



THE SOS GUIDE: MISSING PERSONS

A GUIDE FOR THE FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF MISSING PERSONS





This guide has been prepared by the National Missing Persons Coordination Centre (NMPCC) in consultation with State and Territory Police to provide the best possible practical advice and information.



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WHERE TO START

Around 38,000 people are reported missing to police every year in Australia. While the majority are found safe and well, others remain missing for longer periods of time.

In Australia a missing person is defined as anyone who is reported missing to police, whose whereabouts are unknown, and where there are fears for the safety or concern for the welfare of that person.

A long-term missing person is someone who has been missing for more than three months.

Every missing person investigation will be different depending on the individual circumstances of a disappearance. The *The SOS Guide: Missing Persons* provides general guidance on how to navigate legal and practical matters during the disappearance of a family member or friend.

For more information visit missingpersons.gov.au

DO NOT WAIT 24 HOURS BEFORE REPORTING SOMEONE AS MISSING.

*Note: If your missing person returns home safely or makes contact with family members or friends, **immediately** notify police so they can confirm their safety and welfare.*

THE INVESTIGATION

1. FILING A REPORT

If you have concerns for someone's safety and welfare, and their whereabouts is unknown, you can file a missing person's report at your local police station.

The first 24 hours following a person's disappearance are the most crucial. This is because the sooner police are able to follow-up leads, such as the availability of CCTV footage, the more likely the person will be found safe and well.

It is important to give the police all the facts and circumstances related to the disappearance, including search efforts already made by you and others. Relevant information may include intimate or private details regarding the missing person or their lifestyle. **Every piece of information matters; let the police decide what it means for the investigation.**

When filing a missing person's report, be prepared (where possible) with the following information about the person who is missing:

- **Name, age, home address, and employment information.**
- A recent, clear and coloured **photograph** of the person missing.
- Their **physical appearance**, including any identifying features (tattoos, scars etc.).
- What they were **wearing when last seen.**
- Their **last known whereabouts**, or intended arrangements (travelling by bus to the local shopping centre, going to the gym etc.).
- Habits and **places they may frequent.**
- Their **social media accounts/use** (think Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat).
- **Telephone and banking information** (Phone number, bank account details).
- **Any behavioural changes**, personal, medical or emotional problems they may have experienced before they went missing.
- **Medication** the person may use and what it is used to treat. (Do they have a medical condition police should be aware of?)
- If the person **has been reported missing before**, the circumstances and where they were found.
- **Lists of friends, acquaintances, and anyone else who might have information** or clues about the person's whereabouts. (Try to include telephone numbers and home or work addresses.)

You should also discuss with police any plans you have to make your own enquiries or assist with the search. It is important police are aware of your plans, as they may impact the investigation.

PHOTOGRAPHS

The more photos you have of the person who is missing, the better. Photos will be used by police, the media for inclusion in media releases, posters and for other publicity purposes.

Where possible, photos should be recent, clear, in colour, and clearly show the missing person's face.

2. KEEP RECORDS

It's important to keep a record of conversations, details about the missing person and anything you can think of while it's fresh in your mind throughout the missing person's investigation. Even if you don't see it as relevant, this information may prove beneficial to you or police at some stage during the investigation. Record this information in the same place so it's easily found, and almost becomes a timeline or diary. You can use this SOS Guide for this purpose, or a book.

Some records you should keep:

- The contact details of the officer who took your initial missing person's report including their name, rank, station, phone and email, and any subsequent officers you deal with during the course of the investigation.
- The case number corresponding to your missing person's report and investigation. Police will inform you of the case number, however if they don't, you should ask for it as all information will be filed under this 'job'.
- Keep detailed records of everyone you speak to in relation to your missing person, including dates and times, names and numbers, information provided etc.
- Any action you need to take to preserve details for forensic collection. For example, you may need to limit access to your home until police have collected possible evidence or put aside items such as hairbrushes, tooth brushes for DNA collection.

3. THE POLICE INVESTIGATION

During the early stages it is important to support your case officer's efforts and to work together. Establish how often they will be in contact with you to provide updates and how you can contact them.

Police will use the information you have provided to consider all lines of enquiry, which are appropriate and necessary in the circumstances, to try and locate the missing person. The police will provide information, where possible, on what is being done.

Typical lines of enquiry may include:

- Searching the home address of the missing person to confirm they are not there and to establish if there is any information or evidence that can help find them.
- Searching the area where the person was last seen (if different to their home address).
- Checks with local hospitals.
- Checks with mobile phone providers, financial institutions, and social media accounts.
- Checks on mobile phone(s) and devices used by the missing person, including internet search history.
- Checks with other State and Territory police, or the Missing Persons Unit, where applicable.
- Door knocks and house-to-house enquiries near where your missing person was last seen, as well as their home address.
- Reviewing closed circuit television (CCTV) footage.
- Interviews with family and friends, acquaintances, colleagues.
- Coordinating media coverage to raise awareness or appeal for information.

Depending on the circumstances of the disappearance, police may also involve the use of Search and Rescue personnel to conduct specialist searches (for example, using helicopters, divers, or dogs).

4. BEYOND THREE MONTHS

When a person has been missing for more than three months, they are classified as a 'long-term missing person'.

At this point, your local police (through the State and Territory Missing Persons Unit) will provide the National Missing Persons Coordination Centre (NMPCC) with profile information (and a recent photo of the person missing) for inclusion on the Australian national register at missingpersons.gov.au

If your local police haven't already done so in the early stages of the investigation, authority to publish the missing person's details will be sought from the next of kin (NOK) prior to the profile being submitted to the NMPCC for publicity.

5. NATIONAL MISSING PERSONS COORDINATION CENTRE

The National Missing Persons Coordination Centre (NMPCC) is a non-operational arm of the Australian Federal Police (AFP). The NMPCC was established in 2006 to drive national coordination in response to missing persons in Australia, and to complement the investigative role of State and Territory police. Its mandate is to reduce the incidence and impact of missing persons in Australia and as a function of the AFP, the NMPCC is funded by the Federal Government.

The NMPCC is the host of the national register of long-term missing persons. As part of its mandate, the NMPCC also works to educate the Australian community and raise awareness of the issues and impacts of missing persons in Australia. This is done through programs such as National Missing Persons Week and International Missing Children's Day, national bi-annual posters profiling long-term missing persons, proactive media engagement, and education initiatives such as Day for Daniel (Morcombe).

You can view the national register of long-term missing persons and find out more at missingpersons.gov.au.

CONTINUE TO MAINTAIN REGULAR CONTACT WITH YOUR CASE OFFICER AND KEEP RECORDS.

AUSTRALIANS MISSING OVERSEAS

If you have concerns for the safety and welfare of a family member or friend missing overseas, and you have been unable to make contact with them or any known travelling companions, you can report them missing at your local police station.

You will need all the information included in **section 1** to file a missing person's report.

