



National Missing Persons Week 2009: 2 - 8 August

Not knowing is like living in darkness. Not knowing what has happened to someone you love, where they are and whether they are safe is like living in darkness.

This is how it feels for the many families and friends who are left behind when someone disappears.

The focus for National Missing Persons Week this year is on older people with dementia or memory loss as a key group at risk of going missing. Memory loss and wandering are the more common symptoms of dementia which often lead to the disappearance of an older person.

To highlight this group at risk of going missing, the NMPCC is working with key partners Homelessness Australia and Alzheimer's Australia.

Four families of missing persons form the 'face' of the campaign, sharing their story of not knowing, the ongoing darkness that surrounds them and the glimmer of hope that keeps them going day-to-day.

They will share their stories in the hope that someone, somewhere, may recognise their missing loved one and to raise awareness of this significant community issue so that the public keeps an eye out for older people, preventing others from having to go through what they do. We thank these families for sharing their stories

with us. We can only imagine how hard it is recounting the hours that play on their minds every day.

A national media advertising campaign has been launched in support of National Missing Persons Week. Advertisements will run across various media channels including radio, online advertising, television and print. Additional promotion has been secured through Centrelink outlets during August. State and Territory police forces and Missing Persons Units will also be conducting activities on a local level in support

of the week.

The official launch of National Missing Persons Week will be held at the Hyatt Hotel in Canberra on Monday 3 August. Mike Munro will once again act as master of ceremonies. This year National Missing Persons Week will be co-launched with National Homeless Persons Week. Governor-General Her Excellency Ms Quentin Bryce AC will also be in attendance speaking as the Alzheimer's Australia patron.

Visit www.missingpersons.gov.au for more information and to view family stories. For more information, please email missing@afp.gov.au.

National Missing Persons Week 2009 Calendar of Events

National

AFP, National Missing
Persons Coordination Centre
Media launch
Monday 3 August, Canberra.

Australian Capital Territory

ACT Policing church service
9.30am - Sunday 2 August , All Saints Anglican Church,
Ainslie.

New South Wales

NSW Police launch, church service
and promotion
11:00am - Sunday 2 August, NSW Police
Headquarters, Parramatta.
Prayer for the missing at church services throughout NSW.
Big screen promotion and live reads during Round 21 and
22 of the NRL.

South Australia

South Australia Police church service
Sunday 2 August, Prayer for the missing at church
services throughout South Australia.

Tasmania

Tasmania Police media promotion
Articles will run in local Tasmanian newspapers and nightly
news.

Victoria

Victoria Police
Victoria Police Media Unit and Missing Persons Desk will be
conducting media interviews on request.

Western Australia

Western Australian Police
Western Australia Missing Persons Investigation Team will
be conducting media interviews on request.

Queensland

Queensland Police media promotion
Feature at Police exhibition at Royal National Association
Show ('The Ekka').
Articles run in local QLD newspapers.

Northern Territory

Northern Territory Police media launch
and promotion
Wednesday 5 August, Peter McAulay Centre, Berrimah.
Joint broadcast on local radio with Alzheimers Northern
Territory, to link in with Safe Return Program.

International Missing Children's Day a global movement

For the first time, a global effort was mounted to commemorate International Missing Children's Day on Monday 25 May 2009.



Above left: Attendees at the Australian launch of International Missing Children's Day.
Right: Balloon release on the lawns of Parliament House in Canberra.

Nine countries from four continents, including Australia, united to launch International Missing Children's Day to raise awareness of missing children and its tragic consequences. The main purpose of the Day is to spread a message of hope and remind people of the children who are still missing.

It was the first time the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and the National Missing Persons Coordination Centre (NMPCC) participated in the event and together with the International Centre for Missing and Exploited

Children (ICMEC), led the world-first global campaign.

As part of spreading the global message: Together we can make a difference, the AFP produced a 30 and 60 second community service announcement which was broadcast on television stations nationally and internationally, on websites as well as social networking sites such as YouTube and MySpace. Non-English speaking countries were supplied with community service announcements in their language. An international media release as well as a

support letter from participating countries was also distributed.

