

Contents

Abbreviations and glossary	2
Introduction	5
Executive summary	7
Opening address	9
Facts about missing persons	12
Missing persons in Australia	13
Research and missing persons – a panel dialogue	20
Diversity framework model for an Australian research agenda on missing persons	31
Filling the gaps: Ideas and Issues	32
Conclusion	37
Appendices	
1. Identifying the research agenda	39
2. Methodologies and questions potentially useful in missing persons research	40
3. The Diversity Wheel	41
4. Contributors at the National Missing Persons Research Forum	42
5. Australian researcher contributions to the missing persons field	44

Abbreviations

AFP	Australian Federal Police
AGD	Attorney General's Department of NSW
AIC	Australian Institute of Criminology
ARC	Australian Research Council
ATSI	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander
DFAT	Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade
DOCS	Department of Community Services (NSW)
FFMPU	Families and Friends of Missing Persons Unit
GP	General practitioner
ISS	International Social Service
LAC	Local Area Command
MCS	Multicultural Communication Service
MPU	Missing Persons Unit
NGO	Non-government organisation
NMPCC	National Missing Persons Coordination Centre
NSW	New South Wales
SA	South Australia
UK	United Kingdom

Glossary

The following terms are used when working with diverse communities.

Non English Speaking Background (NESB)

There is very little agreement about the definition of 'NESB'. The first major use of the word focuses on language, that is, first language spoken, preferred language, or language spoken at home. The second major definition uses country of birth as an indicator of cultural background and includes within 'NESB' those countries where English is not the main language spoken.

Culturally and Linguistically Diverse (CALD) Background

At a meeting of the Ministerial Council of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs in 1996, Commonwealth and State Ministers noted the problems associated with the use of the term 'NESB' and agreed that the "term be dropped where possible, from all official communication". Since then, Commonwealth agencies have used 'Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Backgrounds' where appropriate.

Ethnic Group/Ethnicity

Ethnic group refers to a group of people of the same descent and heritage who share a common and distinctive culture passed on through generations. Ethnic groups can exhibit such distinguishing features as language or accent, physical features, family names and customs.

Migrant

A migrant is a person who chooses to leave their own home in order to settle in another country.

Asylum-seeker

'An asylum seeker is an individual who is seeking international protection. In countries with individualised procedures, an asylum seeker is someone whose claim has not yet been finally decided on by the country in which he or she submitted it. Not every asylum seeker will ultimately be recognised as a refugee, but every refugee is initially an asylum seeker.'

(United Nations High Commission for Refugees, Master Glossary of Terms, June 2006)

Refugee

A refugee is a person who 'owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group, or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to or, owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country.'

Article 1, The 1951 Convention Relating to the Status of Refugees

New and emerging communities

New and emerging communities refers to those communities who have recently settled in Australia.

Introduction

In March 2008 the National Missing Persons Coordination Centre (NMPCC), Australian Federal Police (AFP) convened a Research Forum as an adjunct to the two-yearly International Diversity in Health conference (2008).

The objectives for the forum were:

- To engage the research community around missing persons issues.
- To develop a national research agenda and strategy to support ongoing investment/involvement in issues related to missing persons.
- To identify specific issues arising from the application of a diversity lens to missing persons research.
- To identify collaborative research opportunities with key agencies.
- To promote on-going dialogue and partnerships.

The expected outcomes were to include:

- The development of a broad national agenda and research strategy for missing persons.
- The identification of a core group of active stakeholders in the research community prepared to action strategies.
- The creation of dialogue and network opportunities.

As evidenced in the following documentation, the forum more than met its objectives. It provided a catalyst for more than 40 people representing diverse academic fields and a broad range of universities and non-government organisations (NGO) to explore collaborative research directions for the missing persons field using a diversity framework.

Funding requests for the project were supported by Ms Leonie Jacques, Coordinator of the National Missing Persons Coordination Centre, and Mr Ray Johnson, Manager of Special Operations, AFP. Professor Abd Malak AM from Sydney West Area Health Service provided a venue for the event and organisational support. Special thanks particularly to Joanne Corcoran, Monique Wakefield, and Nadia Garan.

Executive Summary

The day was facilitated by Ms Maria Dimopolous of MyriaD Consultants and included presentations and panel discussions from Dr Judy Putt (Australian Institute of Criminology), Ms Judy Saba (NSW Police, Diversity Unit), Ms Sarah Wayland (Senior Project Officer, NMPCC), and Emeritus Professor Anthony Marsella (University of Hawaii.)

A special thank you also to the two international keynote speakers, Emeritus Professor Anthony Marsella and Professor Diego de Leo from the Diversity in Health conference, who generously gave their time and expertise to the Forum.

And thanks to all who attended despite busy research and academic schedules. Your contribution and commitment added to the day's dialogue and outcomes, and your participation in continuing discussions and research projects will enhance both the knowledge of and responses to missing persons and their families and friends.

Margaret Cunningham MSW

Senior Project Officer – National Training Coordination
National Missing Persons Coordination Centre

The National Missing Persons' Research Forum was held as an adjunct activity to the International Diversity in Health Conference, 2008.

Academics representing public health, psychology, social work, nursing and police education met for one day with representatives of government and non-government search agencies.

Professors Anthony Marsella (Emeritus Professor, University of Hawaii) and Diego De Leo (Griffith University, Queensland) provided commentary and contributions to discussions.

Dr Judy Putt (Australian Institute of Criminology) presented an overview of the recently issued research *Missing in Australia* co-funded by the National Missing Persons Coordination Centre, Australian Federal Police, and the Families and Friends of Missing Persons Unit, Attorney-General's Department of NSW.

A panel discussion highlighted some of the research issues in the sector. The discussions were framed around the following key questions:

- Which lenses are needed to aid development of a national research agenda for missing persons?
- From a methodological point of view, what are the dilemmas in missing persons research?
- What partnerships are necessary to develop a research agenda in the missing persons field?
- In terms of training and research, what is the culture that informs us, and what are the benefits that can be enhanced?

Workshop participants highlighted the importance of a strategic and collaborative research process that enabled the implementation of diverse research agendas and perspectives.

The meeting, the first of its kind in Australia, engaged academic researchers, national partners, government agencies, community advocates and invited collaborations to explore further opportunities to augment related research.

A key feature of this cross-sectoral dialogue was to place missing persons research in a diversity framework and to produce a consensus-driven research agenda that identified research priorities for the AFP, the academic sector and relevant agencies.

Opening Address

[Edited]

Commander Ray Johnson, Manager Special Operations,
Australian Federal Police

Acknowledgements

I acknowledge that today's forum is being held on the land of the Cadigal and Eora peoples and I acknowledge their connection to the land, both past and present.

I would also like to acknowledge and thank the Diversity in Health Conference and Professor Abd Malak (AM) specifically for their support in providing the AFP with space to hold this research forum as part of this significant cultural diversity conference.

Background

In Australia, 35,000 missing persons reports are lodged every year – that is, one person goes missing every fifteen minutes.

Any one of us can be touched by having someone we love become a missing person. Our youth, elderly and people living with a mental illness are particularly at risk of becoming a missing person. For their families, living with the uncertainty about the safety and well-being of their relative becomes a daily, traumatic, and ongoing challenge.

National Missing Persons Coordination Centre

In 2006, the Australian Government provided the AFP with an additional \$3.9 million over four years for the establishment of the National Missing Persons Coordination Centre (NMPCC). These funds enabled the NMPCC to fulfil a national leadership role and to progress a range of initiatives which are improving responsiveness to missing persons and their families and friends.

The mission of the NMPCC is to coordinate and promote an integrated approach to reduce the incidence and impact of missing persons.

The PLEASE policy and program principles drive the work of the NMPCC with initiatives across all areas of Prevention, Location, Education, Awareness, Support and Evaluation. These include:

The range of suggestions included in this research agenda could be developed only through the collaborative process of idea gathering from experts in the field and those generally involved in the research process. The agenda created must be flexible to allow the inclusion of any new, pressing research questions and research domains that may need to be addressed.

