



NSW POLICE

OPERATIONAL INFORMATION AGENCY

MISSING PERSONS UNIT



Mission:

To provide World's best practice, service and success in locating missing persons.

History:

The Missing Friends Bureau was first formed in the early 1930's. Inquiries from that time until 1949 were carried out by two police officers attached to No. 20 Division, Police Headquarters.

The unit underwent a number of name changes: in 1947 it became the Missing Persons Bureau; in 1974, the Missing Persons Section; and in 1987 it was renamed to its current title, Missing Persons Unit (MPU) and was part of the Technical Support Group (TSG).

In 2002, the Missing Persons Unit became part of the Operational Information Agency (OIA). Currently the Missing Persons Unit, with the Tourist Liaison Unit (TLU), and the Photo Identification Unit (PIU) form the Community Tracing Section (CTS).

Location:

Level 6 Ferguson Centre, 130 George Street, Parramatta NSW 2150.

Operating Hours:

Normal operating hours are 6am to 6pm, Monday to Friday.

Contact Details:

During business hours contact Missing Persons Unit staff on telephone 9689 7388 (e/n 79388), facsimile 9689 7881 (e/n 79881), Memoid: #mpu and e-mail: #mpu@police.nsw.gov.au.

Urgent after hours assistance may be obtained by contacting the Duty Operations Inspector, VKG.

Roles & Functions:

Management & Investigation - maintain Service policy & procedures; examine and quality control over 8000 missing person cases per year; collect DNA samples from families of missing persons; conduct initial investigation for interstate and overseas cases and refer to appropriate Local Area Command; maintain appropriate liaison with all relevant external agencies to ensure the timely and accurate receipt of information; provide a help line service concerning all aspects of missing persons issues to police and community; and provide a National toll-free telephone service.

Information Technology - maintain the NSWPS Intranet Missing Person's Application, including the development and implementation of enhancements; and improve the capture of missing and located person information on COPS.

Information & Intelligence - receive, record, research and collate all information; provide statewide analysis of long-term cases; and statistics.

Education & Training - provide in-Service education & training; produce education & training packages; conduct Missing Persons Liaison Officers' (MPLO) courses; conduct lectures at Local Area Command police training days, Homicide Investigators' Courses and other police courses upon request; and maintain a library of reference material concerning local, National and International missing person issues.

Publicity / Public Awareness - co-ordinate Missing Persons Week activities such as Operation Safe & Well; School Liaison Input Programme (SLIPs); shopping centre displays; photographs, interviews for internal & external media publications, missing person posters in the Police Service Weekly (PSW), other magazines, local & major print, radio and television media; develop and

circulate information brochures; deliver public awareness presentations to community groups, such as Neighbourhood Watch, Lions & Rotary Clubs and schools.

Other Roles - member of the Missing Persons Committee NSW Inc; member of National Police Consultative Group on Missing Persons; member of National Advisory Group on Missing Persons; provide advice and assistance to the Family & Friends of Missing Persons Support Group; member of Ministerial Working Party to address non-law enforcement issues impacting on missing person families; in NSW, manage the Operation Home Free service provided by Greyhound Bus Company; State-wide responsibility for the collection of ante-mortem records as part of the Disaster Victim Identification (DVI) process; multi-skilled staff to respond to tourist support incidents; and on-going support to the East Timor National Missing Persons Unit.

MISSING PERSONS POLICY

Missing Person Definition:

"A missing person is anyone who is reported missing to police, whose whereabouts are unknown, and there are fears for the safety or concern for the welfare of that person. This includes anyone missing from any institution, excluding escapees."

When to Submit a Missing Persons Report:

- A missing persons report is to be submitted when the criteria for the above definition is satisfied.
- Do not accept reports for the mere purpose of reuniting family or friends, debt collection, or for any other reason except that which is allowed by the definition. Refer the person reporting to an appropriate agency. If in doubt, please contact the Missing Persons Unit for advice.
- **Take reports immediately and submit them without delay, as the person may have met with foul play, misadventure or is in potential danger.**
- Reports may be accepted at any police station, not necessarily the station nearest the person reporting's place of abode or the area the missing person was last seen.
- Reports are to be taken by a sworn officer.

