

When someone is missing: Making a police report and assisting the investigation

Key facts about police missing persons' reports

- The NSW Police definition of 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.
- You do not have to wait 24 hours to report someone missing. You can lodge a report as soon as you have concerns for their safety.
- You can make a missing person's report at any police station, regardless of where the person went missing.
- You do not have to be a family member to report a person missing to police.
- People of any age can be reported missing.
- A person can be reported missing more than once.
- It is not a crime to go missing.
- Police cannot search for family members in circumstances where there are no real concerns for their safety, such as families searching for someone for debt collection.
- Police will respect the privacy of the missing person. If a missing adult is located safe and well, police cannot reveal their whereabouts without their permission. In some cases, police may only be permitted to provide information that the person has been located safe and well.
- You can report the sighting of a missing person to Crimestoppers on:

Phone: 1800 333 000

Email: www.crimestoppers.com.au

How to lodge a police missing person's report

If you have concerns for the safety of a person whose whereabouts are unknown, and all usual methods of contact do not locate them, you can lodge a missing person's report in person at any police station. Reports cannot be accepted via email or over the phone.

Contact your nearest police station to discuss your needs if you are unable to attend the police station to lodge a report.

What information to provide police

When you attend a police station to report someone missing, it will help police if you bring along the following information about the missing person (if possible):

- A recent photograph of the missing person.
- A detailed description of the missing person's appearance including height, build, hair (length, style, colour), eye colour, complexion, racial appearance, and any distinguishing features (for example, tattoos, birth marks, facial hair/features, scars, favourite jewellery, glasses).
- The person's full name including any aliases or nicknames they may use.
- Date and place of birth.
- Any factors that give you concern for their current wellbeing.
- Address, phone numbers, email accounts, social network accounts (for example, Facebook page).
- Names and contact details of friends, associates, employer, work colleagues and school (if young person).
- Contact details of the missing person's doctor, dentist, therapist and any other health practitioner.
- Any medical requirements or medications needed.
- Any likely destinations, for example favourite places, work/study locations or places with past connections.
- Bank, credit card or other financial accounts.
- Centrelink benefits or other benefits they may have been receiving.
- Car registration number, make, model or any other transport the person may be using, such as a motorbike or bicycle.
- Licence and passport details.
- Description of the time and place they were last seen, clothes last seen wearing, people they were last sighted with, where they were heading.
- Description of previous missing episodes, the circumstances and where they were found.

- Any behavioural changes, personal, medical or emotional problems they may have experienced before they went missing.
- Any information gained that may be relevant no matter how long after lodging the original report.

After you have lodged a missing person's report

It may be helpful to record the following information:

- Event number for the investigation
- Police station
- Rank and name of Officer in Charge (OIC)
- OIC Telephone
- OIC Fax and/or email
- Alternate contact person if OIC unavailable

Discuss with the Officer in Charge (OIC):

- The best way to access ongoing feedback about the investigation. Advise the OIC of the best contact person within your family/friends for them to contact with updates.
- Any plans to involve media or publicise the case, including any plans to create posters, or use social media. Police will seek consent for publicity from you prior to involving media.
- Any information you think of, or find, that may be helpful in locating the missing person, no matter how small.
- Any plans to make your own enquiries (for example, contacting friends, family, agencies, searching their residence or possessions). Update the OIC of any outcomes from these enquiries.
- Notify the OIC immediately if the missing person returns home or makes contact with you or any other member of your family. They will need to be sighted safe and well by police to be removed from the missing persons' list.

What to be mindful of

- It might be helpful to keep a journal of the investigation. It can be overwhelming to remember every conversation. Keep note of names, dates, times and any significant points.
- Be mindful of your own safety when making your own enquiries.
- Further resources and information about taking care of yourself, involving media, and accessing support can be accessed from the Families and Friends of Missing Persons Unit.

Key agencies

Families and Friends of Missing Persons Unit (FFMPU)

FFMPU provides information, support and referral to families and friends of missing persons in NSW.

Phone: (02) 8688 8173/1800 227 772 (Freecall)

Email: ffmpu@justice.nsw.gov.au

Web: www.missingpersons.justice.nsw.gov.au

NSW Police Missing Persons Unit (NSW MPU)

NSW MPU provides operational support to NSW Police in the field who search for missing people.

Phone: 1800 025 091

Email: missingpersons@police.nsw.gov.au

Web: http://www.police.nsw.gov.au/can_you_help_us/missing_persons

National Missing Persons Coordination Centre, Australian Federal Police (NMPCC)

NMPCC does not investigate or search for missing people. It aims to reduce the incidence and impact of missing persons and to educate the Australian community about this significant issue.

Please refer to the FFMPU website for further details about non-police search agencies:

Web: www.missingpersons.justice.nsw.gov.au

Contact details

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

Phone (02) 8688 8173 or 1800 227 772 • **Email** ffmpu@justice.nsw.gov.au

National Relay Service <https://relayservice.gov.au/making-a-call> • **Facebook** www.facebook.com/missing.501
www.missingpersons.justice.nsw.gov.au