Partnerships with academics, government and non-government agencies, and others are crucial for enhancing the body of knowledge around the topic areas and for leveraging and maximising resources.

The forum was a pioneering event for Australia nationally and internationally and met the core themes of:

- Consensus-driven research agenda on diversity and missing persons;
- Partnerships between historically separated partners; and
- Developing support for long-term engagement among stakeholders.

Discussions between panel members and research forum participants identified a range of methodologies that needed to be applied to the field, identified the partnerships required, and produced an extensive list of research ideas and projects, including, in the longer term, collaborative research plans for an Australian Research Council grant.

Implementing the following steps, defined by participants, will form the basis for future work:

- Publication of a report on the research forum
- Establishment of a National Working Group on Missing Persons Research
- The provision of web-based communication media (discussion board) for collaborative research proposal development and engaging researchers and key stakeholders in on-going dialogue
- The development of a Missing Persons Conference/ Research Forum on a regular basis.

These may provide a framework for the development of a journal and/or other publication with a focus on missing persons evidence-based research, education and training initiatives.

- Working closely with CrimTrac and the State and Territory police services in progressing an enhanced national capability for the CrimTrac Police Reference System which will realise an increase in the location of missing persons through effective sharing of missing person's information across police jurisdictions. **Location.**
- Continuing to profile images of missing persons through Foxtel, the Woman's Day online, television series *Without A Trace* and *The Missing Persons Unit*, online through the AFP website and through the AFP's twice-yearly annual missing person's poster. **Location.**
- Developing a national approach to supporting families and friends of missing persons. Only one state, NSW, has a dedicated support service for families and friends of missing persons. The national framework developed by the Centre, entitled *Supporting those who are left behind*, aims to provide professionals across Australia with a guide to understand the trauma families of missing persons experience and how they can best be supported. **Support.**
- Developing and implementing a national media advertising campaign during National Missing Persons Week 2007 and more recently a Christmas campaign encouraging missing persons to Make Contact. **Awareness.**
- Developed partnerships with government and other organisations such as Foxtel, *Woman's Day* and the Mental Health Council of Australia to further raise awareness and reach of specific messages. **Awareness.**
- Implementing a training needs analysis relating to missing persons and police, with participation of the AFP College, police missing persons units, and relevant units in NSW Police. **Education.**
- Supporting national research conducted by the Australian Institute of Criminology. This research confirms that our elderly, our youth and people living with a mental illness are most at risk of becoming a missing person. It also provides guidance on preventive strategies that will guide agencies in reducing the incidence of missing person's reports. **Prevention.**

Purpose of the research forum

This research forum has been organised to identify and progress a national research agenda within the field of missing persons. You have been specifically invited because of your interest, or that of your agency, in progressing research that will add value to the significant issue of missing persons. The discussion, and particularly the outcomes of this forum, has not only national significance, but global relevance due to the dearth of research internationally into the phenomena of missing persons.

CALD Communities Strategy

The forum also provides a wonderful opportunity to launch the AFP's Culturally and Linguistically Diverse Communities Strategy. This strategy has been developed in partnership with the Multicultural Communication Service (MCS) of NSW Health and comprises communication, data development, education and training to targeted ethnic-specific organisations, and monitoring and evaluation. I would like to take this opportunity to acknowledge and thank Mr Peter Todaro and Mr Michael Camit from the Multicultural Communication Service for their commitment to working with the NMPCC in the development of this strategy.

The need for the strategy arises from 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 this strategy I would today like to launch a Missing Persons Factsheet that has been translated into major community languages and those of emerging communities and will be distributed through ethnic media as well as the NMPCC and MCS websites.

In closing, I would like to wish you well in your discussions and deliberations today. I look forward to seeing a national research agenda for missing persons realised within Australia.

Facts About Missing Persons

[Edited]

Ms Sarah Wayland,
Senior Project Officer, NMPCC

Today I am here as the acting coordinator of the National Missing Persons Coordination Centre. The police definition of a missing person is 'anyone who is reported missing to police, whose whereabouts are unknown and where there are fears for the safety or concerns for the welfare of that person'.

It is estimated that 35,000 people are reported missing every year in Australia – one person every 15 minutes. It is an issue that can affect anyone, irrespective of age, gender, race, ethnicity or professional background.

Of those reported missing to police, more than 95 per cent are located within a short period of time, usually one week. However, there remains a significant number, more than 1,600, who are listed as long-term missing, that is, missing for more than a year.

The three primary groups at risk of going missing are those suffering from a mental illness, youth, particularly those aged from 13 to 17 years, and the aged. More than half of those reported missing are under the age of 18, approximately 20,000 people.

Females who are reported missing outnumber males in the youth category. However, adults who are reported missing are more likely to be male. Long-term missing persons also tend to be male.

For every missing person case reported to police, at least 12 people are affected whether it is emotionally, psychologically, physically or financially. For some, the impact on their lives goes on for years and sometimes for a lifetime. Families need support services to help them cope while their loved one remains missing, and then at the important time when they are located.

For the families of missing persons, there is ongoing uncertainty regarding the welfare of someone they love – the not knowing is very traumatic. This is very difficult and creates challenges for family members on an emotional, psychological and financial level. Approximately one-third go missing more than once. Reasons for going missing are many and varied, voluntary and involuntary.

Factors associated with people going missing include issues such as bullying, mental illness, domestic violence, drugs/alcohol, conflict, child abduction, accident or misadventure, homicide and homelessness. People don't choose to go missing – they often feel that they have no other options.

You do not have to wait 24 hours before reporting someone missing. Going missing is not a crime.

Missing Persons in Australia: National Research by the AIC

[Edited]

Dr Judy Putt, General Manager,
Research Services, Australian Institute of Criminology
judy.putt@aic.gov.au

Context

Dr Judy Putt provided an overview of the context, methodology, key findings, priorities and future directions of the Australian Institute of Criminology's report *Missing persons in Australia* (James, M; Anderson J & Putt, J, 2008).

The context of the missing person's sector in Australia includes the impact of previous national research in Australia (Swanton et al 1988; Henderson and Henderson 1998); sectoral changes such as the development of the Friends and Families of Missing Persons Unit in NSW; an increased investment by the Commonwealth government (\$3.9 million over four years) which includes the development and dissemination of resources and information; a National Missing Persons policy signed off by the Police Ministerial Council in 2006; increased public profile through the media through television shows, and the development of stories in mainstream women's magazines such as *New Idea* and *Women's Day*.

Key Stakeholders

Key stakeholders in the missing persons sector in Australia include the:

- National Missing Persons Coordination Centre (NMPCC) of Australian Federal Police (AFP).
- Police services across Australia particularly the state police missing persons units.
- Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) for its role in relation to Australian who go missing overseas.
- Non-government search agencies such as the Salvation Army Family Tracing Service for people who want to make contact with a family member who has gone missing; the Red Cross Tracing Service which traces people internationally; the Link-Up Aboriginal Corporation that finds people from Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander (ATSI) communities, particularly those who are part of the 'stolen generation'; and the International Social Service (ISS) which is involved where overseas parental abduction has occurred.
- Families and Friends of Missing Persons Unit (FFMPU) in the Attorney General's Department of NSW.

- Families and friends of missing persons who are frequently involved in search activities and are coping with the loss of a missing person.
- People who have gone missing in the past and those who are still missing.
- Services who are in contact with those at risk of going missing and/or of going missing again.
- Services in contact with those people and communities who are less likely to report persons going missing for a range of reasons.

Research Project methodology

Funding of \$60,000 was provided by the NMPCC (AFP) and FFMPU (AGD). The research was conducted over a year, primarily in 2007. A research project steering committee was formed comprising the NMPCC, FFMPU, Salvation Army, an academic and a family member of a person who had gone missing.

The key components of the research project were:

- A review of Australian and overseas literature;
- Compilation of national data for 2005-06 from policing services, the Salvation Army Family Tracing Service and Australian Red Cross Tracing Service;
- Consultations with key stakeholders, including face to face interviews with representatives from 23 organisations in six police jurisdictions, and a national roundtable;
- An online survey of core and key service providers (n=29); and
- A questionnaire distributed to a small group of families/friends.