Once a missing person's report has been made the report will be forwarded by your local police to the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), who will coordinate the investigation into the missing person. Consular staff will contact you and explain the missing person processes and will also confirm family consent for DFAT to provide information to external agencies, including INTERPOL, and foreign law enforcement agencies (where applicable).

Your local police will also undertake checks with financial institutions (banks), mobile phone providers, and airlines and travel operators.

6. DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE

DFAT has a Consular Section responsible for the protection and welfare of Australians travelling or living abroad.

DFAT will pursue individual matters based on a serious concern for the welfare of an Australian overseas and a belief the person concerned needs consular assistance. Checks will be made with:

- Australian embassies, high commissioners and consulates to try and locate the person's whereabouts.
- INTERPOL and the AFP (where relevant) to seek the assistance of foreign law enforcement, which may include the issuing of a Yellow Notice (see **section 7**).

DFAT will be your primary point of contact, and will keep you up-to-date with developments. However, privacy provisions operating in foreign countries can severely restrict the information provided to consular staff overseas by local law enforcement agencies.

See **section 33** for contact details.

7. YELLOW NOTICE

A Yellow Notice is a global alert that can be issued by INTERPOL to help locate missing persons when there is concern that the person might travel, or be taken, abroad. Yellow Notices are a valuable law enforcement tool that can increase the chances of a missing person being located, as the alert provides visibility of the case to police around the world.

A Yellow Notice will also alert border officials of the case, making international travel difficult. A Yellow Notice can be issued for victims of parental abduction, kidnappings, or unexplained disappearances (missing persons).

Depending on the circumstances of the individual missing person's case, DFAT (or State and Territory police) can request the assistance of INTERPOL Canberra (AFP) to issue a Yellow Notice. Generally, a Yellow Notice will only be issued if the whereabouts of a person is unknown, and there is a lack of evidence in respect to which country the missing person may have travelled to, or was travelling to.

When appropriate, Yellow Notices can also be uploaded to the INTERPOL website for the public to view at **www.interpol.int**

THE SEARCH

It's important for families and friends of a missing person to feel, and be, involved in the investigation. In consultation with your case officer (local police), you may consider helping with the search.

Police will be managing the overall search strategy for the missing person and it is important you coordinate your efforts with police and let specialist teams search dangerous areas such as lakes, rivers, the sea, and/or remote bushland.

8. HELPING WITH THE SEARCH

- Search places the missing person liked to visit or where they may have gone, such as: shopping centres, hotels, parks, railway or bus stations, food outlets, or amusement arcades.
- Contact the missing person's former and current friends, colleagues, employers, and all known relatives. Check when they last had contact with the person or if they have any information that could be of assistance. Maintain regular contact with these people. They may come across information that could help locate the missing person.
- Check with local transport services. If the missing person suffers a mental illness they may have wandered from home and travelled on public transport.
- Check with hospitals in the area. If the missing person was in an accident, they may be in a local hospital and unable to make contact. Ask for the missing person by name. If no-one by that name is on record, ask if they have any 'unknown' people in their care who resemble the missing person.

REMEMBER TO MAINTAIN REGULAR CONTACT WITH YOUR CASE OFFICER AND KEEP RECORDS.

9. POSTERS

- Create a missing person poster, featuring the person's details (name, age, physical description), last known whereabouts, and a clear, recent photo. A clear heading 'MISSING PERSON' or 'HAVE YOU SEEN ME?' will help. If the missing person is already profiled on the national register, you can download a poster with their relevant information from their profile page on the website.

- Posters should also have clear contact details for people to provide any information they may have. Across Australia, Crime Stoppers (1800 333 000) is used for this purpose. Do not use your own private or mobile phone numbers.
- If you need assistance with printing, Officeworks has a monthly community service budget. Members of Parliament also work to support the local community and their local office may be able to assist you with printing your posters.
- Contact local community groups to help distribute the poster, and keep a list of where posters are distributed and displayed to avoid duplication.
- Consider displaying posters in places the missing person is known to visit and also areas such as: shopping centres; bus stops, and railway stations; at local sporting and entertainment venues; libraries; local councils; gyms; clubs and community centres.

10. SPREAD THE WORD

- Leave a description of the missing person with local taxi and bus services. Ask them to contact Crime Stoppers or your local police if they see the person or receive any information.
- Talk to your case officer about using the media to bring attention to your missing person's case. Work with police to schedule press releases and media interviews. This can include national profiling efforts and campaigns managed by the NMPCC (see **section 5**).
- Discuss with your case officer the creation of a website or social media page (i.e. Help find me Facebook page) to spread the word and capture information or leads. Consider designating a screened and trusted volunteer to manage and monitor this website/account (see **section 17**).

11. TRACING SERVICES

There are other agencies that operate global search networks with the aim of reuniting missing family members with those who have lost contact, whether it be as a result of long-term disconnect, adoption, child abduction, or separation as a direct result of war or disaster.

See **section 35** for a directory of services.

If there is an active police investigation, it is important to inform your case officer that you are considering using these services.

OTHER OPTIONS

There may be other options for you, or your case officer, to consider as part of the missing person's investigation.

12. REWARDS

In some missing person's cases a reward is offered to encourage people to come forward with information regarding the missing person's disappearance.

Rewards for information are generally awarded for information that leads to a conviction or arrest relating to missing person's cases where there is a suspicion of foul play. The ability to offer a reward, and the process to do so, varies in each State and Territory, and is dependent on the circumstances of the missing person's case. Your case officer will be best placed to determine whether your case would benefit from a 'reward offer', and subsequently, how to go about it.

Private rewards may also be offered but it is recommended this is done in conjunction with the investigation, and with the support of the official channels for providing information about the missing person. You may wish to seek legal advice prior to offering a private reward, and again, discuss this option with your case officer.

13. COMMUNITY AWARENESS & EVENTS

Keep the community's awareness of the missing person high by keeping the media interested and involved. Consider highlighting the case on the anniversary of their disappearance and/or their birthday. You may wish to seek out assistance from political figures, influential members of the community, or other high profile people who can help maintain interest in your case.

Events can also encourage community and public support for your missing persons' case, and may also include a fundraising element. Funds raised can be used to support your search efforts, help with the missing person's financial obligations (rent, bills etc.), or donated to a charity of choice. 'Go Fund Me' pages can also be used for this purpose.

If you don't wish to organise your own event, consider getting involved in existing events that raise awareness of missing persons such as International Missing Children's Day or National Missing Persons Week (led by the NMPCC) or family-driven events such as Picnic for Missing, which takes place during National Missing Persons week, or Day for Daniel (Morcombe). More information about existing events can be found at missingpersons.gov.au

14. AGE PROGRESSION

Images of long-term missing persons are sometimes age progressed to illustrate 'what the person would look like today'. This is particularly helpful for cases involving children and young adults, but is just as effective for adults who have been missing for a significant period of time.

Age progressed images of a missing person are used by police as an avenue of enquiry, and in the hope the missing person is recognised by a member of the public years after they disappeared. Age progression of images should be undertaken by trained specialists (usually forensic artists).

