

## 2016 FFMPU Family Forum

### Summary

The 8th annual Family Forum for families and friends of missing people was held at the Parramatta Justice Precinct on Saturday 9th April 2016. The Forum was attended by 25 family members and friends.

Speakers included Rebecca Kotz from the National Missing Persons Coordination Centre, the Commissioner of Victims Rights Mahashini Krishna, Liz Davies, Manny Kassiotis and Stephanie Dartnall from the Families and Friends of Missing Persons Unit (FFMPU), Sarah Wayland PhD, and Katherine Sykes from Victims Services in South Australia.

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. Current and former members of the FFMPU team presented information about their individual research projects.

The FFMPU team delivered a presentation about the work, values and aims of the unit, reporting on a number of achievements over the previous 12 months. Information was provided about:

- the range of support offered to families;
- FFMPU lectures, training and professional development events that focus on ambiguous loss and missing persons' issues; and
- FFMPU's group work program and an update on the group work manual, which is due to be released in August 2016 during National Missing Persons Week;

When asked to rate (in terms of personal relevance) and comment on the FFMPU presentation: nine (9) respondents indicated the FFMPU presentation was 'very relevant.' Some of the comments provided included:

*“ Excellent – welcoming.*

*Well presented.”*

Following the FFMPU presentation, Rebecca Kotz presented an update on the national database as well as on the role of the National Missing Persons Coordination Centre and some of the projects they are currently working on. Some of the feedback regarding this presentation included:

*“ Lots of good information on how to raise awareness of missing with the public.”*

After morning tea there were several presentations in the area of research in the missing persons sector. Sarah Wayland presented some of the findings of her research, *I still hope, but what I hope for now has changed: A narrative inquiry study of hope and ambiguous loss when someone is missing.*

Liz Davies presented on her current research titled *In the loop: identifying and responding to the psychosocial support needs of young people when a loved one is missing*; and Stephanie Dartnall presented her research thus far in the area of *The coronial investigation of suspected deaths and the impact on families of missing people.*

Some of the feedback regarding these presentations included the following:

*“ Excellent and informative – great to see the team continuing to study.*

*Excellent presentation.*

*Very interesting and well presented.”*

The final speaker was Katherine Sykes from the Office of the Commissioner of Victims Rights, South Australia. Katherine presented on her

project developing an information resource and improving support for families of missing people in South Australia.

The following feedback was provided regarding this presentation:

*“ Good to see something happening in South Australia.*

*Good to meet someone from interstate with similar goals to FFMPU.*

*Very good.”*

## Feedback

At the conclusion of the day, participants completed a feedback form. Fifteen (15) forms were returned (a response rate of 60% of those present). The majority of respondents had been to a Family Forum before. Fourteen (14) respondents provided one or more comments about the most useful part of the 2016 Forum. Below is a summary of the responses provided by family members about the day:

*“ All the experts offered excellent insight and information on their special areas.”*

*All was great, very informative and well presented.*

*Having other family members input.*

*Stephanie Dartnall's lecture on coronial procedures*

*Different perspective by attendees on the coronial process.*

*Meeting with others, listening to their stories.*

*Sarah's talk on hope.*

*It was all useful but Sarah, Liz and Stephanie's presentations were particularly useful. Could have done with longer.*

*Missing person's research, especially Stephanie's discussion on the coronial procedures.*

*Interaction with other families.*

*Found it all useful.*

*All was useful however, the most useful was the research into the coronial process.”*

When asked to comment on the least useful part of the 2016 Forum, ten (10) did not comment, three (3) responded that they found the whole day useful, and a further two (2) people provided comments regarding what they found to be the least useful of the day:

*“ Whilst it was interesting to hear about South Australia and what they are doing, I would rather know/share with others in the group about things that affect us all.*

*Federal police section.”*

When asked to suggest improvements or issues for future Forums ten (10) respondents provided comments:

*“ It is always great to hear the experts.*

*A presentation by NSW Police Missing Persons Unit would be useful.*

*A little more question and answer time.*

*Perhaps some breakout workshops to hear other families' experiences.*

*More information on coronial process, including rights and processes. How can we push for reforms in processes?*

*Small group discussions maybe facilitated by FFMPU.*

*Another visit/presentation by Deputy State Coroner Paul McMahon.*

*Helpful hints on practicalities of managing 'everyday' issues.*

*Invite younger people.*

*Invite a family member to tell us a story of how they found their missing person.”*

Seven (7) respondents provided additional comments:

*“ Thank you for all the hard work you do for all the families of missing persons and the catering is lovely too!*

*Very informative conference.*

*Really helpful, love this day and look forward to it annually.*

*Excellent support for families.*

*Thank you – always worthwhile.*

*Thank you for a useful and lively forum. Food was excellent too.”*

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

## Contact details

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(FMP • 06/2016)