

FFMPU support group meetings

This information sheet explains the FFMPU support group meetings: what happens, who can take part, what to expect and key contacts.

Who can take part?

FFMPU support group meetings are for family members and friends of police missing people.

When and where do support group meetings happen?

Groups are held at various locations in NSW and ACT throughout the year. There is no cost to attend the meetings. Currently, groups are held in locations convenient to those interested in taking part in support groups meetings: Campbelltown, Corrimal and Canberra. Locations are evaluated on an ongoing basis to best meet the needs of attendees.

How do I attend one of the support group meetings?

Before attending a group for the first time you will be asked to speak with one of the FFMPU group facilitators. They will discuss your needs, confirm your details and provide more information about what happens in groups, including upcoming dates and locations. Please contact the FFMPU team for more information and to be added to the mailing list. You can also like our Facebook page to see notifications about upcoming groups and other missing persons' events.

Who runs the group?

Qualified FFMPU counsellors (social workers and psychologists) facilitate the group meetings and are available for support during and after the meetings. FFMPU respects the privacy of the families and friends who access our service. Personal information shared in the group is not discussed with others outside the group. To read more about our confidentiality policy please refer to the *What to expect from the FFMPU counselling service* information sheet on our website.

What to expect in a group support meeting?

The groups are informal and intend to provide a safe space where families and friends can share and talk about their experience. Those who attend are asked to keep information shared in the group confidential. Families and friends can attend the meetings as often as they like and participate at a level at which they are comfortable.

The FFMPU groups offer a place where you can:

- meet others who understand what it is like to have a loved one missing;
- share your story with others and hear the experiences of others;
- connect with others who have experienced "missing";
- share ideas and information;
- learn and practice what has helped others and what may help you;
- receive updates about the missing persons sector.

Families who have attended groups have reported:

- That sharing and hearing the experiences of others, and the mutual understanding of the experience of missing, can lead to less isolation, less helplessness and more hope.
- A better understanding of their own thoughts, feelings and experiences when it's normalised within the group.
- An increase in the network of support for families who are experiencing missing.

Groups are also an opportunity to learn new information and skills. Facilitators may bring information or an exercise that they feel would be of value to the group. They may also facilitate discussions on any range of topics relevant to missing persons' investigations. Past topics covered in groups include: practical matters, such as working with media, managing finances and navigating coronial processes or self-care and mindfulness.

How to prepare yourself for a group

Contact FFMPU to discuss your situation and whether the group is the best way to meet your needs. FFMPU staff will also be able to explain the group rules that pertain to confidentiality and safety within the group.

Frequently asked questions on attending a group:

Do I have to come to every group?

No, how often you attend is up to you. There is no expectation that families attend every group.

Is there an expectation that I have to talk or contribute to the group meetings?

We encourage people to participate at a level at which they are comfortable. There is no expectation that people speak during the meeting. Some may find that listening to others is helpful; others may choose to participate more actively.

Can I bring someone with me?

Yes. Family members and friends who attend the meetings may bring a support person with them to any and all of the support group meetings. Please talk to FFMPU if you plan to bring someone.

Will the support group meeting be upsetting?

We understand that groups can be difficult and sometimes upsetting, this is an understandable response. Should you find a discussion difficult, it is alright to stay or leave the room if you wish to. If you have concerns, it may be useful to speak to staff before the meeting, to work out a support plan that works for you. This may include discussion around ways in which you can prepare yourself and places where you can get further support.

See also *Taking care of yourself* information sheet.

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

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