The NMPCC has the capability to do this on behalf of State and Territory police, in consultation with your case officer or Missing Persons Unit.

The media can be a powerful tool for raising awareness about a person's disappearance. It can be used both immediately and long-term to encourage anyone who may have information about the whereabouts of a missing person to come forward to police.



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15. USING THE MEDIA

When using the media, it's important you speak with your case officer or the Missing Persons Unit before you go ahead.

In the rare situation police advise against publicity, they will explain the reasons why. Likewise, police will speak with you prior to involving media as they will need to seek your consent. Police will consider risk factors such as a missing person's medical needs, grave concerns for their safety or welfare, age, or other vulnerabilities when determining whether the use of media is appropriate and may prove useful.

Police Media Units within each State and Territory will be able to help you prepare for a media interview, they will understand what details cannot be discussed as part of the ongoing investigation, and can stop interviews if you feel uncomfortable. They will ensure media activity is coordinated (as there is likely to be several media requests), and they'll ensure media activity undertaken has the greatest chance of success and supports the police investigation.

Developing a plan and deciding early what you are comfortable sharing may help to avoid unwanted media requests and intrusions. Before approaching media yourself, and after speaking with your case officer, consider:

- Who should talk to the media? A relative, friend, or family member; the case officer or police representative; and/or both.
- What type of information are you able to provide in order to avoid inadvertently hindering the investigation; be aware of the missing person's privacy if they were to return; and think about personal details you may be asked and how to best approach them.
- Will you, or the media spokesperson, participate in an interview, or prepare a statement? Seek the advice of the Police Media Unit, who will be able to best direct you.

If the media directly approaches family or friends at home, there is no obligation to participate in media or provide your private contact details. It is always recommended you contact your case officer for advice, and in such circumstances, you can provide them with the Police Media Unit's contact details so they can manage requests on your behalf.

Likewise, if the media do not respect a request for privacy and become intrusive or disruptive, contact your case officer who may be able to assist.

16. WHAT WILL THE MEDIA ASK?

When media approach family members, or close friends of a missing person, they do so in an attempt to add a 'human' element to the story. The more information you can provide them, the more likely they will get the story right.

The media will require basic information about the missing person including their **name, age, a physical description, and their last known whereabouts**. They'll also need recent photographs (several) and any other imagery that will add to the story, particularly for print and television media.

In-depth media interviews—television features, magazines, print articles—will more than likely ask personal questions, such as:

- 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?
- How has this experience affected your family?
- How have you and other loved ones coped with the loss?
- What steps have the police taken in finding your loved one?
- 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?

Keep in mind there is no guarantee the media will run your story, as it may compete with other news items on the day. Also consider seeking proactive media around anniversaries, birthdays, and special occasions such as Christmas. This will spark new interest in the case by both the media and the public, which can help in finding some answers. You can also read our Media Guide for Families of Missing Persons at missingpersons.gov.au

17. SOCIAL MEDIA & MISSING PERSONS

Social media can be a powerful tool to raise awareness of missing person's cases. Before starting a social media campaign, speak with your case officer and think about the long-term implications it may have for you and your family. Things to consider include:

- **Public access to information:** Information shared in the public domain is hard to control. Once information is on the internet it can be freely shared and used by others. If and when your loved one returns, it can also be difficult to remove information from the public domain.

Sharing identifying details and updates about the case may also jeopardise the investigation or alert perpetrators to potential police activity or enquiries.

- **Long-term commitment:** Starting a social media account or campaign is a long-term commitment. While it's great to have community support and many people helping you search for your loved one, be aware that people who join your campaign will be eager for news. You may get regular emails or messages from people requesting updates and new information which can be distressing if there is no new information for periods of time. You may also experience 'trolls', and others who post negative comments about the missing person. While you can eventually block and report these people, the experience can be distressing. Consider sharing the responsibility for monitoring social media sites with friends or relatives to help ease the burden.

All calls for information should be directed to Crime Stoppers (1800 333 000). They will provide the information to police. Providing the public with your private details, or overly engaging within message platforms, is not advised.

PRACTICAL MATTERS

When someone is missing and an investigation is carried out, there are several things that may need to be taken care of on behalf of the missing person. This is particularly the case if you're the missing person's next of kin.

18. PERSONAL PROPERTY

- Initially, you may need to limit access to your home, and that of the missing person, until police have collected possible evidence. Do not touch or remove items from the missing person's room or your own home during this time, as this information may provide police with an avenue of enquiry. Walking through the home may also interfere with forensic collection. (More information about forensic collection can be found at **section 26**.)
- Keep aside items such as hairbrushes, tooth brushes etc. as these items may be required for forensic collection. Your case officer should inform you of any other specific items that need to be set aside for this purpose.
- Where the missing person lives alone, arrange for someone to collect their mail and maintain their property.
- If the missing person has pets, you'll also need to arrange for someone to take care of them.

19. INFORMING THE NECESSARY PEOPLE

- As the next of kin, you will need to inform (where relevant) the missing person's employer, school, club, or business associates. You should ask them to make contact with the police if they noticed any 'odd' behaviour before the person disappeared, or if they have any information that may help in finding the missing person, no matter how irrelevant it may seem.
- Neighbours may need to be informed that police and/or media will be present in the area.
- Try and cancel any social engagements, business appointments, or travel plans the missing person may have had scheduled prior to their disappearance.
- Consider advising your own employer of the situation to discuss the possibility of time off work (if required). While some people may not feel comfortable sharing personal information, your employer will be best placed to support you. A confidante or employee assistance service may also assist in the workplace.

20. PRIVACY MATTERS

- Your case officer may request the medical records of the missing person from their doctor or dentist. The case officer may go directly to the doctor, or request your assistance in retrieving these files. If you have any medical files or information on the missing person, send it directly to your case officer.
- Many families and friends of missing persons distribute their own posters or search information to ensure the community is aware of the person's disappearance. Your private telephone or mobile phone numbers should not be publicised. You should always use Crime Stoppers (1800 333 000) or a direct contact to the investigative team. Your case officer can provide advice on the most appropriate number to provide.
- Families of missing persons are often contacted by psychics and clairvoyants. You should not feel obliged to deal with them, and in some cases, it may be more appropriate for the psychic to be referred to your case officer.
- If possible try to ensure the social media accounts (Facebook, Instagram etc.) of the missing person are set to private. This will stop media outlets accessing information and photos to use in the media. The media should be dealing with the Police Media Unit so that information is accurate and works to complement the investigation.
- Conversely, the privacy of a missing person is protected by the *Privacy Act 1988*. The Act may restrict what information you, as the next of kin, are able to access or request. However, in accordance with the Act police have certain permissions to access personal information to assist in the location of a person who has been reported missing. Work with your case officer if you are having difficulties accessing information relating to your loved one.

21. FINANCIAL & ESTATE MANAGEMENT

As a next of kin, you may become liable for a missing person's financial affairs. If the missing person hasn't appointed a financial power of attorney or executor, it can be difficult to deal with their financial and estate management in their absence.