How many people go missing?

The national missing persons rates for 2005–06 show 1.5 people go missing per 1,000 reports. When combined across police jurisdictions and the Salvation Army and the Red Cross tracing services, this becomes 1.7 per 1,000 of the Australian population.

In the data from the research year, there were approximately 35,000 reported incidents per year which was slightly higher than the previous 1998 estimate. However, it should be recognised that some people may go missing more than once a year, and there is evidence of under-reporting in some population groups such as young people, homeless people, Indigenous Australians, people from CALD backgrounds, and people from gay, lesbian, bisexual and transgendered groups.

In addition, some may have lost contact with family members many years ago and they may be reflected in tracing agency figures but not currently represented in police data collection systems.

The research found that overall, equal number of males and females go missing. However, among young people – more than half the reported cases – females consistently outnumber young males. Young people 13–15 years of age demonstrate the highest risk group in NSW police data. A large number of young people, according to police data, were reported missing from youth institutions or supervised accommodation.

Henderson and Henderson in 1998 reported that two per cent were missing for longer than six months with United Kingdom research demonstrating that long-term missing persons were frequently adult males.

Categories of missing persons recorded by police vary across police jurisdictions and cover characteristics of people such as age, gender, ethnicity, nationality, and Indigenous status. The recording of this information varies widely across police jurisdictions. Police also attempt to record characteristics of the incident (e.g. location) and potential reasons for the person going missing (e.g. domestic violence, mental health). This information is primarily collected to assist police with making a brief risk assessment and, again, the information collected and recorded is variable.

Why people go missing

Earlier documentation considered the issue of people going missing either voluntarily or involuntarily. This research demonstrates that going missing actually occurs more as a continuum across the following four categories: those who decide to go missing, those who drift into missing, those who go missing unintentionally, and those who are forced to go missing.

Those who decide to go missing are notably young people and adults responding to some specific triggers. For young people, there is some evidence they are running away from domestic violence, family conflict, child abuse and neglect, school problems, illicit drug/alcohol use, mental health issues, and problems with peers (Henderson and Henderson 1998). For adults, specific triggers include personal crises such as financial problems or bereavement, or to complete suicide (Foy, S. 2006).

People who have unintentional absences are primarily adults. One quarter of incidents reported to police involved people with mental health problems, as evidenced in NSW and SA police data, and almost half of those who became lost

or wandered were aged 65 years or more (SA police data) and had a dementia or Alzheimer's related illness. No data was available for people who had an intellectual disability.

A smaller cohort comprises people who unintentionally go missing through force, such as abduction and foul play, including homicide. (Foy, S. 2006).

Searching for missing persons

The missing persons sector in Australia is characterised by a degree of ambiguity as going missing is not a crime, yet missing people are reported to police. Law enforcement plays a crucial role in any search activities for a missing person.

The Australian law enforcement definition is:

'Someone whose whereabouts is unknown and there are serious concerns for their safety and welfare'

Despite a national definition, the implementation of police responses varies across police jurisdictions.

Police

Most cases reported to police (over 30,000 reports in 2005–06) are located and/or returned within a short period of time e.g. 90 per cent within seven days, according to Victorian police data.

Police Missing Persons Units (MPUs) in each state (or their equivalent) monitor all missing persons reports made to Local Area Commands (LAC) and assist with additional risk assessment and/or the investigation. Risk assessment and subsequent investigation depends on the perceived seriousness of the case, with a mix of local police, and/or state crime commands undertaking the investigation. The investigation process may include making contact with agencies, family, friends in Australia/overseas; accessing bank accounts; obtaining medical and dental records etc, depending on the relevancy to the case.

Regular contact, particularly during the early stages of the investigation, is often maintained with the family/inquirer or other authority, such as juvenile justice/foster or other alternative care providers.

Tracing services

The Salvation Army Family Tracing Service searches on behalf of adults seeking to find immediate family for the purpose of reunification. The agency respects the wishes of the person who is found if they wish to remain out of contact with their families.

A small fee is charged and the agency has limited resources.

The Link-up Aboriginal Corporation originally focussed on reuniting members of the 'stolen generation'. It conducts searches for people who have lost contact with family.

The Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) provides assistance when Australians go missing overseas.

The Australian Red Cross Tracing Service helps to reunite people separated by war and conflict.

The International Social Service helps with complex intercountry family and child welfare matters, particularly child abductions

Support and counselling

Support needs for families and friends of missing people vary from the provision of information and advice, through to more extensive professional counselling. In addition, support for found/returned missing people is also crucial and may involve mediating reunions between the found/returned missing person and their friends and families.

In NSW, the FFMPU provides specialist counselling services, information and referral, and works closely with police MPU and non-government search agencies.

Improving searches and support

The research identified the following priorities for improving searches for missing people and the support required by them and their families and friends. These priorities include:

- Increased coordination/cooperation with other agencies (local coordinator, referral and case management protocols, joint training);
- Improved information-sharing across agencies. There are perceived privacy barriers stemming from legislation, agency policies, and professional ethics issues;
- Informed and increased public awareness and assistance through a range of media such as television, websites etc;

- Improved communication activities across the missing person sector related to both core and key services; and
- Building linkages with specific communities which seem to be currently under-reporting e.g. Indigenous, CALD communities.

Note: Under-reporting of missing persons in some population groups may occur for the following reasons:

- Indigenous Australians and Torres Strait Islander communities may under-report due to previous experiences and concerns with police and fears for safety of the missing person and for themselves if they report. (Robertson & Demosthenous, 2004)
- CALD communities generally under-report domestic violence with refugees and asylum-seekers having fears about police and other authority institutions. Recent immigrants may be hesitant to report due to distrust, shame, stigma, and concerns about their own' communities' response. (Putt, Anderson & James, 2008)

Applying prevention models

There are a range of models from other human service sectors that could be applied to the missing persons field in Australia.

Preventive frameworks related to developmental crime prevention, early intervention, child abuse and neglect prevention, and the prevention of youth suicide, provide models that may be useful for young people who repeatedly run away from home and/or care due to disrupted or dysfunctional home lives, family violence, alcohol and illicit drug use, and/or other mental health issues.

Relevant preventive initiatives and frameworks from the mental health, family violence, drug and alcohol abuse fields could be adapted for adults who decide to leave due to family conflict, financial problems, drug and alcohol problems and for adults who 'drift' due to mental health/incapacity such as mental illness, intellectual disability, and dementia-related illnesses.

Best practice in the application of prevention and support models for all groups (adults and young people) requires:

- cultural sensitivity;
- adaptation to suit age and gender of target population; and
- inter-agency collaboration.

Service delivery and research priorities

Key priorities in service delivery are:

- Uniform standards for data entry/recording and collection;
- Guidelines on risk assessment and sharing/disclosure of information;
- Consistent approaches to post-return interviews;
- Increased awareness among service providers to prevent people going missing and to support those affected; and
- Increased focus on how key sectors can complement police and search agency efforts.

Research priorities include improved monitoring such as better quality of data, improving access to data; and regular analysis of the available data.

Research into issues around going missing is needed in the following at-risk groups:

- Sub-populations more likely to **not** report to the police;
- Young people who run away (from home, or from care);
- Key groups that may be at risk of unintentionally going missing and/or go missing repeatedly;
- Those who are longer-term missing; and
- Those who may have been victims of crime such as abduction or homicide.

Evaluation activities also need to be developed related to:

- Initiatives to improve coordination and collaboration; and
- Preventive approaches, including communication activities and those that build on existing prevention programs.

Conclusion

The research document *Missing persons in Australia* (James, M; Anderson J and Putt, J, 2008) and a trends and issues report summary is available from the Australian Institute of Criminology www.aic.gov.au

Research and Missing Persons: A Panel Dialogue

Ms Maria Dimopolos, MyriaD Consultants

The panel comprised:

- Professor Anthony Marsella, Emeritus Professor University of Hawaii. Keynote speaker Diversity in Health Conference 2008.
- Ms Judy Saba, Diversity Unit, NSW Police.
- Dr Judy Putt, AIC.
- Ms Sarah Wayland, NMPCC, AFP.

