

2017 FFMPU Family Forum

Summary

The 9th annual Family Forum for families and friends of missing people was held at the Parramatta Justice Precinct on Saturday 8th April 2017. The Forum was attended by 24 family members and friends and 15 professionals.

Speakers included Det Sgt Kylie Whiting, team leader, NSW Police Missing Persons Unit (NSW Police MPU); Sean Carling, team member, National Missing Persons Coordination Centre (NMPCC), Debbie Leyshon, Manager of Registrations, NSW Registry of Births Death and Marriages (BD&M), and Liz Davies, Manny Kassiotis, Stephanie Dartnall and Keesha Quinn, Families and Friends of Missing Persons Unit (FFMPU).

The focus of the forum was to bring families together, to hear information and updates in the missing persons' sector. The day allows families to share ideas and experiences in a supportive environment. Professionals in attendance have the opportunity to learn from families, to share updates, and to respond to family questions. As with previous forums, the timing of the day was flexible to meet the needs and issues raised by families over the course of the day.

Presentations

The FFMPU team delivered a presentation summarising the work of the unit, including: the range of FFMPU services; the types of questions FFMPU receives; a "typical working week"; community speaking engagements over the last year; reflections from the support groups; efforts to raise awareness from families and FFMPU; FFMPU research projects & conference planning.

Following the FFMPU presentation, **Sean Carling** presented an update on the work of the NMPCC, including the new NMPCC Facebook page, the NMPCC website which now hosts the national register of long-term missing persons, a range of NMPCC media campaigns and NMPCC missing persons' posters.

Det Sgt Kylie Whiting spoke to families about the varied range of activities that make up a typical day for an officer in the NSW Police MPU. This includes managing a list of 'new' missing persons' reports from across NSW and managing risk assessments for incoming reports from local area commands.

To close the day, **BD&M Registrations Manager, Debbie Leyshon** spoke about the process in NSW to apply for a death certificate for a missing person. Debbie spoke of the new information sheet being developed by BD&M, FFMPU and the State Coroner's Court to better explain this process for families. Families were provided a copy of this draft information sheet to allow their input before finalisation and dissemination of this publication. Several families spoke of the difficulties they had encountered in applying for a death certificate and the emotional impact of this process.

Feedback

At the conclusion of the day, participants completed a feedback form. Twenty forms were returned. The majority of respondents (70%) had been to a family forum before.

Most useful part of the forum

Nineteen (95%) of respondents provided one or more comments about the most useful part of the 2017 Forum. Below is a summary of the responses provided by family members about the most useful aspect of the day:

All topics:

“Speakers information all good, very informative – learned a lot today from qualified people.

Found most parts informative.

All speakers were interesting and answered several questions for me.

All (of it).

I gained a lot from most parts of the day.

New information received.

I enjoyed it and was very good.

Informative. Delivered well.”

Other families:

“Connecting with other family and friends of missing persons.

Hearing concerns that affect missing persons’ families.

Speaking to families of missing persons.

1) Meeting the families, and 2) Finding out my feelings and thoughts are normal.”

BD&M:

“The new procedure for BD&M. BD&M.

being provided further information relating to BD&M in NSW.”

Missing persons sector / information:

“Being able to speak during breaks to representatives that presented from services relating to missing persons.

Listening to the guest speakers and learning more about the process when a missing person is reported.”

NSWPOL MPU:

“The Detective Sergeant’s description of her daily activities.”

NMPCC, AFP:

“The AFP session on promotional activities Hearing from AFP about the improvements to the system/technology.”

Contact with professionals:

“Being able to speak to coroner personally.”

Least useful part of the forum

When asked to comment on the least useful part of the 2016 Forum:

Eight (8) did not comment;

Five (5) reflected that the “hot,” “stuffy” and “un-airconditioned” conditions, which were “very poor” and “painful for a person with a disability”;

Four (4) did not indicate any part of the day was the least helpful commenting: “nothing, “n/a” or “I found everything relevant and appreciate the opportunity”, and” “It gives me more information to find my missing daughter”;

A further three (3) people provided comments about what they found to be the least useful of the day:

“perhaps NMPCC was too long”

“The session on applying for a death certificate”

“The BD&M part was interesting but least useful at present for me”

Topic relevance

Respondents were asked to rate how much the four forum topics were relevant to their individual needs on a 5-point scale (where 1 = not very relevant to my needs, and 5 = very relevant to my needs). Respondent results are summarised in the Table 1 below.

Table 1: Did you find the topics relevant to your needs?

Topic/presentation	1 - Not very relevant to my needs	2	3	4	5 - Very relevant to my needs	Rating average	Response count
FFMPU	0	0	1	4	15	4.70	20
NMPCC	0	1	1	5	12	4.47	19
NSW Police MPU	0	0	1	5	13	4.63	19
BD&M	0	2	1	5	12	4.35	20

Post-it note activity

At the forum there were various ways in which families could voice their comments and questions, including an option to write questions or comments on post-it notes relating to specific topic of concern. The following comments were written on post-it notes

- **Topic: Accessing Information.**

Comment: "Never take 'no' for an answer. Hound the authorities. Speak to their supervisors until you get satisfaction."

- **Topic: Self-Care:**

Comment: Vital. Victims DJ Manny said need to use humour, a great release.

- **Topic: Support for families:**

Comment: Thank goodness for FFMPU!

Usefulness of the post-it note activity:

Ten (10) people provided comment:

Six (6) indicated they did not take part in the post-it note activity or did not find it helpful and

Four (4) indicated it was useful or helpful to share ideas or as an "opportunity to ask more personal questions."

Suggested improvements or issues for future Forums:

Ten (10) respondents provided comments.

Four (4) comments did not request changes but said: "Everything was so good," "Always great to be kept up to date with changes in any arena."

Three (3) comments related to better ventilation and improved air-conditioning at future events, and four respondents made the following comments:

"Try and keep the day on track and time"

"Having now attended my first family forum I can attest to the relevance of the NMPCC providing the national perspective. I recommend the continued attendance of the NMPCC"

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

Facebook www.facebook.com/missing.501 • **Email** ffmpu@justice.nsw.gov.au

www.missingpersons.justice.nsw.gov.au

"Continue to provide opportunity to speak with relevant stakeholders, e.g was amazing that the [deputy] state coroner attended to meet with families."

"This years' furniture placement was good. More interactive, less formal."

Additional comments:

Ten (10) respondents provided comments.

“Appreciate your support.

It was amazing thank you.

Thank you for facilitating the whole forum.

Congratulations to all FFMPU organisers.

The food was delicious. But the air conditioning was atrocious!

Air conditioning issues.

Thanks to the team for organising the session.

The presentations are useful for insight to the police and others' activities and having the families there puts things into perspective.

Feedback from the families as to how they found it, relevance etc.

There is no comment.

Everything was great, wonderful.

The air conditioning was terrible, felt like the heater was on.

Another worthwhile day, thank you.

Ventilation in the room very poor, Thank you for the Forum. All speakers were good and relevant. FFMPU team-awesome work. Living with missing would be much harder without the opportunity to meet other families, and the FFMPU team supporting us. Thank you :)”

Please note: The feedback reflects the individual opinions of the family members and friends present on the day. FFMPU endeavours to take this feedback on board in planning of future forums.