When a relative is missing for an extended period, managing the financial affairs of the missing person is an important consideration. Legal advice should be sought about matters such as life insurance, superannuation, their will, property management, and trust funds. In some states there are specific processes through which the affairs of a missing person can be managed.

Relevant legislation in some States and Territories provides a scheme for the management of financial affairs and property of a missing person. In these States, a 'manager' or 'administrator' may be appointed with the authority to make decisions about the financial affairs and property of the missing person.

Because legislation and processes regarding a missing person's estate and financial management varies in each State and Territory, it is recommended you contact your case officer and/or a legal representative for advice specific to your missing person case. More information can also be found at missingpersons.gov.au

In circumstances where a person has been missing for many years, you may eventually need to consider initiating the coronial process to declare them legally deceased (see **section 23**). Although this is a very hard decision, and emotionally may be very distressing, this legal process is often necessary to manage a number of legal and property issues. This may include claiming benefits and/or life insurance, or dissolving a marriage. Unfortunately, these things cannot be done without a death certificate.

In the short-term, you may need to consider:

- Payment of the missing person's mortgage, rent, bills or other financial obligations.
- Consulting bank managers or financial advisers if extra funds are required to help cover mortgage repayments, rent, bills or any unexpected travel or personal expenses.

- Arranging for a close friend, colleague or relative to help the family keep track of bills or other commitments.

Police and tracing agencies may monitor the missing person's bank account during the investigation. It is important to inform them of any unusual activity, or if you make any changes to accounts.

22. MOBILE PHONE ACCOUNTS

Many Australian telecommunications companies have bereavement support services in place that enable families to manage accounts in the event of an emergency or death. Some companies have also implemented a specific missing person's policy to help families manage their loved one's account.

Most companies require a police report number and the contact details of the case officer to authenticate the request; at your request the company may suspend the account, or provide assistance in payment plans for the account.

You are encouraged to speak with your case officer before suspending a mobile phone account to ensure this does not impede the police investigation.

Information on specific telecommunications policies can be found at missingpersons.gov.au

CORONIAL PROCESS

When a person is missing under accidental, unexplained, or suspicious circumstances, and there is belief the person may be deceased, the case may be referred to the Coroner. Police may refer the case to the Coroner to ascertain whether there are alternate avenues of enquiry as part of the investigative process.

Similarly, families can request a case is referred to the Coroner's Office for the purposes of a death certificate, or as a review of the police investigation to identify potential new avenues of enquiry. Talk to your case officer about this process, as they will be able to help you and guide you through the coronial process.

Some States and Territories are required to report all outstanding missing person cases to the Coroner once they reach a certain date/timeframe.

Once a matter is referred to the Coroner's Office, the Coroner will decide how the coronial will be conducted. This may include deciding whether an inquest is required or whether the Coroner can make a finding (without inquest) based on information provided by the investigating police.

23. WHAT IS A CORONIAL INQUEST?

A Coronial Inquest is a formal hearing in a courtroom concerning the death or suspected death of a person. The inquest is led by the Coroner to gather more information about whether a death has occurred and, if so the cause and circumstances of the death. An inquest is unlike other court cases, and is different for every case. It is an inquisitorial process rather than adversarial. In other words, an inquest is not a trial, with a prosecutor and a defendant, but an inquiry led by the Coroner that seeks to find out why the event occurred (and how). It is not the role of the Coroner to determine guilt or lay blame for a suspected death.

24. THE CORONIAL PROCESS

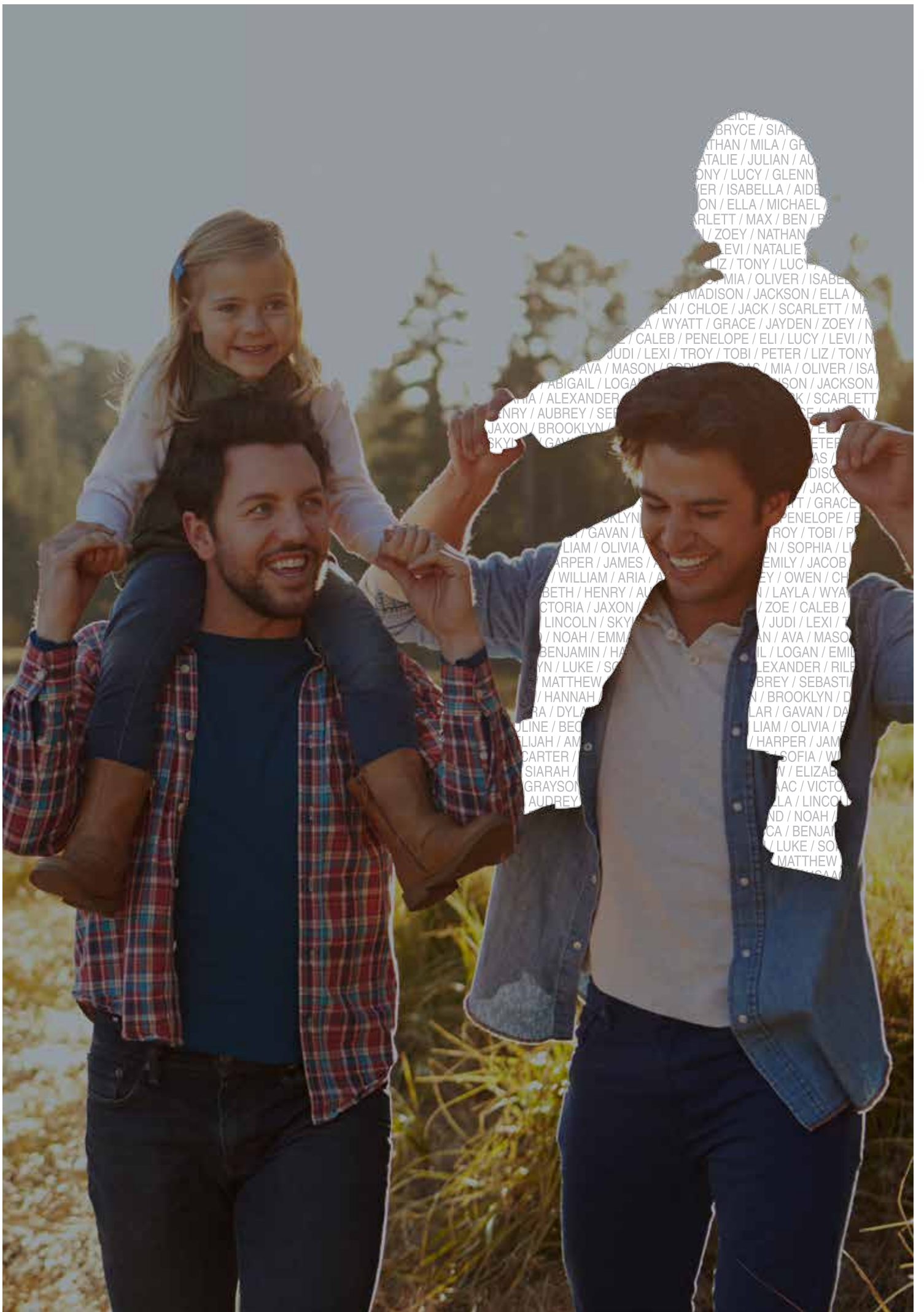
In most circumstances, the Coroner's role is to review suspicious and accidental deaths; to identify the person who has died and to find out how their death occurred, including the cause and circumstances.

