national/missing | Freecall 1800 000 634



Each year an estimated 30,000 people are reported missing in Australia. A high percentage suffer from, or have a history of mental illness.

National Missing Persons Week is an annual event organised by the National Missing Persons Coordination Centre (NMPCC), with the support of state and territory police services, non-government search agencies and other relevant organisations.

The theme for National Missing Persons Week 2007 focuses on the link between missing persons and mental health: *How do you find someone, when they struggle to find themselves?*

National Missing Persons Week has two primary aims:

1. To assist in the resolution of missing persons cases through heightened awareness and increased sightings reports.
2. To raise community awareness regarding issues facing missing persons and their families and friends.

The official launch of National Missing Persons Week 2007 will take place on Monday 6 August at the National Museum of Australia – Canberra. Once again, Channel Nine's Mike Munro, closely connected to the missing persons sector, will act as master of ceremonies. AFP Commissioner Mick Keelty will officially launch the Week with Senator, the Hon David Johnston, Minister for Justice and Customs, speaking at the event.

National television and out-door advertising promoting National Missing Persons Week commences mid-July and will include:

- Television commercials on Foxtel, Prime, Win and Southern Cross Ten
- Advertisements on 575 buses (220 Sydney, 155 Melbourne, 80 Brisbane, 55 Perth, 45 Adelaide, 20 Canberra)
- Five large billboard panels at Central Station – Sydney
- 100,000 National Missing Persons Week postcards distributed to 1,250 venues.

Media profiling of missing persons will be significantly increased during the Week. Television appearances have been secured with family and friends of missing persons, the AFP Commissioner and NMPCC Coordinator, Leonie Jacques on Channel Seven's Sunrise, Channel Nine's Today Show, Channel Ten's 9am with Dave and Kim and through Foxtel's Crime & Investigation Network. Articles will also be appearing in the Good Weekend, Woman's Day, Madison Magazine and Men's Health.

A big thank you to state police and non-government search agencies who have also organised their own radio, television and print media to further raise awareness of National Missing Persons Week. Your efforts are greatly appreciated!

National Missing Persons Week 2007 Calendar of Events

National

DATE	ACTIVITY
Monday 6 August - 11.00am	National Missing Persons Week - official launch. National Museum of Australia - Canberra.

Australian Capital Territory

DATE	ACTIVITY
Sunday 5 August - 9.30am	Church Service: All Saints Anglican Church - Ainslie.

New South Wales

DATE	ACTIVITY
Sunday 5 August - 1.30pm	Church Service: Arncliffe Uniting Church.
Thursday 9 August - 10.00am	FFMPU information session morning tea: Elizabeth Street - Sydney
Sunday 12 August - 9.00am	Church Service - Coffs Harbor Uniting Church.

Victoria

DATE	ACTIVITY
Sunday 5 August - 10.30am	Launch: Southern Cross Train Station - Corner of Spencer Street and Collins Street.

Queensland

DATE	ACTIVITY
Thursday 9 August	Police: Display at Royal National Show - Ecca.

South Australia

DATE	ACTIVITY
Sunday 5 August	Police/Salvation Army: Prayer for the missing.

Northern Territory

DATE	ACTIVITY
Saturday 21 July	Salvation Army: Public Safety Expo with NT Police MPU.
Sunday 5 August - 10.00am	Church Service: Salvation Army Church - Palmerston

Tasmania

DATE	ACTIVITY
Sunday 5 August - 10.00am	Church Services: Salvation Army Churches - Elizabeth Streets - Hobart and Launceston.
Sunday 5 August - 11.00am	Church Service: Salvation Army Church - Wilson Street - Burnie

Kim's prayer...

Kim O'Donnell's step-sister, Amelia Housia, went missing in December 1992.

Amelia was last seen at a local shopping centre in the ACT and was last heard from after she phoned her biological mother in Tonga to tell her that she was ok. No further contact has been made since.

In memory of Amelia, Kim (on behalf of Amelia's extended family and friends) will be reading a poem she has written for the National Missing Persons Week's Church Service:

Amelia Fua Hausia, born 21st July 1974. Daughter, sister, niece, grand-daughter, aunty and friend. A strong woman raised together with her loving and resilient Tongan and Aboriginal families.

Mia - her nickname...affectionately used when we share our individual memories and stories about her.

Energetic, spirited, lots of 'fuzzy hair'!

Loves dancing, singing, playing sport and her family and friends.

Infectious laughter...inquisitive nieces and nephews longing to meet her.

Away for 15 years, missed by many but not forgotten. We will never lose hope of seeing her again. Hope is the ingredient that keeps our spirits strong. Amelia, please come home if you can. We love and miss you deeply...



Amelia Housia: missing since December 1992.

