



National research into missing persons launched

Minister for Home Affairs, the Hon. Bob Debus officially launched the Australian Institute of Criminology's (AIC) *Missing Persons in Australia* report on Thursday 13 March in Canberra.

The research was commissioned and co-funded by the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and the Attorney-General's Department of NSW. The research provides strategic direction for a coordinated government and non-government approach to missing persons in the Australian community.

The report identifies those groups most at risk of going missing and provides direction on preventative strategies to reduce the number of people who go missing. The three primary groups identified as being at-risk of going missing are people experiencing a mental illness, young people (under 18 years) and the aged (over 60 years).



The AIC conducted the research between July 2006 and December 2007. The researchers reviewed national and overseas literature, compiled data from Australian police services, received input from non-government stakeholders and conducted a series of questionnaires and face-to-face interviews with families and friends of missing persons.

The data suggests that 35,000 missing persons reports are received each year in Australia, equating to one person every 15 minutes.

Various stakeholders from the missing persons sector, in addition to families and friends of missing persons, were present at the research launch held at the Canberra Convention Centre. Commander Warren Gray from the AFP and Dr Judy Putt, Research Manager from the AIC both spoke about the importance of the research and what it means for future direction.

The NMPCC would like to thank the Attorney General's Department of NSW, the AIC and the family members of missing persons for their commitment to this research.

The report can be accessed on both the AFP and AIC websites: www.afp.gov.au/national/missing | www.aic.gov.au.



Developing a national missing persons research agenda

On 12 March more than 40 academics participated in a forum to develop a national research agenda on missing persons. The research forum was held in Sydney as an adjunct to the International Diversity in Health Conference.

Participants represented diverse campuses across Australia as well as various fields including public health, nursing, social work, psychology, social inclusion/exclusion, men's health, social justice and police education. The participants also included practitioners from the Attorney General's Department of NSW, non-government tracing agencies (Red Cross, Salvation Army Family Tracing Service, International Social Service), health and mental health services.

Dr Judy Putt from the AIC provided a summary of the findings from the most recent national research on missing persons; *Missing Persons in Australia* (see previous article). The Forum included a vibrant panel discussion comprising Emeritus Professor Anthony Marsella (University of Hawaii), Ms Judy Saba (NSW Police, Diversity Unit), Ms Sarah Wayland (Project Officer, National Missing Persons Coordination Centre) and Dr Judy Putt (AIC) focussing on research and diversity.

The NMPCC would like to thank Professor Abd Malak AM, from the Diversity Health Institute for assisting with the venue and organisation, Professors Anthony Marsella and Professor Diego De Leo for participation and commentary, Ms Maria Dimopolos for facilitating the day, and to everyone who gave time, expertise and commitment to developing a research agenda.

For further information about the research forum or to participate in the National Working Group on Missing Persons Research, please contact Margaret Cunningham on **(02) 92864551** or email margi.cunningham@afp.gov.au.



Launch of the national missing persons Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities Strategy

Commander Ray Johnson, Manager of Special Operations, AFP launched the missing persons Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities (CALD) Strategy in Sydney on 12 March.

The strategy recognises that many people in CALD communities may have limited access to information about the procedures and services available when someone goes missing.

The strategy is a partnership between the Multicultural Communication Service (MCS) of NSW Health and the National Missing Persons Coordination Centre (NMPCC). The strategy comprises of four focus areas:

- communication
- data development
- education and training to targeted ethnic-specific organisations
- monitoring and evaluation.

Commander Johnson stated that 'the need for the strategy arises from, the acknowledgement that missing persons represent all communities within Australia and therefore agencies working within the field need to operate within a diversity framework.'

As a first step in the strategy Commander Johnson launched a Missing Persons Factsheet that has been translated into six community languages and will be distributed through ethnic media as well as the NMPCC and MCS websites.

A recently conducted project by the MCS involved interviews of people from both the Chinese and Vietnamese communities on issues related to their experience and knowledge of missing persons, who they contacted when someone went missing and how information on missing persons can reach their communities.

From these interviews more than 100 people have indicated interest in participating in focus groups on missing person issues in their communities.

The NMPCC would like to acknowledge Mr Peter Todaro and Mr Michael Camit from the MCS for their commitment in working with the NMPCC in the development of this strategy.

For further information about the CALD Communities Strategy please contact Margaret Cunningham on (02) 92864551 or email margi.cunningham@afp.gov.au.

NMPCC awareness campaigns

Recently released national missing persons research identifies young people as being a primary group at-risk of going missing. As such, the NMPCC will focus its 2008 awareness campaigns on this group.

National Youth Week: talk b4u walk

For the first time the NMPCC is sponsoring National Youth Week which takes place between 5 - 13 April 2008. National Youth Week is an initiative of the Department of Families and Housing, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs (FaHCSIA).

To celebrate the launch of National Youth Week 2008, a Video Hits Live concert took place in Martin Place, Sydney, on Saturday 5 April. The concert was broadcast live to air via Network Ten's Video Hits program.

The Minister for Youth and Sport, the Hon. Kate Ellis MP, attended the event and officially launched the Week. Last year, a similar event attracted more than 5,000 young people.

As part of the sponsorship agreement, the NMPCC was present at the Concert conducting on-ground activities. This included setting up a stall and distributing merchandise featuring the tagline **talk b4u walk**. A youth missing persons' community service announcement was also played at the Concert encouraging young people to talk to their families, friends or a youth specific agency when they feel that going missing might be their only alternative.

Further information can be found at www.youthweek.com.au.



National Missing Persons Week 2008

In 2008 National Missing Persons Week will be held between 3 - 9 August. The week will be officially launched in Canberra on Monday 4 August. Further information will be provided in the next edition of *Missing*.

Red Cross serving the community

Every year thousands of families across the world are separated as a result of war or other humanitarian emergencies. As part of the International Red Cross/Red Crescent tracing network, Red Cross in Australia together with its 186 sister Red Cross National Societies facilitates exchange of family news, re-establishes contact or clarifies the fate of the missing.

It is a unique service provided free-of-charge to the public involving:

- Tracing requests - help in locating a relative missing as a result of war or disaster
- Red Cross Message - help in sending a message to a relative where there is no formal means of communication
- Health and welfare inquiries - help in checking the welfare of a relative overseas who cannot be reached due to illness or other circumstances.

The service also provides information on a broad range of services as well as referrals to other public and private agencies.

For more information contact the Red Cross on (03) 9345 1800, email natinfo@redcross.org.au or visit www.redcross.org.au.

Missing is a quarterly e-bulletin developed by the NMPCC. To provide feedback or submit articles, please contact Kathryn Jones, Team Leader, NMPCC on (02) 6246 2384 or email kathryn.jones@afp.gov.au.