Each member of the panel gave a brief introduction about themselves and their experience of diversity and culture in response to the AIC report and also provided commentary on questions from the Research Forum participants.

Professor Marsella

Completed cross-cultural work in psychiatry working in the slums in the Philippines and in the jungles of Borneo where he studied psychiatric disorders in people who had no contact with Westerners. He developed understandings about culture which went beyond issues such as the clothes, roles, and the institutions people were a part of.

Culture is the way we construct reality inclusive of heart, mind, and body. In speaking with Ebon people and asking '*Teach me the Ebon way*' the response was: 'We are the earth, we are the water, we are the birds, the seas, the sounds, the will' etc. Culture is about different realities. There are more than 5,000 different cultural groups in the world. The United Nations (UN) only has about 192 member countries.

Referring to his Sicilian background, Professor Marsella reminded us that, in Italian, *la vita* goes beyond the meaning of the word, life, to represent the smell of dirt; the smell of baking bread. Culture is our different constructions of reality and these differ dramatically around the world. Every culture gives us the choice to experience reality in a different way. Diversity is choice, freedom, and life. Diversity is often responded to with conflict, yet diversity is life.

Ms Judy Saba (Diversity Unit, NSW Police)

Commented on the complexities for operational police responding to missing persons reports. Police are the first respondents in most cases. There are three things to highlight:

1. The notion of 'missingness' – what is it? For many people it may be a way of saving your life and surviving. What does the experience of missing mean for people from other cultures and how do we access those groups to obtain understanding of their perspectives?
2. What does it mean for operational police? In training operational police, the question is consistently asked: 'What is it that I need to do?' What are the skills, awareness, knowledge and capacities required so that it is not what do I do for them but it is simply 'What do I do?' To operationalise practice in a diversity framework is to value-add to the sector, to address factors related to normalising absence and pathologised presence. Diversity brings in a range of perspectives on an issue.
3. Recognising the host of reasons that people go missing. We need to talk to people – those who have gone missing and have been returned, families, service providers – and reflect on what is the current practice, how is it working, what has worked, where are the gaps, and begin to collaborate and develop solutions.

Dr Judy Putt (AIC)

Dr Putt reflected on her travel experiences in Northern Pakistan and work experiences with colleagues to emphasise the importance of understanding not only other cultures but the importance of understanding the perspectives that people from other cultures have about what is and is not mainstream. She gave examples such as young white women in the 1970s being viewed as sexually available and open to violence in Middle Eastern countries due to the information that was at that time publically available to Middle Eastern men about white Western women.

Dr Putt also provided an example of a Western-trained medical practitioner, a devout Muslim, making connections between his medical textbooks and sections of the Koran. He was shocked that people from Western countries from ostensibly Christian backgrounds did not attempt to link the knowledge they received in their health profession training with core religious beliefs.

These examples highlighted that, in working with people from diverse cultures, we also need to understand their perceptions of Australian institutions and Australian practice and find ways to gather information across different networks of knowledge, to recognise that police, indigenous communities, cultural groups and agencies all have different knowledge networks that are important to research.

Further emphasis was placed on the need to respect the reasons, views and experiences of people who choose to go missing and who do not wish to be reunited with families and friends.

Ms Sarah Wayland (NMPCC, AFP)

Ms Wayland emphasised the need to view work in the sector through the lens of both the missing person and their community. She spoke about her work in the Families and Friends of Missing Persons Unit (FFMPU) where she looked at what was provided to people who were left behind and noted the limited cultural diversity in the client group – yet there was diversity in how people lived with unresolved loss and diversity in responses to people when someone returned.

Ms Wayland commented that research alone could be a concern if devoid of outcomes and noted that the NMPCC had a limited knowledge of how people go missing and how they come back due to a lack of research and an evidence-base to further understanding. She emphasised the importance of not only respecting people's decisions to leave, but to be mindful of the effects on families.

Ms Wayland reminded the group that missing is not only about location. There is a need to understand why people go missing and why they do or do not come back. She reflected on her Churchill Fellowship (to study the international approach to counselling for unresolved loss relating to families of missing persons) and referred to a comment made by a mother about her long-term missing daughter:

'Each day is not another day my daughter has gone but another day closer to my daughter coming home.'

The panel members and research forum participants reflected on questions posed by the facilitator.

Which lenses are needed to aid development of a national research agenda for missing persons?

Professor Marsella: As researchers, we learn how to think about issues. In this field, we need to begin with an anthropological process and ask where these cases are coming from. Who are the outliers? We need to understand the diverse positions. The socio- economic and socio-political criteria need to be mapped. We often tend to believe that people go missing due to mental health issues and focus on the intra-psychic.

We need a simple anthropological question and we need to sample different sectors related to the issue including:

- Map where people go missing from and where people are located;
- Talk to 'runaways' (young people who repeatedly go missing) and who come back: what is their opinion; and
- Talk to service providers about their opinion. Politicians who fund research will have a view.

Some of the questions that could be asked are:

- *What are some of the reasons why people might run away?*
- *What are some of the reasons people don't, what makes them decide not to?*
- *What are the outcomes for families, friends, communities of people running away?*

Research in this field does not start with questionnaires. It involves open interviewing and the development of different studies.

- Collect the narratives of people who have run away across 100 ethnic groups in Australia.
- Conduct a literature review of people who have run away in different societies.
- Conduct some psychiatric epidemiology such as asking the questions:
 - *'In your lifetime has there been anyone in your family who has run away? Anyone else?'*
 - *In the last year has there been anyone in your family who has run away? Anyone else?'*

Studies rooted in the actual experience need to be developed and used. Sample different ethno-cultural groups, sample different age groups, sample different gender groups, sample groups with different immigration status e.g. migrants, refugees, asylum-seekers.

For example 95 per cent of asylum-seekers in Sweden are in Sweden illegally. They would have a different perspective on the experience of missing than those who may be there legally.

From a methodological point of view what are the dilemmas in missing persons research?

Dr Judy Putt: Missing person's research needs multi-disciplinary methodologies. Narratives are powerful for this group, but to make a difference in policy terms we require numbers. A lot more could be done with the recorded data already available. This could also be a first step.

Participants in the forum raised a number of additional issues for consideration such as:

Data collection and analysis: Reports on crime statistics are collected and available annually, so missing persons data could become more readily available and usable on an annual basis. Data about missing persons needs to be reported annually in the same way as other police statistics are. The national data collection system, Crimtrac, has been piloted in three states and is being developed so that missing persons reports can be entered. It will be some time before this data will become more widely available.

Reporting processes: People who approach a police station to make a report about someone who is missing, also disappear for a number of reasons such as the police refusing to take the report until the person has been missing for 24 to 48 hours. Taking the report is a front-line police responsibility and it is difficult for police at times to prioritise this when faced with a range of incidents and issues being reported at the same time.

Community responses on reporting to police: Many mental health consumers and their families would not go to the police. People from some cultural groups would also not report as involvement by some agencies at times is viewed as interference in what is understood by some culturally and linguistically diverse groups as a private family matter.

Research processes: Anthropological research is resource intensive and yet is important for obtaining the interactions which enable the full stories to be told. Reference was made to the work of Professor Judy Atkinson (author of 'Trauma Trails') and the challenges/complexities in developing data collection through story telling.

Developing appropriate data collection systems: Referred to a situation that occurred in the Lebanese Maronite community in Western Sydney. Traditionally, people preferred going to the priest if someone went missing rather than to the police. Some years ago 13 young Lebanese men who had broken up with their partners committed suicide over a seven-week period. The community was devastated. A support service was established at the Church and practitioners noted that all the idioms of distress identified in Western psychology for suicide risk were behaviours that were present prior to suicides, yet these did not signal distress to the families as the behaviours were valued. For example, staying home at night was seen as being home with the family; giving away property was seen as generosity; and breaking up with a non-Lebanese girlfriend was seen as enabling potential relationships with Lebanese young women.