In Australia, Minister for Home Affairs, the Honourable Bob Debus and AFP Commissioner Mick Keelty officially launched International Missing Children's Day on the lawns of Parliament House in Canberra.

Special guest speaker Denise Morcombe, mother of missing child Daniel Morcombe, shared the emotions felt by her family and the pain caused by not knowing where Daniel is.

Long-time supporter of missing persons and television journalist Mike Munro travelled from Sydney to act as master of ceremonies at the launch.

At the conclusion of the launch, Commissioner Keelty was joined on stage by Denise and Bruce Morcombe to release 40 balloons displaying photos of

missing children from around the world. Invited guests, including the families of missing children profiled on the balloons, and AFP Executive released an additional 40 balloons.

The same balloons were also released by participating countries in the hope that someone, somewhere would recognise one of the, children profiled.

While the exact number of missing children internationally is unknown, in Australia, 20,000 people under the age of 18 are reported missing every year. While 95 percent are found within a short period of time, the impact, particularly on families left behind is devastating.

Participating countries, Australia, Brazil, Germany, Greece, Ireland, Romania, South Africa and The Netherlands are part of the Global Missing Children's Network (GMCN) which was established by the ICMEC in 1998.



Above: Mike Munro, Commissioner Keelty and Bruce and Denise Morcombe release balloons on the lawns of Parliament House in Canberra.

Visit www.missingpersons.gov.au for more information and to view the television community service.

Greece launch European Hotline for International Missing Children's Day

The Smile of the Child, a member of the Global Missing Children's Network (GMCN) released balloons for International Missing Children's Day in addition to holding a press conference to launch a three month campaign promoting the awareness of the European Hotline for Missing Children 1 16000, which is consistent with nine other European countries.

The public awareness campaign for the European Hotline for Missing Children was supported by Missing Children Europe (MCE).

MCE is a European organisation representing 23 non-government organisations in 16 European Union states.

During the press conference the Greek National

Police and The Smile of the Child released official data on missing children in Greece:

- 2008: 91 percent of cases investigated by The Smile of the Child resulted in children returning home safely.
- 2009: 90 percent of children who were reported missing were located and returned home safely.

"While many think of International Missing Children's Day as a sad occasion, we want to emphasise that in fact many of our children return home safely and that we continue to search for and hope to find children that are still missing," Maggie Lazaridis from The Greek Centre for Missing and Exploited Children said.



Above: Balloon release at Constitution Square in Greece.

For more information visit www.missingchildreneneurope.eu,
www.missingkids.com or www.icmec.org

UK Missing Persons Bureau marks International Missing Children's Day

The Missing Persons Bureau of the National Policing Improvement Agency (NPIA) staged a special event to mark International Missing Children's Day on Monday 18 May (25 May was a public holiday in the UK).

Families and police forces involved in the investigations of missing children united on London's South Bank to encourage anyone with information that could help find a missing child to contact the police.

The same balloons used by all countries were displayed in a balloon arch (below).

Chief Constable Peter Neyroud, Chief Executive of the NPIA said "We must do

everything we can to minimise the risk [of a missing child]. A lot of work has been done both in the UK and internationally to help find missing children, not only in the vital hours immediately after a child goes missing, but also in the days and weeks that follow. There is now better information sharing and joint international working on investigations".



Above: Balloon arch display in the UK.



Above: Family members of missing children profiled on the balloons attended the launch of International Missing Children's Day at London's South Bank.

For more information visit www.npia.police.uk/missingperson

Brazil release balloons for missing children

In Brazil International Missing Children's Day was marked by a prayer and a balloon release.



Above left: A prayer for the missing children.



Above right: Brazil's GDF Secretary, parents of missing children and the wife of the Governor release balloons.

Age progression training to aid in the location of missing persons

The NMPCC facilitated age progression training for its members as well as those from AFP Forensic and members from Victoria and Queensland Police.



Left: Age progression course participants from the AFP, Queensland and Victoria Police with Instructor Glenn Miller (centre front).

Through the Police Consultative Group on Missing Persons it was identified that profiling long-term missing persons cases in Australia could be improved by using age enhanced photographs. It was discussed that location rates may have better success if missing persons cases were profiled with an age enhanced photograph to resemble what the missing person would currently look like.