When the case is referred to the Coroner by police, the matter is referred in the form of a report which outlines the facts in relation to the missing person's case. The Coroner may ask you and/or others to give evidence at court as a witness. You may also have the opportunity to ask questions of witnesses and may choose to do this through a solicitor, family representative, or a Coronial Advocate. After the Coroner has reviewed and heard all the evidence, he or she will write a finding. In a missing person's case, the Coroner firstly has to make a finding in respect of whether, on the balance of probabilities, he or she believes the missing person is deceased. If the Coroner isn't satisfied, that the person is deceased, the matter may be referred back to police for further investigation.

If the Coroner **finds the person is deceased**, based on the information provided, the family can request a death certificate via application to the Department of Births, Deaths, and Marriages in their State or Territory. (see **section 33** for contact information.) Based on this finding, the active police investigation into the missing person's disappearance will cease, however the case will remain 'open' until the remains of the person are found. Police will always hold records of the case as new information may come to light 'down the track' to resolve the case.

It is up to you—the family—to decide whether you want your loved one to continue being profiled through the national missing person's register at missingpersons.gov.au. Noting, where there is a strong suspicion of foul play and police are perusing offenders, State and Territory police may recommend the missing person is profiled with the leading line "Do you have information" or "What happened to me", versus "Have you seen me".

An **open finding** means there is a lack of evidence to conclude whether the person is alive or has died. In these circumstances, current investigations will either continue or cease until further evidence is obtained, depending on the individual circumstances surrounding a person's disappearance.



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RLETT / MAX / BEN / P
/ ZOEY / NATHAN
...LEVI / NATALIE
...LIZ / TONY / LUCY /
...MIA / OLIVER / ISABEL
...MADISON / JACKSON / ELLA /
...MEN / CHLOE / JACK / SCARLETT / MA
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...JUDI / LEXI / TROY / TOBI / PETER / LIZ / TONY
...AVA / MASON / SOPHIA / MIA / OLIVER / ISA
...ABIGAIL / LOGAN / JASON / JACKSON /
...MIA / ALEXANDER / ... / ... / SCARLETT
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DNA & FORENSIC COLLECTION

During the first three months of a person's disappearance you will be asked by police to provide forensic or DNA samples. Forensic collection forms part of a standard missing person's investigation. When collection takes place will be dependent on the circumstances surrounding the investigation.

25. THE NATIONAL MISSING PERSONS AND VICTIM SYSTEM

The National Missing Persons and Victim System (NMPVS) provides a national platform for State and Territory Police Missing Persons Units and Forensic examiners to search and compare long-term missing persons against unidentified human remains.

Once a person has been identified as a long-term missing person (missing for more than three months), the missing person's profile will be uploaded to the NMPVS. This will allow for unidentified human remains to be matched to profiles of missing persons, if matches exist. That is, if a bone is found in NSW matching the description of someone who went missing in the Blue Mountains, the system will notify the relevant Missing Persons Unit of this match, and the likelihood of the bone being of that person can be investigated further.

26. DEOXYRIBONUCLEIC ACID (DNA)

The most common form of forensic collection is DNA, the hereditary material passed from a parent to their children. Every person has DNA and two forms are used for identification: nuclear DNA and mitochondrial DNA. Nuclear DNA comes from the cell nucleus. Half of nuclear DNA is inherited from the mother and half from the father. This requires DNA samples to be taken from both the mother of the missing person, and father, which is not always possible. Mitochondrial DNA (mtDNA) is inherited from the mother only.

Both of these kinds of DNA can be used for identification purposes however, mitochondrial DNA is generally not as reliable as nuclear DNA.

If police cannot get a DNA sample for the missing person, it may be helpful to obtain a DNA sample from you and/or other family members in order to assist with a possible DNA identification process. The ability to match people to their relatives can depend on how closely they are related.

The familial DNA samples most useful for identification are from close blood relatives of the missing person such as a biological mother, father, children, or siblings. Fathers do not pass on mitochondrial DNA to their children and this means that if police require DNA from extended relatives they will look to maternal relatives (such as siblings or aunts/uncles on the mother's side) for mitochondrial DNA testing.

There may be cases where DNA testing is not able to identify a person.

27. DENTAL RECORDS

Dental records of a missing person are one of the most useful forensic samples for identification.

During the course of the investigation police will ask for the contact details of a missing person's dentist to obtain their dental records. This is because the configuration of a person's teeth and dental work done over time is unique to an individual. Teeth are often left intact after a person has died, even if their body has been exposed to the elements. Sometimes in cases where DNA identification is unable to be used, teeth can provide answers.