After the events, psychologists discussed with families why idioms of distress were unnoticed. They responded that no-one had asked them the right questions. This led to the development of a more useful battery of questions, which are still used, for use with people of Lebanese Maronite background.

What partnerships are necessary to develop a research agenda in the missing persons field?

Community partnerships: It was noted that when people were involved in training cross-culturally, there was an assumption that practitioners doing this training have in fact looked through the lens to ask the appropriate questions. However, for research activities, communities frequently ask 'What's in it for me?'. What are the benefits for communities of participating in research activities?

An additional factor that is frequently not taken into account is that newly-arrived immigrants, refugees, and asylum-seekers will often tailor their answers to what they wish people to know, or to what they believe is more acceptable to those asking the questions.

A small study in Vietnamese and Chinese communities in Sydney identified that people in some communities are willing to attend focus groups about the issue of missing persons in their community. It also gave some information about the small numbers of people who had experienced someone going missing. They did not report the person missing to police due to beliefs that the person who went missing would be charged with an offence. There was a community belief that to go missing is a crime.

Agency agendas and partnerships: Missing persons is a complex and multi-layered issue. Many clients have been seen by several agencies and may have experienced a range of professional behaviours (including professional incompetence) due to a lack of knowledge about the complexities families face when someone is missing. Families may have experienced multiple traumatic incidents before the disappearance of their family member with the issue of a missing person not identified as an additional trauma incident. In what ways should we, as practitioners, be ensuring that we include the missing persons issues on our agency agendas. The health sector needs to know who is most at risk and what to do for those who are left behind. Human responses to situations encompass the four fs: fight, flight, freeze, fornicate, with many missing persons using flight as their response to managing life stressors.

Client partnerships: There is a need for sensitivity to the issues. One clinician noted that more than 98 per cent of people who survived the Bali bombings would not go to a psychologist for assistance and support. Working with the AFP to engage survivors facilitated a normalising process. Even when researchers encouraged some survivors to talk to researchers and clinicians about the research, the participants were adamant that they would not do research with anyone who did not give something back. They asked:

'What is the issue? What is the research going to do? What is it going to give back?'

Clients want to inform the research process.

Runaways may want to be part of the research. The pathologising of trauma is huge. There needs to be a focus on resilience.

Service provider partnerships: It is important to involve service providers in research. Service providers in many areas are rarely invited to participate in research projects, yet it is important that researchers work closely with service providers.

'Get to the service providers. We can implement research for you. We will get the numbers for you.'

How can research inform our practice?

However it is important that research also meets the needs of service providers at the coal face.

In training, what is the culture that informs us, what are the benefits that can be enhanced?

Professor Marsella: Identify the groups that constitute the work-group and work together to develop a lens of information. Work together on a range of projects to gather information from different perspectives. Some suggestions are:

- What languages of missingness are there? What is the alignment to accepted definitions? What are young people's definitions for 'runaway', for example and what are service providers/workers definitions?
- Collect 25 narratives each – different genders, different sectors – and encourage people to tell their story.
- Tap into existing resources and identify what data is already available.
- Conduct a survey in a couple of schools asking young people:
 - 'Why do kids run away?'
 - 'Have you known anyone who has run away?'
 - 'What happened to them?'
- How do agencies view different types of missing and what do we do in response to different kinds of missing?
- Review service responses for different kinds of runaway: a child who goes missing; a young person; someone with mental health issues; a mother; someone who is aged; an immigrant; someone who is ATSI; someone who has attempted suicide; drug users. Each status is likely to have a different response.

We need to begin to map the landscape of the different sectors and to develop training and education materials to inform responses.

It was pointed out that researchers need to be comfortable with the concept of ambiguity, with not knowing. That to go missing is the trauma and people need to be professionally comfortable with this concept of ambiguity and unresolved loss (**Note:** Most researchers live with ambiguity as it is frequently an aspect of the research process. However, there may be need for more research on service provider responses to working with the concepts of both ambiguity and unresolved loss, and the identification of training needs).

Embedding the training in the work people do at the coal face and developing ways of interviewing that assist investigation are models that have met with success in the police training sector. For example, instead of asking 'What's your address?' we can ask 'Where do you live?' This is a different and more subtle question that provides investigators with more information. This training has been tried and tested particularly in NSW Police and detectives and investigators are now being encouraged to obtain the story from where people start.

What research could be of value to the missing persons field?

Some studies that could be developed:

1. Report on a sample of missing persons across a few jurisdictions.
2. Obtain 100 narratives to capture the diversity of experience.
3. Develop a case situation by a detailed analysis of one case from before the person going missing, through to the reporting process, to outcomes and identify the support services and education and training needs for police through the process of building the case situation.
4. Identify existing services and their work with different communities and have a look at how they do it and what can be applied to missing persons.
5. Identify people (in either one or several police jurisdictions who returned on a particular day) and follow them up over 12 months to capture how many people go missing again, what support they received and what support they needed to receive.
6. This area also requires a large community sample to create the necessary mapping in different languages and address areas such as:
 - experience of someone missing in the past,
 - repetition of missing events,
 - access to services,
 - motivation to go missing, and
 - what stops people.

If done as a large-scale epidemiological study, such as 20,000 people interviewed with two or three questions developed into a proper scale, it will provide reliable interest from which to develop other research projects.

7. Identify benefits for communities to tell us about their experiences. How do we help communities to develop their own strength?
8. We need a study on families and their coping and resilience strategies. Telling the stories does make a difference to people as does hearing people and how they survive: *'If I speak about it, it's a healing process. Hearing gives understanding about how people cope.'*
9. Identify what the issues are for people at the coal face then provide training and research on the results of the training intervention.
10. Siblings are an untapped resource for research. Siblings rarely have a chance to talk about their experience and they frequently have a view that is separate and different to their parents who are the ones most likely to report. They have a different view of the world and of their sibling. Clarke's research (Clarke, J., 2006) found that young adult males who had experienced a sibling going missing found talking about the experience most difficult.
11. We need to research what sort of environment would make people decide to leave without letting other people know.
12. Map where people are going missing from and where people are found. This ethnographic approach will begin to raise some questions and provide some answers.
13. If the research shows adult males are a risk group, we need to ask what kind of men. It is suggested that unemployed businessmen are a grouping, yet there could also be an underclass of transitory 20 to 30 year-old young men.
14. Review missing persons records for the past five years and compare the situations and management of each case for those who were found with those not located – including the medium used e.g photos/dates. Identify the differences and patterns of those found and not found to define what works best and provide this information to police and other agencies.

Research challenges

Identify the academics that want to move this agenda forward. Develop a study to explore who are missing persons, what are the market sectors, who are the groups? What is the perception of missingness, and how are people supporting others to either go/stay missing, or to return. Can we learn from social marketing strategies? How can we support people with dementia who go missing? People with Alzheimer's Disease and dementia-related illnesses are over-represented in people over 60 who go missing.

Research is also a question of finding the significant others. We presume it is families who are key, but sometimes it is national and international ties. It is important that we do not only look at families but also find out who does that person talk to?

When collecting narratives we need to also address differences in norms. We need to note the differences in power relations of a young person's narration as opposed to the power of those asking the questions. Qualitative researchers with young people in the United Kingdom are now using more phenomenological approaches such as a focus on experience, memory books, visual approaches. Research itself can pathologise young people. Early intervention approaches can pathologise. The development in Australia of a social inclusion agenda has the potential to facilitate community responses to missing persons and a range of strategies need to be developed to ensure 'missingness' is part of social inclusion debates.

Child protection has contact with young people who run away repeatedly. There are people who work with intellectual disability/dementia etc. People who are at risk of suicide are often known to someone. General practitioners in their surgeries may only come across a handful of people at risk when compared to other health issues in their practices. There is little value in targeting those sectors of professionals who are not going to have very much contact on a daily basis. If one was targeting, say, middle-aged men, what sectors would you work with?

What does 'to go missing' really mean for some people? Families often do not know when to report. When working with people in other countries, such as Romania, we learn that when someone leaves, we generally know where they are going, but after three or four months, if there is no contact, then that is a different situation.