The NMPCC arranged for the Forensic Imaging Technique Training to be conducted in Australia by a representative from the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC) which is based in the United States of America. The training was offered to State and Territory police forces and stakeholders in relevant fields of expertise.

The training occurred over a six day period and included juvenile and adult age progression, adult age regression and facial

reconstruction. The training complements the investigative work being conducted at a State and Territory level in the location and resolution of missing persons' cases.

This initiative has the added benefit of providing support and developing consistency across law enforcement jurisdictions on the best options for age enhancement.

The NMPCC is aiming to implement this capability in the near future. The age enhanced photos of long-term missing person's cases will be uploaded at www.missingpersons.gov.au and used in relevant media profiling activities.

Countries around the world have found the use of age enhanced photographs as an important tool in the location of a missing person.



Above: Results of an age regression exercise.

Alzheimer's Australia release new information

People with dementia make up a significant number of the 35,000 people reported missing to police each year. Over 230,000 Australians have Dementia, 60 to 70 percent of who live within the community.

Walking is something that most of us take for granted, as a means of getting from place to place or getting our daily exercise. People with dementia can derive great benefit from the enjoyment of continual walking, however, for some there may be an increased risk of wandering, injury or getting lost and therefore becoming a missing person. Alzheimer's Australia has released new research which indicates that safe walking depends on a number of factors:

- physical competence
- orientation to place (i.e. being aware of where you are, where you are going and how to get home again)
- the ability to recognise and understand important cues in the environment
- the ability to rest when tired.

Families and carers can support people with dementia to continue to walk safely for as long as possible by:

- helping to maintain physical conditions for safe walking
- preparing for rapid identification of the person if required
- promoting discrete family and community awareness
- knowing the familiar routes and destinations usually chosen by the person
- being prepared to alert police quickly if necessary
- considering using locator technology to help monitor and find a person with dementia who wants to continue to walk alone.

Alzheimer's Australia sponsors a Safe Return program in NSW, Victoria, South Australia and the Northern Territory. Assistive technology is also available to support safe walking.

This year the NMPCC is partnering with Homelessness Australia and Alzheimer's Australia to further raise awareness of older people with dementia or memory loss as a group at risk of going missing.



For information about dementia and approaches to safer walking contact the National Dementia Helpline on **1800 100 500** or visit www.alzheimers.org.au.

Families and friends of missing persons invited to re-launch missing persons helpline in Dublin

The new National Missing Persons Helpline was officially launched on 18 April at an event at Dublin's city centre.

The previous National Missing Persons Helpline ended in March 2005 due to lack of funding. After several years of campaigning to restore the service, the voluntary organisation Missing in Ireland Support Service (MISS) secured funding from the Commission for Support of Victims of Crime.

The Commission for Support of Victims of Crime allocated €20,000 to the organisation in 2008 to set up the helpline

and 5000 euro this year to operate the helpline (1890 442 552).

Junior Trade Minister John McGuinness TD officially launched the Missing Persons Helpline. He said that it was a "privilege and honour to be launching the helpline and to once again meet with families of missing persons."

The re-launch of the Missing Persons Helpline was attended by a number of family members of missing persons. These included

Josephine Pender, whose daughter Fiona went missing in Offaly in 1996, and Ann Boyle, whose daughter Mary was just six when she went missing in Donegal in 1977.

During the launch, 22 MISS volunteers were presented with diplomas in family and individual support. The volunteers will support people affected by a loved one going missing.

Dermot Browne, Chairperson of MISS said, "I look forward

with great anticipation to improving upon our working relationship with the Garda and I hope that the helpline can assist them by dealing with the human and emotional effects on family and friends while they proceed with their efforts to trace the missing person."

At the close of the event, 10 doves were released to symbolise the hope that families of missing persons have in finding their loved one.

Feature article

Welcome to a brand new section of the Missing e-bulletin. The feature article will include every day information and reviews on articles, books, education and training activities of relevance to the missing persons field. This edition's article is about resilience.

