

## A mother's story – Lost and not found

Today is 3 July 2017 and it marks the fourth year Anthony, our son, has been missing. I don't cry too often these days, but today is an exception. I put up a post on Facebook and the tears just wouldn't stop. Where can he be? What's happened to him? Why hasn't he contacted someone in the family? We all try to justify this lack of communication with excuses that maybe he's not well, or he doesn't know we are looking for him or maybe he's out there just living his own life.

The big problem is we just don't know, we don't know anything. We don't know if he is still alive or if he's dead or if he's just out there wandering the outback or working somewhere, or maybe sleeping on a beach or living rough somewhere in OZ. We just don't know and for me, as his mother, this is intolerable and I just can't give up on him. I've been searching for four years with no leads or evidence that he is alive, but the alternative, to believe he is dead, is also not acceptable without some kind of evidence.

It's difficult to explain what the not knowing does to you. You can't grieve because you don't have any concrete evidence that they are dead, so you keep hope alive by convincing yourself that one day he'll come home and even though it's hard to justify that all the searching over the years has given you nothing, you still keep hoping and you still keep searching. It's like being held over a cliff by string

and you don't know how strong the string is, or how long the string will last, but you keep hoping that it will last and it will keep holding you up.

When people ask me about Anthony, they often ask "do you think he is alive?" And my response is, as a mother, I don't have a magic gauge that tells me 'dead or alive'. I'm a positive person, so I often respond with 'until there is some evidence that he is dead, I will keep on hoping that he is alive'. What more can I do. For me, what usually happens is: I start to go through the grieving process but when I come to the letting go part I get stuck because I just don't know if Anthony is dead. It's impossible to let him go totally because in the back of my mind I keep hope alive and you keep trying to convince yourself that maybe he will come home, and then I find myself stuck in the 'not knowing' basket again and the whole process starts again. This kind of loss, not knowing how or when it will end, I think they call this ambiguous loss and that's where I am stuck.

When I recognise this is where I am again, I go and sit quietly on the bench at the dam on our property and think about Anthony and all my other children and grandchildren and slowly I begin to feel grateful that I have such a supportive and loving family and I know I'll be okay with their love and support.

Loving mother of Anthony Fahey on the 4th anniversary of his missing.

Eileen Fahey  
3 July 2017

### Contact details

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