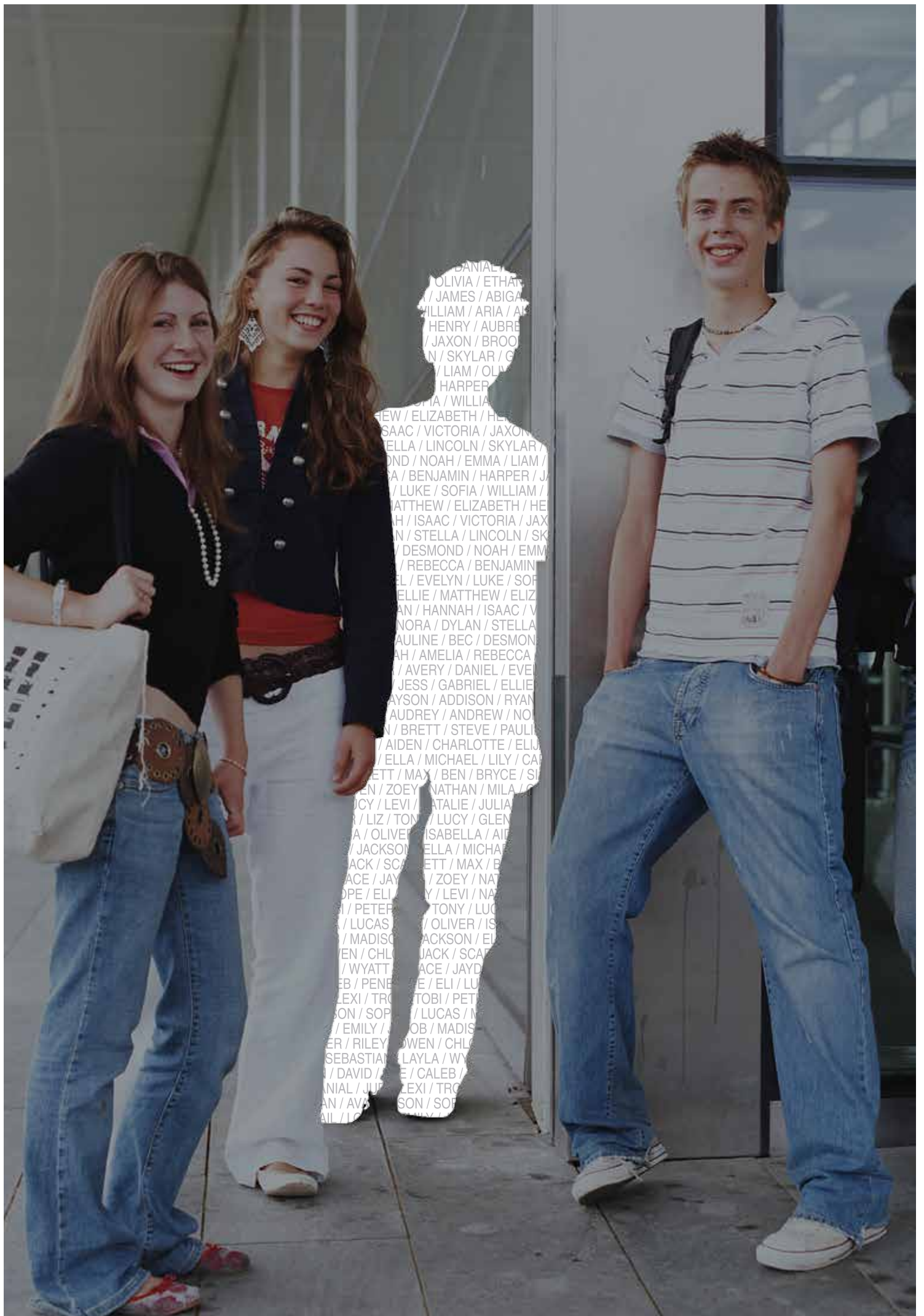
A missing person's dental x-rays can be extremely valuable as they can be directly compared to radiographs taken of unidentified human remains for similarities. Every component of a person's dental record is important such as treatment records, dental charts, plaster casts or impressions, as well as clinical photography.

28. FINGERPRINTS

Fingerprints are a well-known method of uniquely identifying a person. Even identical twins have different fingerprints. Fingerprints are made up of a series of whorls, loops, ridges and arch formations.

During a missing person's investigation police may send forensic officers to the missing person's home to attempt to obtain fingerprints from surfaces or their personal possessions. Fingerprints can be very fragile, especially on certain surfaces, so forensic officers will use specific techniques to detect them. Officers may use ultraviolet light to ascertain if fingerprints are present on surfaces not easily visible or may brush over surfaces with powder to display prints. There are also a variety of other collection methods available.

The collection of fingerprint samples can be messy and forensic officers may not clean the surfaces when they are finished. Some people may find this process distressing and you may want to consider asking a friend or family member to stay with you while the forensic team is in the home, and to help clean up after they have gone.



DANIEL / OLIVIA / ETHAN / JAMES / ABIGAIL / WILLIAM / ARIA / ANTHONY / HENRY / AUBREY / JAXON / BROOKLYN / SKYLAR / GABRIEL / LIAM / OLIVER / HARPER / SOFIA / WILLIAM / JEWEL / ELIZABETH / HENRY / ISAAC / VICTORIA / JAXON / STELLA / LINCOLN / SKYLAR / DESMOND / NOAH / EMMA / LIAM / ANNA / BENJAMIN / HARPER / JACOB / LUKE / SOFIA / WILLIAM / MATTHEW / ELIZABETH / HENRY / H / ISAAC / VICTORIA / JAXON / AN / STELLA / LINCOLN / SKYLAR / DESMOND / NOAH / EMMY / REBECCA / BENJAMIN / ELLIE / EVELYN / LUKE / SOPHIA / ELLIE / MATTHEW / ELIZABETH / HANNAH / ISAAC / VICTORIA / NORA / DYLAN / STELLA / PAULINE / BEC / DESMOND / NOAH / AMELIA / REBECCA / AVERY / DANIEL / EVELYN / JESS / GABRIEL / ELLIE / RAYSON / ADDISON / RYAN / AUDREY / ANDREW / NOAH / BRETT / STEVE / PAULINE / AIDEN / CHARLOTTE / ELIJAH / ELLA / MICHAEL / LILY / CAITLYN / BRETT / MAX / BEN / BRYCE / SHANEEN / ZOEY / NATHAN / MILA / JACOB / LEVI / NATALIE / JULIA / ANNA / LIZ / TONY / LUCY / GLENDA / OLIVER / ISABELLA / AIDEN / JACKSON / STELLA / MICHAEL / JACOB / SCOTT / MAX / BEN / TRACE / JAYDEN / ZOEY / NATALIE / HOPE / ELIJAH / LEVI / NATALIE / PETER / TONY / LUCAS / OLIVER / ISABELLA / MADISON / JACKSON / ELIJAH / OWEN / CHLOE / JACK / SCARLETT / WYATT / TRACE / JAYDEN / PENELOPE / ELI / LUCAS / LEXI / TROY / TOBIAS / PETER / SON / SOPHIA / LUCAS / MADISON / EMILY / JACOB / MADISON / RILEY / OWEN / CHLOE / SEBASTIAN / LAYLA / WYATT / DAVID / TRACE / CALEB / DANIEL / JUDY / LEXI / TROY / AN / AVERY / SON / SOPHIA / ALL / LUCAS

SUPPORT

When a relative or friend is reported missing, the emotional impact on families and friends can be considerable. It's important to acknowledge that each person may be affected in their own way, and react differently.

Families and friends of missing persons often speak about feelings of fear, anger, guilt, blame, frustration, helplessness, ambiguity, and isolation. While people may not experience all these emotions, it is important to recognise that any of these responses are normal reactions to an extraordinary situation.

29. PERSONAL HEALTH & WELLBEING

When someone goes missing it is important to remember to make some time for yourself and your family. You should consider the following:

- **Physical needs:** Are you sleeping enough, eating healthy, exercising where possible?
- **Emotional needs:** Are you experiencing unexpected emotional changes? Do you need to seek professional help, or talk to someone about how you're feeling/what you're experiencing? Acknowledging your feelings is important for best management.
- **Communicating with others:** Are you reaching out to others, accepting support offered, and letting friends and family know how they can help?
- **Taking care of each other:** Are you talking about your feelings with your family, encouraging children to do the same, and arranging activities with friends, neighbours, relatives or colleagues?
- **One day at a time:** Are you keeping your routine and making sound decisions? Personal judgement may be affected when making significant life changes. Routine and everyday tasks, can help to remain grounded during unexpected and emotional situations.

If there are children in your family affected by the disappearance of a missing person, notify the children's school. School counsellors may be a helpful resource in supporting them, and will know what to do in this situation.

