



## Summary

The 6th annual Family Forum for families and friends of missing people was held at the Parramatta Justice Precinct on 12 April 2014. The Forum was attended by 20 family members and friends along with staff from the NSW Police Missing Persons Unit, NSW Coroner's Court, the Families and Friends of Missing Persons Unit (FFMPU), and Victims Services. The day was an opportunity for families to come together, to share ideas, provide mutual support, and hear about updates in the missing persons' sector.

The manager of the NSW Police Missing Persons Unit gave a brief presentation on the role of the Missing Persons Unit. During this presentation he provided a broad overview of the work of the unit, some statistical information, and reinforced the unit's commitment to supporting families.

Following this presentation, the FFMPU team delivered their own presentation regarding their work and achievements, focusing particularly on the last 12 months. Information was provided about different referral pathways and how these have changed over time; the breadth and reach of the unit both nationally and internationally; an overview of the group work program; information about the research currently being conducted; and an acknowledgement that despite the difficult circumstances in which contact is made with families and friends, it is because of this contact that FFMPU is able to achieve everything that it has.

During and following morning tea, the Deputy State Coroner Magistrate Paul MacMahon, spoke to those present and then officially launched the new resource, *A guide to coronial services in NSW for families and friends of missing people*. Following the launch of this resource the Acting Commissioner for Victims Rights, Mahashini Krishna officially launched the second resource, *A quilt for missing people: companion book*.

After lunch an informal group discussion took place. A number of points, some previously raised by family members were discussed. These included the need for a national database for missing persons. A number of family members have lobbied and continue to lobby federal MP's for action on this. Family members have reported a range of responses to their representations, mostly receptive to further discussions. There was also a discussion about the needs of families and how best to meet them, and the role

of FFMPU with regards to these issues. Family members spoke about their desire to raise awareness about missing people and their families, not just during National Missing Persons Week, but throughout the year as well.

## Feedback

At the conclusion of the day, participants completed a feedback form. Thirteen forms were returned and a summary of the responses provided by families follows. Eleven of the 13 respondents had attended a Family Forum previously.

### *What was the most useful part of the day?*

Nine of the 13 respondents provided comments, and some responded on more than one aspect of the day.

The comments provided were equally divided between meeting other people and sharing information; and the launch of the companion books. With regards to meeting other people and sharing information, some of the comments were:

*Talking to and getting more information about different stages.*

*Talking to people helps all who are involved.*

*Speaking with other family members, seeing the great work FFMPU have been doing.*

*Meeting other families who have had the experience of someone missing.*

*Meeting people and speaking to newer people who have a loved one missing. Understanding their situation and perhaps give them some support.*

*Information sharing and meeting with people sharing the same experiences.*

*Interacting with people experiencing similar situations.*

*Meeting everyone and getting information about resources and people/organisations that can help.*

In relation to the launch of the companion books being the most useful part of the day, some of the comments were:

*The launch of some excellent resources.*

*The opportunity to be present at the launch of both books.*

*The official presentation of the Quilt Companion Book.*

*The launching of the excellent companion book.*

### *What was the least useful part of the day?*

Eight of the 13 respondents provided comments. Some of these comments are as follows:

*Long breaks between sessions – would have liked the police and the coroner to spend more time and be available to chat to.*

*The statistical information about missing people is readily available online and is not new.*

*Possibly a bit too long – perhaps finishing a little earlier could be considered in future forums.*

When asked to rate the family groups in terms of personal relevance and comment on the family group discussions, the following responses were received:

- very relevant (8)
- somewhat relevant (2)
- no response (3)

Comments included:

*Talking helps.*

*Group discussion: raising awareness of the national database issue.*

*Chatting with each family group allowed us to voice our feelings for/about our loved ones.*

*It gave us insight and an opportunity to share.*

*Making people aware of the possibility of someone going missing.*

When asked to rate in terms of personal relevance and comment on any other activities during the forum, the following responses were received:

*I wish this family/ community support had been available for my parents 39 years ago!*

*LAC's to be made aware of missing persons issues.*

*Lunch again top quality plus a time to relax and catch up with others – as much a learning time as any other of our activities.*

*Thank you for the lovely morning tea and lunch.*

*Morning tea excellent – loved the espresso.*

When asked to suggest improvements or issues for future forums eight (8) respondents provided comments:

*Possibly a bit shorter, but if there were more attendees we would have needed more time to mingle.*

*Keep doing what you are doing.*

*Wider advertisement of event, to encourage other people to attend. Larger group is good for more discussion and learning from other people's stories.*

*I think there could be more structure but then I'm not much for standing around and chatting, so perhaps most people get more out of relatively unstructured day.*

*A new quilt and Australia wide database coming up.*

*Need to look at ways we can get the media involved – lobbying politicians.*

*The science of organising police searches could be an interesting topic...how searches are planned and carried out.*

*Thank you for the lovely morning tea and lunch.*

Six (6) respondents provided the following additional comments:

*Maybe the day is a bit long winded, but it is a thing that varies so much according to input and people's needs on the day.*

*These are valuable get togethers for families and friends and thank you to FFMPU staff for making the effort to organise them – congratulations on the two publications.*

*Informative, well presented, relevant and useful.*

*Thank you once again FFMPU for providing an excellent venue and opportunity to honour our loved one, learn from you and other families and feel that we can do something to possibly help.*

*Thank you to everyone for all the support and help we have received.*

*Thank you FFMPU.*

Please note: The feedback received reflects the individual opinions of the family members and friends present on the day.

*(20 April 2014)*

© State of New South Wales through Families and Friends of Missing Persons Unit, Department of Justice, May 2014. This work may be freely reproduced for personal, educational and government purposes. Permission must be received from the Department for all other uses.

Alternative formats of this information are available.

This document has been prepared by Families and Friends of Missing Persons Unit for general information purposes.

(FMP • 05/2014)

## **CONTACT DETAILS**

For further information about this material or other topics, please call us on:

**Phone:** (02) 8688 8173 or 1800 227 772 • **National Relay Service:** 1800 555 677

**Fax:** (02) 8688 9632 • **Email:** [ffmpu@agd.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ffmpu@agd.nsw.gov.au)

**[www.missingpersons.lawlink.nsw.gov.au](http://www.missingpersons.lawlink.nsw.gov.au)**