Profiling of missing persons

Profiling of missing persons has been extended across the media. The Woman's Day web site (www.womansday.ninemsn.com.au) will now be profiling four missing persons each month.

This exposure is in addition to profiling of missing persons which currently airs on both Foxtel and Channel Nine.

Foxtel (Crime & Investigation Network) continues to support both the AFP and the missing persons sector by airing its exceptional missing persons commercial and profiling missing persons cases through its 'Missing Persons Fact Files'.

Channel Nine's *Missing Persons Unit* and *Without a Trace* series also continue to support the NMPCC by profiling missing persons at the conclusion of each show.

In addition, a number of Police Missing Persons Units (NSW, Victoria, WA and Tasmania) have secured spots to profile missing persons cases through print, radio and television media during National Missing Persons Week. Profiles will be displayed via electronic scoreboards at NRL games and in city railway stations in NSW and Victoria; through the Sunday Times and West Australian.

Missing persons and mental health

In line with this year's National Missing Persons Week theme, the NMPCC is working in partnership with a number of mental health organisations to inform the Australian community of the link between mental health and missing persons. The aim is to alleviate the distress experienced by people living with a mental illness and their families and friends; and to reduce the incidence of people going missing due to mental health problems.

The link between mental health and missing persons

Mental illnesses such as depression and the less common conditions of bipolar disorder and schizophrenia, can affect a person's ability to cope with life. Research suggests that this is one of the factors that contributes to the rate of people going missing.

For people with poor mental health there are many triggers that can lead to them going missing such as feeling depressed and unable to cope with daily life, delusional symptoms about needing to hide, uncertainty about who or how to ask for help, disagreement with family members about how to address a mental health problem, frustrations with health professionals, or a sense that there are no alternatives but to go missing. Some may go missing for a short period of time. Some go missing time and time again.

There is persistent misunderstanding in the community of the effects of mental illness and how it can be treated, and this can include an unwillingness to accept that mental health has played a role in someone disappearing. In addition, the secrecy that often accompanies a missing person's case, can lead to those left behind feeling they have little support available to them - increasing their risk of grief and becoming depressed.

Thank you particularly to the Mental Health Council of Australia (MHCA), SANE Australia and Beyond Blue for their work and input into this year's National Missing Persons Week.



NMPCC and Mental Health Council of Australia launch

Working in partnership, the NMPCC and the MHCA will be co-launching the link between mental health and missing persons in October 2007 – coinciding with World Mental Health Day (10 October).

More details of the launch will be provided in the next edition of *Missing*.

NSW Missing Persons and the Mental Health Reference Group

The Families and Friends of Missing Persons Unit in NSW (FFMPU) recently convened the first meeting of the NSW Missing Person and Mental Health Reference Group. The Reference Group is a sub-committee of the Families and Friends on Missing Person (FFMP) Interagency Forum. The Reference Group meets quarterly and will be reporting back to the Interagency Forum.

The Reference Group will be working towards progressing the FFMP Interagency Forum priority area of mental health, as well as addressing issues identified at the Mental Health Roundtable hosted in May 2006. Representatives on the Reference Group include: FFMPU and Victims of Crime Bureau at Attorney General's Department of NSW; NMPCC; NSW Police Force; NSW Health Office of Mental Health, Drug and Alcohol; Mental Health Association NSW Inc; Missing Persons Committee NSW Inc; Department of Community Services; Department of Education and Training; and Association of Relatives and Friends of the Mentally Ill (ARAFMI).

For more information contact Lee Purches, Senior Project Officer FFMPU (02) 93743014.

SANE Australia wants your help

Do you have a relative or friend who had a mental illness who has gone missing? Would you like to contribute to improving services and support for others in this situation?

SANE Australia, the national mental health charity, is working on an important new initiative to improve the support and services for family and friends of people with mental illness who have gone missing and/or died following a suicide: the Mental Illness Bereavement Support Project.

Suicide is a major issue for people affected by mental illness as is the incidence of people going missing. This often has a profound effect on families and friends, and this impact and their consequent needs for information and support are poorly understood. However, it is clear that often there are additional and different emotions to contend with when mental illness is involved in a suicide or where someone has gone missing. There may also be a lack of specialist support and services available in this area.

The first stage of the project will focus on gaining a better understanding of the needs of family and friends of people with mental illness who have gone missing or who have died by suicide. The next step will explore the challenges current services may experience around delivery of support to this group of people.

If you would like to share your views and experiences please contact the SANE Australia Helpline on 1800 18 SANE (7263) and ask for Jen Lorains or leave your name and phone number for a call back. Alternatively you can email Jen at jennifer.lorains@sane.org

This project is funded under the Australian Government's National Suicide Prevention Strategy.