Together with the NSW-based Families and Friends of Missing Persons Unit NSW (FFMPU), the NMPCC has developed a series of fact sheets about supporting families and friends during the

experience of a person's disappearance. You can find these fact sheets at missingpersons.gov.au.

You may also find it useful to seek counsel from your General Practitioner. It's important they understand, however, that the 'ambiguous' loss of a missing person is very different to grieving for the loss of someone who has died, where the outcome is known. When someone goes missing, the uncertainty surrounding what has happened to them, whether they are safe and well, or whether they have met with foul play, can be all-consuming; you may cycle through a range of different feelings each day dependent on what you think has happened to them on any given day. For this reason, the NMPCC developed a support framework for families and friends of missing persons: **Supporting those who are left behind**. You can request a copy from the NMPCC and provide this to your General Practitioner.

You can also turn to support services, listed at **section 36**. And remember, the disappearance of someone you love is a unique experience.

30. WRITING & REMEMBRANCE

Finding ways to appropriately remember your missing person can be difficult. Consider visiting a public place of remembrance dedicated to missing persons, a list of which can be found at missingpersons.gov.au. You may also decide to create your own temporary memorial that you can visit or use.

Writing about your experience or keeping a diary can also help, and potentially help others going through a similar experience. While you may wish to write for therapeutic reasons, you may also want to consider sharing some of your 'memos' with newspapers, magazines, or on blogs so that others can better understand the uncertainty surrounding the disappearance of a family member or friend.

31. SUPPORT SERVICES

There are a range of support services available that may be helpful in providing you with support and guidance. Along with the list of support services we recommend, you can find more information at missingpersons.gov.au.

Remember: Everyone's experience is unique. There is no 'rule book' when it comes to missing persons, but talking about it can go some way to managing day-to-day activities.

See **section 36** for a directory of Support Services.

CONTACTS

32. LAW ENFORCEMENT

AGENCY	DESCRIPTION	CONTACT DETAILS
<p>STATE AND TERRITORY MISSING PERSONS UNITS</p>	<p>State and Territory police are the lead in managing and investigating a missing person's case, including taking the initial missing persons report. In some States and Territories, a dedicated Missing Persons Unit may also be involved to coordinate the case, and provide advice to your case officer/local police.</p> <p>When filing a missing persons report, you should attend your local police station in person.</p>	<p>ACT POLICING (02) 6256 7503</p> <p>NSW POLICE FORCE (02) 8835 7656 1800 025 091</p> <p>VICTORIA POLICE (03) 8690 2884</p> <p>QUEENSLAND POLICE SERVICE (07) 3364 6213 1800 017 744</p> <p>SOUTH AUSTRALIA POLICE (08) 8172 5467</p> <p>WESTERN AUSTRALIA POLICE (08) 9351 0699</p> <p>NORTHERN TERRITORY POLICE (08) 8999 5511</p> <p>TASMANIA POLICE (03) 6173 2606</p>
<p>NATIONAL MISSING PERSONS COORDINATION CENTRE (NMPCC)</p>	<p>The National Missing Persons Coordination Centre (NMPCC) is a non-operational arm of the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and drives national coordination in response to missing persons in Australia, and to complement the investigative role of State and Territory police. The NMPCC does not oversee or conduct investigations.</p>	<p>Telephone: 1800 000 634 (toll free)</p> <p>Website: www.missingpersons.gov.au</p>
<p>CRIME STOPPERS</p>	<p>Crime Stoppers is the crime reporting tool within Australia. The information gathered and supplied by the community is essential to assisting police agencies with crime solving and prevention.</p>	<p>Telephone: 1800 333 000</p> <p>Website: www.crimestoppers.com.au</p>

33. GOVERNMENT AGENCIES

AGENCY	DESCRIPTION	CONTACT DETAILS
DEPARTMENT OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS AND TRADE (DFAT)	<p>DFAT is the Federal Government’s lead agency for matters relating to Australians harmed or believed to be missing overseas. Its Consular Section is responsible for the protection and welfare of Australians travelling or living abroad.</p> <p>DFAT will pursue individual matters based on a serious concern for the welfare of an Australian overseas, and when a missing person’s report is filed at your local police station.</p>	<p>24-Hour Consular Emergency Contact 1300 555 135 (within Australia) +61 2 6261 3305 (outside Australia) +61 421 269 080 (SMS)</p> <p>Website: www.dfat.gov.au</p>
CORONER’S COURT	<p>The State Coroner ensures that all deaths, suspected deaths, fires and explosions are properly investigated. If necessary, an inquest into the death is held. Coroners can also recommend measures to prevent future deaths.</p> <p>For further information about the Coroner’s court in each state contact their office.</p>	<p>ACT 02 6207 1754</p> <p>NSW 02 8584 7777</p> <p>NT 08 8999 7770</p> <p>QLD 07 3239 6193</p> <p>SA 08 8204 0600</p> <p>TAS 03 6165 7132</p> <p>VIC 1300 309 519</p> <p>WA 1800 671 994</p>
FAMILY COURT OF AUSTRALIA	<p>The Family Court of Australia, through its specialist judges and staff, assists Australians to resolve their most complex legal family disputes, including parenting and financial cases.</p> <p>The Court maintains registries in all Australian states and territories except Western Australia (WA). WA manages its own family court system.</p>	<p>Telephone: 1300 352 000 (except WA) 08 9224 8222 (WA only)</p> <p>Website: www.familycourt.gov.au www.familycourt.wa.gov.au</p>
BIRTHS, DEATHS, AND MARRIAGES	<p>Is where to register a birth, apply for a certificate, change your name or search your family history. The registration of births, deaths and marriages, changes of name, changes of sex, adoptions and provision of certificates is the responsibility of the state and territory governments in Australia.</p>	<p>ACT 02 6207 3000</p> <p>NSW 13 77 88</p> <p>NT (08) 8999 6119</p> <p>QLD 13 74 68</p> <p>SA 13 18 82</p> <p>TAS 1300 135 513</p> <p>VIC 1300 369 367</p> <p>WA 1300 305 021</p>

34. FAMILY ADVOCACY NETWORKS

AGENCY	DESCRIPTION	CONTACT DETAILS
<p>DANIEL MORCOMBE FOUNDATION</p>	<p>The Daniel Morcombe Foundation was established by parents Bruce and Denise Morcombe in 2005 after their son Daniel was abducted and murdered in December 2003. The Foundation was established as a lasting legacy to Daniel and now has two main aims; to educate children on how to stay safe in a physical and online environment, and to support young victims of crime.</p>	<p>Telephone: 1300 326 435</p> <p>Website: www.danielmorcombe.com.au</p>
<p>MISSING PERSONS ADVOCACY NETWORK (MPAN)</p>	<p>Missing Persons Advocacy Network (MPAN) was established in 2013 by Loren O’Keeffe, whose brother Dan went missing in July 2011. MPAN creates awareness for missing persons and provides practical support to those left behind through their online guide of what to do when someone goes missing. MPAN also seeks to establish corporate partnerships that not only increase visibility of the issue but also lessen the financial impact on those searching.</p>	<p>Telephone: 0405 102 831</p> <p>Website: www.mpan.com.au</p>
<p>LEAVE A LIGHT ON</p>	<p>Leave a Light On was established by Suzie Ratcliffe following the disappearance of her sister Joanne Ratcliffe and Kirste Gordon from the Adelaide Oval in 1973. The aim of the charity is to raise awareness of missing persons cold cases in Australia by working alongside other missing persons organisations. The charity aims to promote long-term cases and raise awareness of the need for ongoing support for families and friends dealing with the ambiguous loss of a missing person.</p>	<p>Telephone: 0439 572 290</p> <p>Website: www.facebook.com/LeaveALightOninc/</p>