Diversity Framework Model For An Australian National Research Agenda on Missing Persons

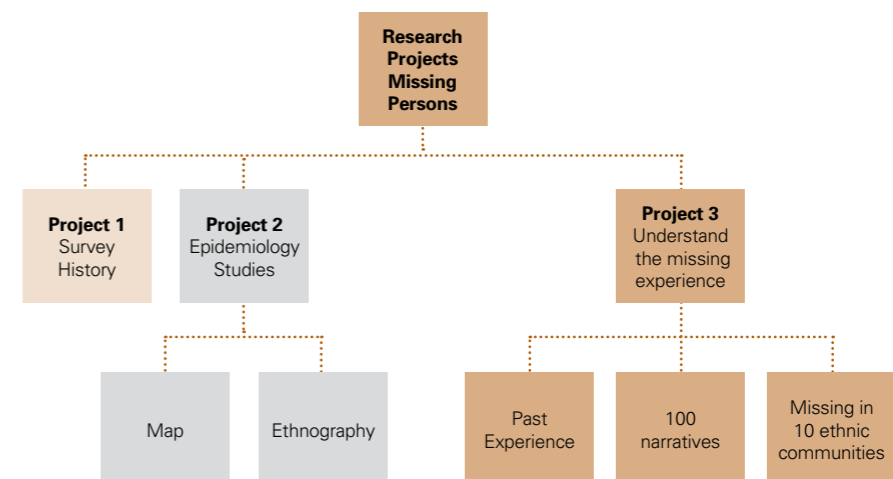
Professor Tony Marsella

Missing Persons National Research Agenda

Develop research papers on:

1. Terms of reference issues.
2. Definitions and how they are used in different sectors e.g. legal, police, schools and educational institutions, health and mental health, service providers.
3. Literature review
4. Relationships and sectors.

Conduct research projects that provide credible baselines and evidence.



Once these studies are completed then funds can be sought for projects related to:

1. Objectives
2. Products e.g. Brief interventions
3. Evaluation
4. Conferences
5. Education and training material
6. Media

Filling the Gaps: Ideas and Issues

This table is a composite of the ideas and issues generated from the small group discussions. They are additions to the agenda set in the previous section.

FOCUS AREA	IDEAS	ISSUES
Prevention	<p>How do we understand WHY people go missing.</p> <p>Confidentiality/Privacy and duty of care responsibilities: managing interagency barriers, professional ethics and service provider responsibilities in the missing persons field.</p> <p>Developing basic knowledge of the missing: who has gone missing (young people may be overstated). Who is going missing a problem for? Why is it a problem? How is it perceived differently by different people?</p> <p>Identify critical moments for people who go missing or at risk of going missing.</p> <p>Define key indicators for missingness (using story-based and non-pathologising frames of reference)</p> <p>Map and interview people who are found: where did they go (places); what did they do (behaviour). Profile the things that happened.</p> <p>Use a health promotion approach to develop information about:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) triggers for missing; b) intentionality to decisions; c) deterrents to going missing; d) who goes missing and why; e) what are the statistical inferences in particular groups; f) what are the ethical concerns e.g issues of privacy juxtaposed against duty of care; g) what are the agencies people come into contact while they are missing <p>What are the recidivism rates of people who go missing?</p>	<p>Need to understand the issues from a population health perspective: physical, emotional, spiritual.</p> <p>Need to ensure ethics clearances for research activities.</p> <p>Refine opportunities to increase resilience rather than only focus on socially vulnerable due to limited resources.</p>

FOCUS AREA	IDEAS	ISSUES
Location	<p>Longitudinal study of people who are reported on one day nationally and follow-up this cohort.</p> <p>Systemised interview protocol to person, a family member, and a friend when a person is found.</p> <p>Self-location versus location by police: who knew they were missing and did not report and why?</p> <p>What agencies have information about people that could assist location of missing persons and could be shared e.g. homeless sector, youth refugees, women's refuges, hospitals?</p> <p>Which 'centralisations' would facilitate the missing person field and reduce frustrations in searching across eight States and Territories.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> a) Identify those centralisations that could be done once and information shared across states and/or relevant agencies. b) Consult with agencies to identify which centralisations would be most useful for searching. <p>How do people remain missing and why can't they be found?</p> <p>How do people survive when they are missing (given 100 point identity requirements)?</p> <p>What are the intentions of people who go missing and who has been assisting them in going and staying missing?</p> <p>What are community expectations of how a missing person is located and who is involved?</p>	<p>Clarify boundaries: is this a police issue/ an academic issue/ who else is part of this issue</p> <p>If most people are found in seven days, what is the magnitude of the issue?</p>

FOCUS AREA	IDEAS	ISSUES
Education	<p>Police investigations. How are people treated: same or equal?</p> <p>Police: Clarity of reporting requirements</p> <p>Police: Risk assessment: how to judge the seriousness</p> <p>Which agencies have duty of care responsibilities?</p> <p>Structures of muting: why people who have relevant information don't speak? What are the structures, beliefs, stigma, fears, barriers that stop people speaking? Need a project that looks at what keeps people quiet – an ethnographic study on what makes people hold back.</p> <p>Definitions of missing and the value of a 'serious concerns' approach e.g. provide examples for temporality (8 weeks/24 weeks/72 weeks), the choices and decision trees.</p> <p>Issues for front-line workers in police, health, education, tracing agencies, particularly in taking reports and sharing information across sectors.</p> <p>Incorporation of missing persons issues in current police liaison roles.</p> <p>Project across police; DOCS; GPs. What helps to engage people in telling the truth about their own or someone else going missing?</p> <p>Education and training needs of health and mental health sector, particularly where people have no next of kin.</p>	
Awareness	<p>Types of missing</p> <p>Strategies for communicating with CALD communities: media campaigns; radio programs in community languages where people are heard talking about it.</p> <p>How to report to police so you are heard e.g. make sure people tell police the person has gone missing before.</p> <p>How and why do some cases become high profile?</p> <p>Develop joint media representations that include several perspectives: the person/ the family member/ the community/ community members</p> <p>members/ religious organisations/ other affiliations, anyone who has a serious concern for the person.</p> <p>Develop story-lines for key Australian programs.</p> <p>Documentaries for television.</p> <p>Print articles for age-specific magazines e.g. men's health etc.</p>	<p>People have often told their story so many times and should not have to go through a lot of agencies</p>

FOCUS AREA	IDEAS	ISSUES
Support	<p>Use of Victims Charter for Missing Persons and review implementation.</p> <p>What processes are available for support: stories of missingness from person and family</p> <p>Value of developing Missing Persons Liaison Initiative</p> <p>How does someone who goes missing move through the health care system and obtain assistance?</p>	<p>Importance of respecting people's voices and stories</p>
Evaluation	<p>Barriers that support or reduce people's capacity to report and systemic improvements that need to be made</p> <p>Triangulation of interviews: police, missing person, family.</p> <p>Mapping contacts: what other agencies are involved with families of missing persons and identify agencies.</p>	
Data collection	<p>Repeat the British 'Lost from View' study in Australia.</p>	<p>Make data more visible</p>
Police culture	<p>Police stereotypes re missing persons cases: assumptions to practice – how they do/don't play out; how stereotypes skew results.</p> <p>Systems and processes when police move</p> <p>Narratives of police experience in the missing persons sector.</p> <p>Portfolios in each Police jurisdiction: where does missing persons fit in senior police management portfolios</p> <p>Improving efficiency: reviewing decision-making processes and the information used to categorise missing persons cases e.g. how does triage operate/not operate/ how can it be improved?</p>	

Developing the Research Issues in Missing Persons

- Different academic disciplines see the issue/problem and research questions differently.
- Who are the key researchers: engage with experienced researchers, Masters and PhD students, link NGOs and academics, link participants and researchers.
- Ensure diversity among stakeholders and research partners.
- Develop research projects linking social science, health, legal, criminology sectors.
- Source funding through ARC Linkage grants
- Approach the Australian Criminology Research Council to make missing persons a research priority
- Develop an email list and discussion board for people participating in this research forum and those requesting inclusion unable to attend.
- Make use of the expertise of everyone who attended the forum including international researchers.