When to Submit a Located Persons Report:

- A person may only be located if they have been sighted and their identity confirmed by police or other person in authority (eg. Customs Officer, DOCS officer).
- If a police officer (not necessarily the investigating officer) locates a missing person, ensure the person is safe and well. Provide any assistance where necessary, eg. Medical attention.
- The locating officer is required to create a 'Located Person' incident within the original missing Person COPS event. Enter all appropriate details. Ensure the status of the person is changed to 'Missing Now Located Person'. If the person was located deceased, change the status to 'Missing Now Located Body'. Link the event to the unidentified body or deceased person event.
- Advise the investigating officer that the missing person has been located.
- Advise the person reporting and/or family of the missing person that the missing person has been located.
- Police must keep the whereabouts of the located missing person confidential unless the located person consents to their whereabouts being disclosed.
- If the located person is under 16 years of age and does not wish to return home, place the child in the care of DOCS and advise the person reporting and/or family of the missing person to contact the respective DOCS office.

Interstate or Overseas Missing Persons:

Interstate - If the person has disappeared from an Interstate location, take the report as usual and seek support from the NSW Missing Persons Unit.

Overseas - Persons missing from overseas locations must be at minimum residents of Australia for action to be taken. If the missing person does qualify, have them contact the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT), Consular Section on 1300 555 135. The completion of a COPS

event is not required. DFAT will conduct preliminary inquiries. If the matter warrants further investigation then the Australian Federal Police (AFP) will continue inquiries and forward results to DFAT. DFAT will have ultimate carriage of the case, including final contact with families / clients. This is solely DFAT's responsibility due to Privacy Act considerations.

If the person is not an Australian citizen or resident, then advise the inquirer to contact the respective Consulate or Embassy, or authorities in the Country concerned.

MISSING PERSONS PROCEDURES

The following missing person procedures are divided into four stages. This will allow police to easily recognise what is required during each stage of the investigation. The four stages are:

- Initial Reporting of a missing person
- The Investigation of missing person cases
- On-going management of long-term missing person cases
- Finalisation of missing person cases

Each stage outlines the role that each person performs. The roles are:

- Investigating Officer
- Supervisor
- Duty Officer
- Case Evaluator
- Investigations Manager
- Crime Manager
- Local Area Commander

INITIAL REPORT OF A MISSING PERSON

Role of the Investigating Officer (during initial reporting stage):

- The officer taking the missing person report is deemed the Investigating Officer and is responsible for exhausting all avenues of inquiry until the missing person is located or the investigating role is transferred to another officer, Local Area Command or specialist unit by way of Case Management.
- Confirm the bona fides of the person reporting. Refer to 'When to Take a Missing Persons Report' above.
- Create a 'Missing Person' COPS event. Input all available information, ensuring to enter a narrative describing the circumstances surrounding the disappearance and a full physical description of the missing person, including distinguishing features such as tattoos and scars.
- It is important to obtain further information from the person reporting such as, the missing person's friend's names and addresses; places frequented; vehicle description; Doctor and Dentist name and contact details; and information as to any medical condition, including mental state. Also, gain information relating to employment and banking details.
- If a suicide note exists, forward a copy to the Missing Persons Unit indicating the missing person's name and COPS event number.
- Consult the Initial Response Checklist (refer Annexure '1') as a guide for any other appropriate actions.
- When taking reports of children that regularly runaway, involve the Youth Liaison Officer. Arrange to attend the family home to determine any influencing factors causing the child to behave in this manner and the appropriate police response to resolve any issues. Examples of possible contributing factors are abuse (emotional, physical, sexual, and so on), alcohol, drug use or 'uncontrollable child'. Police actions may include involving the Department of Community Services (DOCS) or commencing Court proceedings for 'uncontrollable child'.

- Extend every courtesy to the person reporting / next-of-kin. Advise them that all appropriate inquiries will be made and that they will be kept regularly updated as to the investigation's progress.

Role of the Supervisor (during initial reporting stage):

- Ensure the report is taken by a sworn officer and is verified prior to the conclusion of the investigating officer's shift.
- Ensure the event contains all required information. If not, resubmit the event so the investigating officer can complete it prior to the completion of the shift.
- Do not verify missing person events as No Further Investigation unless the person is located and no further police action is required.
- Immediately transfer the event to Work Priority so that it may be allocated for investigation as a case.
- If a missing person is located and the COPS event is updated, ensure the Located Person incident has been completed correctly and the person's status is changed to 'Missing Now Located Person'.

Role of the Duty Officer (during initial reporting stage):

- Ensure and be accountable for the assessment of, and initial response to, all missing person incidents.
- If the missing person disappeared from a location outside your Local Area Command, liaise with the Case Evaluator to have the case transferred to the appropriate Command. Immediately advise the Local Area Command by telephone so that immediate and appropriate attention may be given to the case.
- Evaluate if a potential 'crime scene' exists and be responsible for notifying Investigators, specialist police and the Local Area Commander.
- Accountable for the management and Co-ordination of crime scene preservation pending the arrival of Investigators and specialist police.
- Remain accountable for the management and Co-ordination of the crime scene and other specialist police in attendance.
- The procedures outlined in the Code of Practice for Crime (CRIME) are to be adhered to and, if appropriate, Crime Agencies notified.
- Responsible for evaluating if search activity is necessary.
- Responsible for an efficient 'Hand Over' to the oncoming Duty Officer.

