

A day spent waiting is a day lost

This year the dangers of waiting to report a loved one missing were highlighted during National Missing Persons Week. Through the National Missing Persons Coordination Centre, the AFP provides leadership in efforts to reduce the number of people who go missing and to lessen the impact of a person's disappearance on families, friends and the community.

Each year in Australia more than 35,000 people are reported as missing to police. That's one person every 15 minutes. People go missing for many reasons, not always under suspicious circumstances. Conflict in families, relationship breakdowns or mental health issues can all lead to someone walking away without telling their loved ones where they've gone.

It is estimated that for each person reported missing, the impact is felt by 12 others. These people are predominantly family members and friends, but work colleagues or others in the community can also be affected. They all face a range of physical, emotional, psychological and financial impacts as a result of the loss. Relationships can be strained and there are often significant changes in quality of life or routine activities for those left behind.

The theme of this year's National Missing Persons Week, A Day Spent Waiting is a Day Lost, was designed to dispel the myth that people need to wait a certain amount of time

before they report someone as missing. Throughout the campaign, members of the public were urged to make a report as soon as they became concerned for the safety or whereabouts of a loved one.

National Missing Persons Coordination Centre (NMPCC) Coordinator Leonie Jacques said having all States and Territories participate in the annual campaign is crucial to its success.

"The AFP is committed in a national capacity and in partnership with the government and community to help find missing people," she said.

"During National Missing Persons Week we focus on working with the community to raise awareness of some of the issues associated with the issue of missing persons. We encourage the community as a whole to help us and our partners in preventing this serious and significant issue. We want to work together to reduce the incidence and impact of missing persons and to assist the groups most at risk of going missing."

This year's campaign had a strong focus on raising awareness in cultural and linguistically diverse communities.



01: Commissioner Tony Negus with the Milograd family. Tamara Milograd went missing in the 1970s and her family hope the campaign will help to raise awareness about the impact of missing persons on families.



02 and 03: Family members at the launch of National Missing Persons Week. **04:** Eugene, Luba and Nick Milograd at the launch of National Missing Persons Week. **05:** Commissioner Tony Negus speaking at the launch. **06:** Commander Chris McDevitt addresses the media. **07:** The launch of National Missing Persons Week in Melbourne.

Research suggests that people from these backgrounds are less likely to be aware of the issues and risks associated with missing persons.

The campaign was officially launched by the Minister for Home Affairs Brendan O'Connor in Melbourne. He was joined by the families and friends of missing persons, members of the AFP Executive, the Director of the Federation of Ethnic Communities Councils of Australia and representatives from police missing persons units across Australia, as well as representatives from a diverse range of multicultural groups and non-government agencies.

The launch was followed by a national community advertising campaign. SBS Television provided assistance in getting the message to people from diverse backgrounds through running translations of the advertisement across its multi-language network. To complement this, a Myths and Facts on Missing Persons brochure was translated into eight additional languages for distribution into multicultural communities.

Being able to coordinate this type of national approach was made easier four years

ago, when the government committed federal funding to the creation of the National Missing Persons Coordination Centre. The NMPCC is hosted by the AFP and works with State and Territory police and community organisations to coordinate the approach to missing persons cases. It also provides educational material about the significance of the issue to the broader community.

The NMPCC also works with Commonwealth and State government agencies, non-government agencies and the families and friends of missing persons. Having a coordinated approach ensures the efforts of all those involved are not duplicated. It also leads to more informed decision making, maximises the use of agency resources and improves referral mechanisms.

The NMPCC's work is driven by the national missing persons policy framework of PLEASE: Prevention, Location, Education, Awareness, Support and Evaluation. This provides a common goal and approach for those affected by missing persons issues and the agencies that work in the missing persons sector.

For more information on the work of the National Missing Persons Coordination Centre visit:

www.missingpersons.gov.au





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