Resilience

The experience of having someone missing in a family may take many years to resolve. Many people wonder how they can do what they have to do while managing the overwhelming feelings and changes that are often an inevitable part of when someone you know suddenly becomes missing.

According to the Merriam-Webster Online Dictionary the term 'resilience' means:

1. the capability of a strained body to recover its size and shape after deformation caused especially by compressive stress
2. an ability to recover from or adjust easily to misfortune or change.

For many family members and friends of missing persons the challenge to recover, adjust and spring back after experiencing the trauma of 'missing' may extend over many years. How resilient we are in situations depends on many factors stemming from other family and personal experiences in life as well as our individual temperament. We can demonstrate our resilience by how we engage with life despite the challenges.

Maintaining one's personal and family resilience can seem daunting though research supports the importance of maintaining competencies, developing coping strategies, and reducing additional stresses. This can often be done by:

- maintaining one's self esteem and self confidence (this can be supported by taking care of the physical – diet, exercise and relaxation)
- creating and maintaining friendships that are supportive
- having a sense of purpose in your own life
- ensuring your personal values and beliefs guide your responses to situations
- maintaining your sense of control over what it is possible to control.

Project Resilience (www.projectresilience.com) a private US organisation emphasises the importance of focusing on individual and family strengths when facing challenging experiences. The following has been adapted for families and friends of missing persons.

Insight – Obtain as much information by asking questions and when others ask you about your situation give honest answers.

Independence – Being a family or friend of a missing person can be time-consuming and emotionally consuming. Finding ways to distance yourself emotionally from the situation enhances your ability to manage.

Relationships – Make and maintain fulfilling connections to other people. It is easy to feel different from others and to isolate one's self.

Initiative – Use your personal and family skills and abilities to stay on top of other day to day problems.

Creativity – Expressing oneself through art forms such as writing, music, craft, drama all assist in using our senses to communicate to ourselves and/or others our experiences and feelings.

Humour - Finding the comic in the tragic may seem a strange strength to focus on but maintaining our sense of humour, finding things to laugh about, produce endorphins that assist physical and psychological health.

Morality – It is important to maintain one’s sense as a moral person and to act according to our conscience. This can be particularly trying and difficult if there are situations beyond our control in the investigations processes.

Talking about these strengths and how you and members of your family are practising them can be a powerful way to develop a feeling of accomplishment.

So many times friends and family members of missing persons focus on what they have done wrong; or what they should be doing. Recognising that it is an accomplishment to get up each day, to face daily family and work situations and acknowledging the strengths you use to get through each day despite the hardship you are facing. It is a bittersweet mixture of pain and triumph that is usually under the surface, but is sometimes readily visible in many young people and adults who have gone through difficult circumstances.

If you have any comments or wish to share your insight about how you have managed a situation with a friend or family member of a missing person – either personally or professionally – please forward your comment to missing@afp.gov.au.



Websites of interest

www.authentic happiness.com
www.projectresilience.com

Books of interest

Walsh, F., (2006) Strengthening Family Resilience. New York, Guilford Press. ISBN:1593851866

Conferences of interest

The 2nd Adolescent and Young People’s Health Research Forum, 7 September, 2009

What's new?

Australian film highlights key missing persons issues

Closed for Winter is an Australian film starring Natalie Imbruglia which opened nationally 23 April. The film is about a woman who tries to piece together the mystery of her sister's disappearance. A public forum has been set up where you can listen to clips or share your own stories and thoughts.

Visit: <http://closedforwinter.wordpress.com/>

youth beyondblue

On 18 May youth beyondblue launched a national advertising campaign to raise awareness about the signs and symptoms of depression and anxiety in young people. As part of the launch 21 new fact sheets have been developed and are available from the website.

Visit: www.youthbeyondblue.com

New report on missing persons

The Garda Siochana Inspectorate published a fifth report on Missing Persons (*Review and Recommendations*). Equality and Law Reform to review current practice regarding missing persons advise the Government on the need to establish a dedicated missing persons unit within the Garda Siochana and a response network similar to the Amber Alert in the USA.

The report follows a request from the Minister for Justice,

The report is available on the Inspectorate's website at www.gsinsp.ie