Role of the Case Evaluator (during initial reporting stage):

- Immediately create a Case on the Case Management System and allocate it to the Investigating Officer.
- If the missing person disappeared from a location outside of the Local Area Command where the initial report was submitted, transfer the case to the relevant Local Area Command and immediately notify the Duty Officer.
- If suspicious circumstances exist, allocate the case to local criminal investigators for immediate action and notify the Investigations Manager.

Role of the Investigations Manager (during initial reporting stage):

- Liaise with the Case Evaluator and obtain all information relating to suspicious missing person cases.
- Ensure all suspicious missing person cases are appropriately investigated.

Role of the Local Area Commander (during initial reporting stage):

- The Local Area Commander has overall responsibility to ensure these guidelines are being carried out.

THE INVESTIGATION OF MISSING PERSON CASES

Role of the Investigating Officer (during the investigation stage):

- Extend every courtesy to the person reporting / next-of-kin. Advise that all appropriate inquiries are being made and keep them regularly updated as to the investigation's progress.
- Make arrangements to obtain a photograph of the missing person, if not initially supplied. Ideally the photo should be recent and a good likeness of the missing person. Scan the photograph and e-mail it to the Missing Persons Unit immediately, along with the missing person's name and COPS event number. Return the photograph to the person who supplied it.
- Request permission for authority to publicise the matter from the person reporting or next-of-kin, whoever is appropriate. If permission is granted, have the person sign the Authority for Publicity form (refer Annexure '2'). Forward a copy of the form to the Missing Persons Unit. NB. Publicity will only occur if and when appropriate during the investigation.
- Keep a record of all inquiries made, including dates and times. Where appropriate, utilise COPS Case Management, TIMs or e@gle.i.
- Update the COPS event and case regularly.
- Exhaust all avenues of inquiry.
- Contact the Missing Persons Unit for assistance and advice. The Missing Persons Unit is able to make inquiries on your behalf with other Government departments and external organisations (eg. Centrelink, Immigration, Births Deaths & Marriages, financial institutions) and Interstate and Overseas organisations.
- Liaise with the Missing Persons Unit who is able to periodically repeat all inquiries with external organisations and provide further publicity.
- Keep in contact with the person reporting even if you have nothing new to advise. Your contact will help reassure the family that the matter is continually being investigated.
- The Missing Persons Unit is able to assist in providing on-going support for families of long-term missing persons. Contact the Missing Persons Unit to discuss available options.
- Collect all information and material that may later identify the missing person (i.e. photographs, hair samples, fingerprints, and dental records/charts/x-rays) and cause transfer of such information and material to the Missing Persons Unit.
- Organise regular meetings with families of missing persons and provide appropriate feedback as to the progress of inquiries.

Role of the Duty Officer (during the investigation stage):

- With the Case Officer, consult the Crime Manager to ensure appropriate resources are allocated to the inquiry and, if appropriate, consider transfer of the matter to Detectives for a Criminal Investigation approach.
- Ensure quality customer service continues to be provided to the person reporting and/or next-of-kin.
- Accountable for the collation of all information and material that may later identify the missing person (ie. photographs, hair samples, fingerprints, dental records/charts/x-rays) and the transfer of such information and material to the Missing Persons Unit.
- Upon the location of a missing person, ensure any outstanding issues are finalised and no further police action is required so that the event may be appropriately updated to 'No Further investigation'.

Role of the Case Evaluator (during the investigation stage):

- Liaise with the Investigations Manager and Crime Manager ensuring COPS and Case Management procedures are adhered to.

Role of the Investigations Manager (during the investigation stage):

- Liaise with the Case Evaluator to ensure appropriate cases are allocated to local criminal investigators.
- If the matter remains outstanding, meet with the Investigating Officer, Crime Manager and Local Area Commander to assess that all appropriate resources have been allocated to the inquiry.
- Regularly inform the Duty Officer, Crime Manager and Local Area Commander as to the status of inquiries.

- Regularly monitor and review the status of police actions, ensuring COPS and Case Management procedures are adhered to and the investigation maintains momentum.
- If the matter remains outstanding, meet with the Investigating Officer, Case Evaluator, Crime Manager and Local Area Commander to assess that appropriate resources have been allocated to the case and that all avenues of inquiry have been exhausted.