35. SEARCH AGENCIES

AGENCY	DESCRIPTION	CONTACT DETAILS
AUSTRALIAN RED CROSS INTERNATIONAL TRACING AND REFUGEE SERVICES	Conducts worldwide searches through the International Red Cross/Crescent Movement in approximately 177 countries.	Telephone: (03) 9345 1800 Website: www.redcross.org.au
INTERNATIONAL SOCIAL SERVICE AUSTRALIA	Helps trace family members separated by adoption or other legal intervention, international child abduction and voluntary or forced migration.	Telephone: 1300 657 842 Website: www.iss.org.au
SALVATION ARMY FAMILY TRACING SERVICE	Operates a worldwide search network for missing family members over 18 years of age. Also provides a service (NSW only) for people separated by government intervention.	Telephone: 13 72 58 Website: www.salvationarmy.gov.au
LINK UP	Provides reunion services to adult Aboriginals separated from their families and cultures by government intervention policies such as adoption, fostering, or institutionalisation.	Website: www.aiatsis.gov.au/research/finding-your-family

36. SUPPORT AGENCIES

AGENCY	DESCRIPTION	CONTACT DETAILS
NSW DEPARTMENT OF JUSTICE—FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF MISSING PERSONS UNIT (FFMPU)	The FFMPU provides counselling and support from trained professionals to families and friends of missing people. The Unit hosts support group meetings and family forums to help bring families together. Support is available face to face, online and via social media. FFMPU is funded by the NSW government and is part of Victims Services.	Telephone: (02) 8688 8173 1800 227 772 (toll free) Website: www.missingpersons.justice.nsw.gov.au
CENTRECARE	Is a WA based not-for-profit community service offering counselling and support services.	Telephone: (08) 9325 6644 Website: www.centrecare.com.au
COMPASSIONATE FRIENDS	Offers 24-hour phone support, grief support groups, and associated literature.	Website: www.thecompassionatefriends.org.au
DADS IN DISTRESS	Offers a range of services that aims to provide help and hope, and harm prevention for separated Dads and their families.	Telephone: 1300 853 437 Website: www.dadsindistress.asn.au
GRIEFLINE	GriefLine is Australia's only dedicated grief helpline service that provides counselling support services free of charge to individuals and families. These include telephone support; online counselling; in-house one-on-one counselling; education and training and health support programs.	Telephone: 1300 845 745 (03) 9935 7400 Website: www.griefline.org.au
KIDS HELP LINE	Trained counsellors provide a 24-hour, confidential, anonymous, national telephone counselling service for young Australians aged 5-25. The site also includes information for parents, carers, and teachers.	Telephone: 1800 551 800 (toll free) Website: www.kidshelpline.com.au
LIFELINE	A national, 24-hour telephone counselling and referral service.	Telephone: 13 11 14 Website: www.lifeline.org.au
GOOD GRIEF	The Good Grief flagship program, <i>Seasons for Growth</i> , is a program for children, young people or adults who have experienced significant change or loss. The program explores how we can learn to live with and grow from our experiences.	Telephone: (02) 8912 2700 Website: www.goodgrief.org.au

AGENCY	DESCRIPTION	CONTACT DETAILS
RELATIONSHIPS AUSTRALIA	Relationships Australia is a leading provider of relationship support services for individuals, families and communities. They aim to support all people in Australia to achieve positive and respectful relationships; they offer counselling, mediation and education programs.	Telephone: 1300 364 277 Website: www.relationships.org.au
BEYOND BLUE	Beyond Blue is a national, independent, not-for-profit organisation working to address issues associated with depression, anxiety and related substance misuse disorders in Australia.	Telephone: 1300 224 636 Website: www.beyondblue.org.au
SANE AUSTRALIA	SANE Australia provides information on mental illness and related topics. SANE Australia have a dedicated Helpline providing information about mental illness symptoms, treatments, medications, where to go for support and help for carers.	Telephone: 1800 187 263 Website: www.sane.org
BLACK DOG INSTITUTE	The Black Dog Institute is dedicated to understanding, preventing and treating mental illness. Their website provides advice on how/where to get support.	Website: www.blackdoginstitute.org.au
ALZHEIMERS ASSOCIATION	A support service for individuals, families and friends affected by dementia.	Telephone: 1800 100 500 Website: www.fightdementia.org.au

MY CONTACTS

Name

Organisation/Title

Number

Email

Name

Organisation/Title

Number

Email

Name

Organisation/Title

Number

Email

Name

Organisation/Title

Number

Email

Name

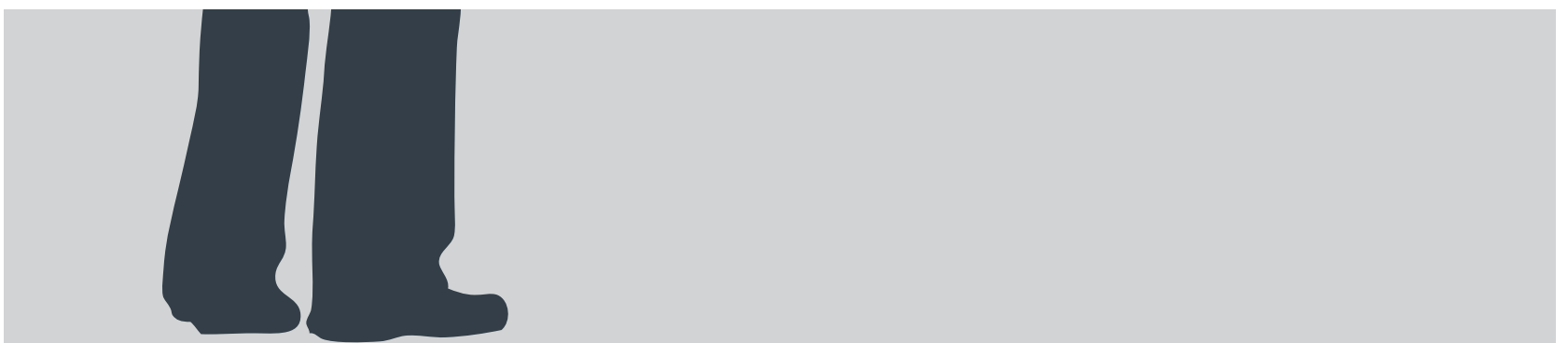
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