



AFP

AUSTRALIAN FEDERAL POLICE

For every missing person's case reported,
at least 12 others are affected

NATIONAL MISSING PERSONS COORDINATION CENTRE

FACTSHEET



► How can the media help you when someone is missing?

When someone is missing, the media can help to:

- Raise awareness of the missing person's disappearance
- Attract the widest possible publicity to assist in locating the missing person
- Act as a mechanism to reach out to the missing person or people who may be aware of the missing person's whereabouts
- Raise community awareness about the issues and impacts associated with missing persons and those left behind.

What you need to know before involving the media

Although using the media can have advantages, you may want to consider the following points before contacting the media. You are under no obligation to involve the media, nor are you obliged to answer any of their questions.

- Media information is 'public', so any information you provide, including personal details, can be used.
- Journalists write stories to attract readers, listeners and viewers and this will mean much of what you tell them, including information you consider crucial, will be left out of their reports.
- Media outlets often belong to larger media networks or have

arrangements for pooling stories and pictures. Any photos or interviews you give could be used nationally or internationally in a variety of media, including online.

- Media might link details of your case to other cases which you think are not similar.
- Media may use your story to drive an agenda unrelated to your concerns and interests.
- Media might not use your story at all, or they may use it at a time which may be detrimental to your aims.
- Publication of your story in the media can also mean that people or organisations you do not know about can use your information in ways you do not agree with.

Implications for you

- You might be contacted by any outlet at any time, even after the person is located, for follow-up stories.
- If you tell your story to one media outlet, many more might become interested and contact you without regard to your lifestyle, needs or desires.
- Telling and re-telling your story might be difficult and challenging and may open old wounds.
- People may form an opinion of you based only on the way the media has told your story.

Where to get advice about involving media

- Discuss the value of involving the media at the time of making your missing person's report.
- Seek the advice of police, other agencies and friends about the best ways to use the media for your situation.

If you choose to speak to the media...

- Provide the most recent colour photo of the missing person (digital images are preferred).
- Ask the police whether speaking to the media will adversely affect any investigation.
- Set any conditions you require to protect your privacy. This may affect whether the media reports your case.
- You can choose someone else to speak on your behalf.
- You might prefer to use an interpreter so that you can express yourself clearly in the language of your choice.
- Be prepared to be asked questions you do not feel comfortable answering so that you can have something to say you are comfortable with.

How to prepare yourself for an interview...

It is important to prepare yourself, mentally and emotionally, before a media interview.

Without preparation, you may find yourself overwhelmed and unable to continue with the interview.

You should think about your responses and practise what you will say during the interview.

Questions you may be asked in a media interview may include:

- When did your loved one go missing?
- What were the circumstances?
- Can you tell us a bit more about him/her and what happened that day?
- What do you believe has happened to your loved one?
- What are the thoughts that go through your head every day?
- How has this experience affected your family?
- What steps have the police taken in finding your loved one?
- How have you and other loved ones coped with the loss?
- What advice would you give to other people going through the same experience?
- What can the public do that might help you and your loved one?
- What would you say to your loved one if they were watching/listening?

Preparing answers to such questions may help you revisit the facts and information about the missing person so that you provide accurate information.

You may also want to consider what questions you do not feel comfortable answering and how much information you want the public to know about you and the missing person. It is a good idea to prepare generic answers that reinforce your main points. These can be used in response to many questions.

If you choose to not to speak to the media...

- You have the absolute right to refuse to speak to the media at any stage, for any reason.
- You should make this clear from the outset, and it is best not to elaborate on this when questioned by the media as it can be taken as an indication that you have changed your position.
- It may be necessary to repeatedly refuse to speak to the media as journalists from several media outlets may try to interview you.

Your rights and responsibilities

- You are responsible for providing accurate and truthful information to the best of your knowledge
- You have the right to seek advice to help you understand your obligations.

If you are concerned about your contact with media

Some journalists are bound by the Journalists' Code of Ethics.

If you have concerns about the behaviour of a journalist or media outlet, contact:

Media, Entertainment and Arts Alliance
02 9333 0999
mail@alliance.org.au

Australian Communications and Media Authority
02 9334 7700 or 1800 226 667
broadcasting@acma.gov.au

The Australian Press Council
02 9261 1930 or 1800 025 712
info@presscouncil.org.au

Communications Law Centre
03 9600 3841
melbourne@comslaw.org.au

What can the National Missing Persons Coordination Centre do for you?

The National Missing Persons Coordination Centre (NMPCC) coordinates media opportunities during national advertising campaigns such as National Missing Persons Week.

These opportunities are supported by the NMPCC through a family media liaison role. The role ensures families are kept well informed of the media opportunity and are supported before, during and after the media interview.

Contact the NMPCC if you would like to take part in media opportunities or form part of the NMPCC media bank.

If you require counselling and support

Families & Friends of Missing Persons Unit

The Families and Friends of Missing Persons Unit within the Attorney-General's Department of NSW provides free counselling to families and friends who have a missing person in NSW. Counselling is also provided to residents of NSW that have a missing person in another State or Territory.

Phone: 1800 227 772

Relationships Australia

Relationships Australia provides counselling and relationship support specifically to families and friends of missing persons (and to missing persons) living in Queensland (including Northern NSW) and the Australian Capital Territory (including Riverina and South Eastern NSW).

Phone 1300 364 277 (local call charge)

Your General Practitioner/Counsellor

Families and friends of missing persons may prefer to seek counselling from their local General Practitioner or community service provider. The NMPCC suggests that the service provider is familiar with the national counselling framework *Supporting those who are left behind* which specifically addresses the trauma experienced when someone is missing and the needs of an unresolved loss. This framework is available from the NMPCC and is free of charge.