Role of the Crime Manager (during the investigation stage):

- Have experienced local criminal investigators easily accessible and available to immediately respond to any missing persons incident where suspicious circumstances exist.
- Monitor all outstanding missing person cases belonging to the Local Area Command.
- If the matter remains outstanding meet with the Investigating Officer, Investigations and Case Evaluator and Local Area Commander to assess that all appropriate resources have been allocated to the case.
- Determine if Crime Agencies support is required.

Role of the Local Area Commander (during the investigation stage):

- Ensure local protocols exist whereby an officer is nominated to assume responsibility, management and coordination of investigations when the original officer may become unavailable due to transfer, long-term sick report or retirement.
- Ensure that appropriate instruction and training is provided on a periodic basis to police within the Command. The Missing Persons Unit is available to provide instruction and training in the latest techniques and resources available to police.

ON-GOING MANAGEMENT OF LONG TERM CASES

Role of the Investigating Officer (for management of long term cases):

- Contact the Missing Persons Unit for assistance and advice. The Missing Persons Unit will make inquiries on your behalf with other Government departments and external organisations (eg. Centrelink, Immigration, Births Deaths & Marriages, financial institutions) and Interstate and Overseas organisations.
- Liaise with the Missing Persons Unit who is able to periodically repeat all inquiries with external organisations and provide further publicity.
- Keep in contact with the person reporting even if you have nothing new to advise. Your contact will help reassure the family that the matter is continually being investigated.
- The Missing Persons Unit is able to assist in providing on-going support for families of long-term missing persons. Contact the Missing Persons Unit to discuss available options.
- Confer with the Missing Persons Unit, who will arrange to obtain a DNA sample from a relative of the missing person to assist in any future identification process.

Role of the Case Evaluator (for management of long term cases):

- Periodically monitor and review ensuring COPS and Case Management procedures are adhered to.
- Liaise with the Investigations Manager to ensure appropriate cases are allocated to local criminal investigators.

Role of the Investigations Manager (for management of long term cases):

- Periodically monitor and review the status of police actions, ensuring COPS and Case Management procedures are adhered to.
- Monitor and review police actions for all missing person cases on a regular basis so that the investigation maintains momentum.
- Regularly inform the Duty Officer, Crime Manager and Local Area Commander as to the status of inquiries.
- Liaise with the Case Evaluator to ensure appropriate cases are allocated to Local criminal investigators.

- If the matter remains outstanding, meet with the Investigating Officer, Case Evaluator, Crime Manager and Local Area Commander to assess that all appropriate resources have been allocated to the case and that all avenues of inquiry have been exhausted.
- Assist investigating police with the preparation of a brief of evidence.
- Liaise with the Missing Persons Unit to ensure that a DNA sample is obtained from a relative of the missing person.

Role of the Crime Manager (for management of long term cases):

- Monitor all outstanding missing person cases belonging to the Local Area Command.
- If the matter remains outstanding, meet with the Investigating Officer, Investigations Manager, Case Evaluator and Local Area Commander to assess that all appropriate resources have been allocated to the case and that all avenues of inquiry have been exhausted.

Role of the Local Area Commander (for management of long term cases):

- Ensure local protocols exist whereby an officer is nominated to assume responsibility, management and coordination of investigations when the original officer may become unavailable due to transfer, long-term sick report or retirement.
- Overall responsibility to ensure these guidelines are carried out.
- If the matter remains outstanding, meet with the Investigating Officer, Investigations Manager, Case Evaluator and Crime Manager to assess that all appropriate resources have been allocated to the case and that all avenues of inquiry have been exhausted.

FINALISATION OF MISSING PERSON CASES

Role of the Investigating Officer (for finalisation of missing person cases):

- When a missing person is located, refer to Missing Persons Policy - 'When to Submit a Located Persons Report' (above).
- When a missing person remains outstanding, in consultation with the Duty Officer, seek advice from your Investigations Manager and Crime Manager as to whether a matter should be placed before the Coroner.
- Complete a brief of evidence, including statements from all relevant persons and, if not already acquired, other documentation and items.
- Forward a complete copy of the brief to the Missing Persons Unit.
- If a missing person case is placed before the Coroner to determine presumption of death, advise the Missing Persons Unit of any pending Court dates and the subsequent result (i.e. the Coroner's name, Court, date of hearing, and the Coroner's decision).

Role of the Duty Officer (for finalisation of missing person cases):

- In consultation with the Investigating Officer, seek advice from your Investigations Manager and Crime Manager as to whether the matter should be placed before the Coroner.
- Assist the Investigating Officer with completion of the brief of evidence.