Conclusion

The research forum provided an opportunity for dialogue. Diversity was reflected in the representation from academic sectors, concerns in the sector, the broader methodological issues and the research gaps.

There is a need to continue to map out solutions and create a different language and questions to address the diverse experiences of the missing persons field.

Researchers can address questions such as:

- How big are the issues: who goes missing and why?
- Prioritise the impact of other political/social/health/research agendas on the missing persons field, and
- Define the research arena depending on who asks the questions and what questions need to be asked from the perspective of different disciplines.

Value can be added to the missing persons field by researchers conducting a range of mapping processes to expand what we know and what we do not know.

Research issues around data collection that would be of value to the missing persons field include:

- The data question: what available data is there and how do researchers gain access?
- Methods of data collection: what are they, do they need review, how standardised are they across state jurisdictions and across agencies who work with missing people and their families?
- Who is engaged in data collection?
- What procedural issues block data gathering and information sharing?

Specific research areas identified were:

- What are the systemic blocks in reporting missing persons and the need to identify the barriers to reporting;
- Need to tap into inter-agency relationships and track interventions;
- Need to look at how different agencies in the field define missing persons: what are the similarities and differences in definition and how this impacts on service delivery.

Appendix 1: Identifying the Research Agenda

Research issues around prevention:

- What are the key messages; do we have the messages right? Evaluation of prevention and media work; does media help or block?
- Collaboration is vital between agencies: police, NGOs and families, and the academic sector. This collaboration also needs to be researched, particularly what blocks collaboration.

Research issues around location:

- Research the ways police and other agencies could provide better data.
- Research the data on who is found, and those not found, to identify patterns about what works, and what needs to be developed further.

Where to from here?

1. Research Forum report to be sent to all participants and those who were unable to attend.
2. Dialogue needs to be maintained: email list and web-based discussion board for people who attended and others to join.
3. Develop a national working group on missing persons research.
4. Summarise a list of research ideas and identify people willing to develop collaborative research proposals.
5. Develop teaching materials for courses: both academic and agency-based curricula.
6. Provide another forum in a year and build into a regular conference on missing persons for researchers to present their research and have ongoing dialogue.

Small Group Discussion Format

Participants were divided into multidisciplinary small groups to discuss the following questions and/or to focus on one or two areas with a view to identifying research questions and areas, potential partners and resources required:

1. Identify the key research topics in relation to:

- Prevention
- Location
- Education
- Awareness
- Support
- Evaluation

2. What is the rationale for further research in addressing the gaps? How would the research add value to the issues?

3. What questions would the research seek to address?

- Prevention
- Location
- Education
- Awareness
- Support
- Evaluation

4. Who are the key research partners/ stakeholders to address these questions?

5. What are the key resource issues to be addressed to progress this research?

6. What is the next step from here?

Appendix 2: Methodologies and questions potentially useful in missing persons research and service development

Narratives to obtain trajectories of experience

Have you ever thought of leaving/running away so you could not be found? – identify how many people have contemplated this.

What stopped you? – to identify enhancers and resilience issues

In your lifetime has there been anyone in your family or friendship networks who has run away? Anyone else?

In the last year has there been anyone in your family or friendship who has run away? Anyone else?

Young People

Why do kids run away?

Have you known anyone who has run away?

What happened to them?

What are some of the reasons why people might run away?

What are some of the reasons people don't – what makes them decide not to?

What are the outcomes for families, friends, communities of people running away?

Narratives interviews with missing persons on return

Where did you go?

What happened to you?

How did you get back?

Who did you stay in communication with?

NB: Interview a friend of a missing person and not only family members. Include siblings where appropriate

Research with service providers:

How many people do you think are missing?

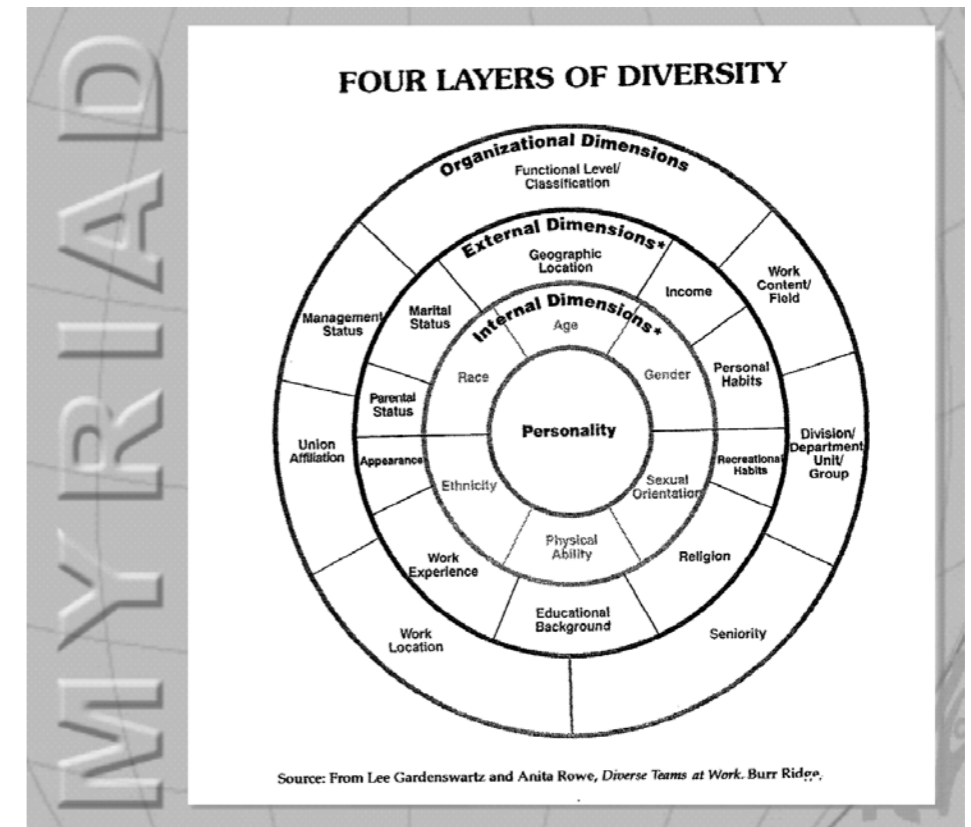
Have you experienced a client going missing – what were the circumstances, were they found? How did they return?

Ways front-line service providers, e.g. GPs, police, agencies related to specific sectors, can identify potential missing persons.

Where do you live?

What do you do in your spare time?

Appendix 3: The Diversity Wheel



Appendix 4: Representation at the National Missing Persons Research Forum

UNIVERSITY	NAME AND FACULTY/UNIT	EXPERTISE AND RESEARCH INTERESTS
Adelaide University	Dr Carolyn Semmler	Forensic Psychology
Australian National University (ANU) ACT	Dr Ross Wilkinson Psychology Department	Youth and Mental Health
Griffith University Queensland	Dr Julie Clark Social Work and Social Science	Missing Persons
	Professor Diego De Leo Australian Institute of Suicide Prevention and Research WHO Centre on Suicide Training and Research	Suicidology
	Professor Boni Robertson Vice-chancellors Office	Indigenous Policy
	Ms Natalie Clements	Criminology
Sydney University, NSW	Professor Johanna Westbrook Health Informatics Research and Evaluation Unit (Director)	Health systems evaluation
	Assoc. Professor Susan Hayes	Centre for Behavioural Sciences in Medicine
	Ms Agi O'Hara Lecturer in Department of Social Work	Psychology and Group Work
	Ms Elizabeth Cousins Koori Centre	Indigenous health
	Dr Kathy Edwards	Social Exclusion/inclusion
University of Queensland QLD	Dr Fran Boyle Division of Health Systems, Policy and Practice	Public Health
University of Western Sydney (UWS) NSW	Professor Stephen Tomsen representing Associate Professor Margaret Mitchell	Homicide
	Associate Professor Meg Smith	Mental Health
	Professor Debra Jackson	Nursing
	Professor John MacDonald	Men's Health and Social Justice
	Jill Farrar	Missing Persons and Writing
	Dr Renu Narchal	Psychology

UNIVERSITY	NAME AND FACULTY/UNIT	EXPERTISE AND RESEARCH INTERESTS
Macquarie University	Dr Elizabeth Latimer-Hill Psychology Department	Ageing and Health
University of New South Wales (UNSW) NSW	Anita McGregor Psychology Department	Forensic Program
Charles Sturt University (CSU) NSW	Victoria Herrington Policing Studies	Police education
	Brett Poultney Policing Studies	Police education
Notre Dame University Sydney Campus	Dr Lyn Raymond	Nursing
Newcastle University NSW	Lyn Francis	Nursing
James Cook University (JCU) NSW/Old	Dr Susan Gair Social Work	
Victorian Police	Ms Mmaskepe Sejoie Human Rights Unit	Human Rights Practice
NSW Police	Ms Judy Saba Diversity Unit	Police education and training
Multicultural Health Communication Service (MHCS)	Mr Peter Todaro	Health Communications
	Mr Michael Camit	Health Communications
Attorney-General's Department	Ms Marianne Curtis	Victim Services
	Ms Kelly Lester FFMPU	Missing Persons
Consultant anthropologist	Dr Debbi Long	Anthropology and trauma
International Social Service (ISS)	Ellen Mara	Inter-country parental abductions
Red Cross	Ms Jan Murphy	Tracing Services
Psychiatric Rehabilitation Association	Ms Janet Meagher AM	
Salvation Army Tracing Service	Mr Col Leonard	Homelessness

Appendix 5: Australian Researcher Contributions to Missing Persons Field

Research

National reports

Dr Monika Henderson and Peter Henderson

Missing people: Issues for the Australian Community

Commonwealth of Australia (1998)

Dr Judy Putt, Jessica Anderson, Marianne James

Missing Persons in Australia

Australian Institute of Criminology (2008)

Research reports

Dr Shaunagh Foy

Contact Details: sfoy6@bigpond.com

PhD, 2004: **A Profile of Missing Persons in New South Wales**

This research examined all relevant information about missing persons who, on being located, were determined to have run away, suicided or fallen victim to foul play. Specifically, the research explored the characteristics unique to those who have run away, suicided or fallen victim to foul play and examined the relevant variables for their capacity to make a prediction about one's missing person status.

Dr Julie Clark

Contact Details: j.clark@griffith.edu.au

Phd, 2006: **Wanting to Hope: The Experience of Adult Siblings of Long-Term Missing People**

People who are long-term missing and the experiences of their family and friends have had limited attention in policy, practice and research. In particular, the experiences of siblings of long-term missing people have had scant attention despite the increasing recognition of the sibling relationship as a significant, often lifelong family relationship. This thesis explores the experiences of adults who have a long-term missing sibling.

Professor Boni Robertson and Catherine Demosthenous

Young Aboriginal Females Reported Missing to Police: Which Way for Prevention and Service

Griffith University (2004)

Available from: http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/vs/ll_mpersons.nsf/pages/MP_publications

Dr Kathy Edwards

Senior Research Associate in Child and Youth Studies

Contact details: k.edwards@edfac.usyd.edu.au

Research on young people's participation and social inclusion. It is known that young people go missing for a variety of reasons and, where foul play is not a factor, that many of these relate to aspects of social inclusion. For example, mental illnesses, conflict (with family, at school, etc), feeling / being socially rejected and losing contact through the breakdown of familial or social ties are all factors recognised as leading to people going missing. There are thus links between socially inclusive and strong communities where different young people can participate, feel valued, supported and respected and the prevention of missing young people.

Churchill Fellowship Reports

Ms Leonie Jacques

Contact details: leonie.jacques@afp.gov.au

Churchill Fellowship, 2002: **To study the international social policy response and provision of services for the families, friends and significant others of people who are missing**

The Churchill Fellowship provided an opportunity to take an international snapshot of the current social policy response and service delivery to families and friends of missing persons.

Internationally there is a dearth of research into, and service delivery directed to, the families and friends of missing persons.

In Australia, the NSW Government established the Families and Friends of Missing Persons Unit (FFMPU) in September 2000. The FFMPU is the only unit in Australia that works specifically with, and on behalf of, families and friends of missing persons. The FFMPU's primary aim is to coordinate support services across NSW with a broad mandate including funding to non-government agencies, linking

both government and non-government agencies through convening a quarterly Interagency Forum, raising community awareness and looking at the need for legislative, administrative and/or social reform.

Internationally, there is a lack of professional counsellors with experience in working with families of missing persons. There is also a dearth of academic literature to guide professionals in their practice.

There exists no specific international fora in which services working with and on behalf of families of missing children, young people or adults can come together to share resources, information and strategies.

Ms Sarah Wayland

Contact details: sarah_wayland@agd.nsw.gov.au

The Peter Mitchell Churchill Fellowship, 2005: **To study the international approach to counselling for unresolved loss relating to families of missing persons**

The Churchill Fellowship was undertaken to investigate the international approach to counselling for unresolved loss relating to families of Missing Persons. Particular emphasis was given to developing a framework of appropriate intervention for counsellors who have contact with families of missing persons and explored international support services for families such as online support groups, family gatherings and services established by families for families.

Mr Mark Samways

Churchill Fellowship, 2006: **To study missing persons cases with a focus on risk assessment models, investigation methods, missing persons procedures, and communication between law enforcement agencies and non-government organisations.**

The phenomenon of missing persons is not unique to Australia. Missing persons span both sexes, all ages, social classes and geographical areas. Per capita, the incidence of people going missing in Australia is consistent with other Western nations.

In Australia, men and women are reported missing in almost equal numbers. Children and young people constitute more than half of all missing persons cases. People go missing for all sorts of reasons, with most missing persons not being the subject of a criminal act. Some people go missing because of mental health problems while others voluntarily disappear to escape abuse or other circumstances, such as family conflict or financial pressures. Many young people are simply rebelling against the rules imposed on them by parents and carers.

Regardless of the reasons behind someone going missing, all missing persons, especially children, may be vulnerable while missing and at risk of becoming victims or perpetrators of crime. Locating missing persons and discovering the reasons behind their disappearance requires significant police and community resources.

Publications

The following publications are available at: www.missingpersons.gov.au

General

- *Missing Persons – Myths and Facts*
- *The PLEASE Policy Principles*
- *Mental health and missing persons*

Foreign language

- *Missing Persons – Myths and Facts: Arabic*
- *Missing Persons – Myths and Facts: Chinese*
- *Missing Persons – Myths and Facts: Dinka*
- *Missing Persons – Myths and Facts: Korean*
- *Missing Persons – Myths and Facts: Spanish*
- *Missing Persons – Myths and Facts: Vietnamese*

Support

- *General information for families and friends of a missing person*
- *Search options and support (brochure)*
- *Search options and support (guide)*
- *What is a trigger?*
- *Are you a young person at-risk of going missing?*
- *Are you the parent of a sibling of a missing person?*
- *Are you a sibling of a missing person?*
- *Are you the extended family member of a sibling of a missing person?*
- *Navigating the coronial process*
- *Can the media help you?*

Education and training

- *Supporting those who are left behind – A counselling framework to support families of missing persons*
- *Are you working with a young person at-risk of going missing?*

Additional publications are available from the FFMPU at:

http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/lawlink/vs/ll_mpersons.nsf/pages/MP_publications

- *Information for Families and Friends of Missing Persons*
- *Families and Friends of Missing Persons Counselling Service*
- *What can I do to assist police when reporting a missing person?*
- *Managing the financial and property affairs of a missing person.*
- *Someone missing – can the media help you?*
- *Reconnecting with a missing person*
- *A glimmer of hope – stories of courage from families of missing persons*
- *'It's the Hope that Hurts – Best Practice in Counselling Models Relevant to Families and Friends of Missing Persons'*