Role of the Case Evaluator (for finalisation of missing person cases):

- In consultation with the Investigator, Duty Officer, Investigations Manager, Crime Manager and Missing Persons Unit, mark a case as 'Investigation Complete' only when all avenues of inquiry to locate the missing person have been exhausted.
- 'Suspend' a case only when an inquest (presumption of death) has been held and completed.
- 'Finalise' a case only when the missing person has been located.

Role of the Investigations Manager (for finalisation of missing person cases):

- Consult with the Case Evaluator to ensure missing person cases are being finalised appropriately.
- Oversee the compilation of all briefs of evidence to ensure all necessary information will be presented to the Coroner.

Role of the Crime Manager (for finalisation of missing person cases):

- Liaise with the Investigating Officer and Duty Officer as to whether a matter should be placed before the Coroner.

Role of the Local Area Commander (for finalisation of missing person cases):

- Ensure local procedures exist whereby an officer is nominated to assume responsibility, management and coordination of investigations when the original officer may become unavailable due to transfer, long-term sick report or retirement.
- Overall responsibility to ensure these guidelines are carried out.

Annexure 1 – Initial response Check List

The purpose of this Investigative Checklist is to provide police with a generic guide for the investigation of missing person cases. This checklist is not intended to be followed step-by-step by officers during each missing person investigation. It is meant to provide them with a framework of actions, considerations and activities that can assist them in performing competent, productive and successful missing person investigations.

- Obtain facts, details and full description of missing person.
- Dispatch officer to scene to conduct a preliminary investigation.
- Search incident records for previous reports relating to the missing person, and prior police activity in the area, including prowlers, indecent exposure, attempted abductions, etc. Inform responding officer of any information.
- Broadcast known details on all police communication channels to Local Area Command's.
- Request supervisory assistance if necessary.
- Brief and bring up to date, all additional responding personnel including supervisors and investigative staff.
- Ensure that everyone at the scene is identified and interviewed separately.
- Note the name, address, home, business and mobile telephone numbers of each person.
- Determine each person's relationship to the missing person and where each person last saw the person.
- Ask each one, "What do you think happened to the missing person?"
- Obtain the names, addresses and telephone numbers of the missing person's friends and associates, and other relatives and friends of the family.
- Continue to keep Communications apprised of all appropriate developing information for broadcast updates.
- Obtain and note permission to search where incident took place.
- Conduct search to include all surrounding areas including vehicles.
- Seal and protect the scene and area of missing person's home (including personal articles such as hairbrush, diary, photographs, and items with the missing person's fingerprints, teeth impressions). This is to ensure that evidence is not destroyed during or after the initial search, and to ensure that items that could help in the search for or to identify the person preserved. Determine if any of the missing person's belongings are missing. If possible, photograph or videotape these areas.
- Evaluate contents and appearance of missing person's room or residence.
- Obtain photographs or videotapes of the missing person or abductor.
- Ensure that information regarding the missing person is entered onto COPS.
- Interview other family members, friends and associates of the missing person to determine when each last saw the missing person and what they think happened.
- Secure the missing person's latest medical and dental records.
- Establish a telephone hotline for receipt of tips and leads (CrimeStoppers).

Annexure 2 – Authority For Publicity

I / We, the undersigned, request and give permission to the Commissioner of Police or his representative for the information in relation to the missing person:

_____ (name)

to be published under the following circumstances:

- (a) For the purpose of being published by the media, including Internet
- (b) For the inclusion in official Police publications which will be displayed for public viewing.

Witness:	_____	Signature:	_____
Print Name:	_____	Print Name:	_____
Rank:	_____	Address:	_____
Station:	_____		_____
Date:	_____	Phone No:	_____

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Mr Abernathy, State Coroner, Glebe

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Det Inspector Wayne Gordon, Strike Force Fenwick, Crime Agencies.

Det Superintendent Mark Goodwin, Commander, Crime Management Support Unit

Superintendent Peter Gallagher, Commander, Canobolas LAC

Det Chief Inspector Tony Waters, Crime Manager Liverpool LAC

Det Chief Inspector Paul Haines, Crime Manager, Penrith LAC

Det Chief Inspector Jim Johnson, Crime Manager, Bankstown LAC

Det Inspector Joe Stanioch, Duty Officer Cabramatta LAC

Det Inspector Michael Lollback, Region Operations Manager, Georges River Region

Senior Sergeant Jeff Emery, Coordinator, Operational Information IIC

Carol Kiernan & Kate Ryan, National Missing Persons Unit, ABCI, Canberra

Federal Agent Paul Weller, Project Manager, Australian Federal Police

Ms Debra Chapman, Project Manager, Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade