



**Justice**  
Families & Friends  
of Missing Persons

# Missing overseas

A guide for family members

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This information may also be accessed on our website.

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## When someone is missing overseas

### Definition of missing:

When a person's whereabouts are unknown and where concerns exist for their safety and welfare.

When someone you know goes missing it can be traumatic, distressing and uncertain. It can be difficult to know where to begin and what to do.

Try and remain calm. Remember that the majority of people reported missing, within Australia and internationally, are found safe.

The individual circumstances when a family member or friend is missing overseas vary greatly, much like someone going missing in Australia. However, the difficulties that arise can be further complicated by a range of factors, including: distance, borders, language and customs.

It is not possible to address every factor that might arise in this document. However, it is hoped that the information included here provides assistance.

## Making a missing persons report in Australia

- If you have concerns for a family member or friend who is travelling overseas and resides in Australia, you can make a missing persons report to the police station where you live.
- If the missing person is an Australian citizen but resides overseas, a missing persons report can also be made by family or friends at the nearest police station in Australia.

You can make a missing person's report at your local police station, regardless of where the person went missing. Visiting a local police station to report someone as missing can be a frightening and unsettling experience; however it is your legal right to do so. If you don't know where the nearest station is, you can contact the **(NSW) Police Assistance Line** on **131 444**.

You do not have to wait 24 hours to file a missing person's report. The sooner you notify the police that your loved one is missing, the sooner they will be able to initiate a search.

**“No one will care about your missing person more than you, so make sure that you follow up with all relevant agencies on a regular basis for an update on progress, especially in the early stages. Don't assume that once you have notified local police that everything is in train. Expect that at times you may be the conduit between different agencies to make things happen.”** *(from a family member)*

## Police report

When you attend a police station to report someone missing, it will help the police if you can provide the following information, where possible:

- A recent photo of the person.
- A detailed description of the person, including height, weight, age, hair colour, eye colour, build, and any other distinguishing features.
- The person's full name, including any aliases or nicknames they use.

- Date and place of birth.
- Address in Australia and overseas, phone numbers, email accounts, social network accounts (for example, Facebook).
- License and passport details.
- Last known address overseas, and the country in which the person is believed to be missing.
- Description of the time and place they were last seen, clothes last seen wearing, people they were last sighted with, and where they were heading.
- Travel itinerary of probable destinations.
- Details of any transport being used, including car registration number, make, model, hire company or any other transport the person may be using, such as a motorbike, bicycle, train, bus.
- Names and known contact details of fellow travellers.
- Contact details for relatives, friends and work colleagues overseas.
- When and how you last had contact, for example last social media contact, last telephone call/text/email/letter.
- Contact details of the missing person's doctor, dentist or any other health practitioner.
- Any medical conditions or medication requirements.
- Bank, credit card or other financial accounts.
- Centrelink benefits or other benefits they may have been receiving.
- 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 factors that give you concern for their current wellbeing.

## Keep a record of the police report.

It may be helpful to record the following information:

- COPS event number for the investigation.
- Police station.
- Rank, name and contact details of the police Officer in Charge (OIC) who takes the report. This will be the person you contact when you wish to follow up.

After a report has been lodged and accepted, police may contact the Missing Persons Unit in the state where the missing person usually resides.

Police will then refer to the **Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT)**, and if deemed appropriate Interpol may facilitate international cooperation in investigating the whereabouts of the missing person. DFAT can be contacted on **1300 555 135** for advice.

If you have serious concerns for the welfare of an Australian overseas and believe that a person requires consular assistance, contact the **Consular Emergency Centre** in Australia on **1300 555 135** 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

If a person is missing overseas due to a natural disaster, the DFAT website will list hotline numbers for updates:

[www.dfat.gov.au](http://www.dfat.gov.au)

The National Missing Persons Coordination Centre (NMPCC) may also be able to assist on **1800 000 634** or <http://www.missingpersons.gov.au/report-a-missing-person/missing-overseas.aspx>

Assistance cannot be given in situations where contact with a family member has been lost through relocation or disconnection. In this circumstance, the non-police tracing agencies listed on page 5 may be able to provide assistance.

## **Some things to consider when dealing with the search for a family member/friend missing overseas:**

- Appoint one person as the single contact person in the family to avoid confusion.
- Develop clear methods of communication for the contact person to keep the rest of the family updated. For example, a group email to avoid multiple calls.
- Keep a list of who you have spoken to and when, including name, agency and contact details where possible.
- Compare notes with the family of any travelling companions and anyone who may have had contact with the missing person.
- You may be able to obtain information from the missing person's bank or internet service provider about when their account was last accessed, although this may require official police intervention.
- You might want to initiate a poster and leaflet campaign in the country concerned. Information may include a photograph of the missing person, details of the last sighting of the person and a contact number for the public to provide information. The most appropriate contact number to display should be the local police or search agency. DFAT or Interpol may be able to provide assistance.
- Families often feel the need to go to the area where their loved one went missing or was last sighted. This is a personal choice. Before going overseas, families should contact DFAT and local authorities. You may require an interpreter and a guide. Be aware that local authorities may be reluctant to pass on information or prioritise the search in the way you consider is appropriate. It may be possible to liaise with investigating police regarding the use of interpreters. DFAT does not provide translation, interpreter, telephone or internet services.

**“Keep notes of key conversations and details for key contacts. This makes it easier to follow up on expected actions.”** *(from a family member)*

## **Non-police tracing agencies**

People go missing for a variety of reasons. Unless there are concerns for the missing person's safety and wellbeing, the police may not be able to make a missing person's report. The following non-police tracing agencies may be able to assist. If there is an active police investigation, it is important to inform the officer in charge that you are using these services.

## Salvation Army Family Tracing Service

The Salvation Army Family Tracing Service (SAFTS) aims to bring family members who have lost contact back together. They work in more than 100 countries worldwide, searching for the family member with whom contact has been lost. They are a confidential service and do not disclose information about the search outcome without permission from the missing person if they are located. SAFTS is a donation only service and will suggest an amount based on individual circumstances. For further information please contact:

Phone (02) 9211 0277 (NSW)

Email [familytracingservicensw@aue.salvationarmy.org](mailto:familytracingservicensw@aue.salvationarmy.org)

Website [www.salvos.org.au/familytracing](http://www.salvos.org.au/familytracing)

## International Social Service

International Social Service (ISS) Australia is a small non-government organisation with over 50 years' experience defending children's rights and connecting families separated by international borders. ISS Australia is a member of the ISS international network, which operates in more than 130 countries worldwide. Some of the services include:

- Family and post adoption tracing for those who wish to locate an immediate family member overseas.
- International parental child abduction, which is when a parent takes a child to another country without the other parent's consent, or refuses to return a child from overseas after an agreed period.

If you require ISS service, please contact:

Phone 1300 657 843

Email [iss@iss.org.au](mailto:iss@iss.org.au)

Website [www.iss.org.au](http://www.iss.org.au)

## Red Cross International Tracing Service

The Tracing Service in Australia is part of the International Red Cross Red Crescent global tracing network. Their mandate is to restore family links between relatives who have been separated as a direct result of war or disaster.

This tracing service is free. For further information please contact:

Phone (02) 9229 4111

Website [www.redcross.org.au](http://www.redcross.org.au)

## Contact details for international agencies

When a loved one is missing overseas, it may be useful to contact a local service in the country the person is missing for assistance. Most countries have no central records or agency that deals with missing persons' matters, but the following services may be useful. The list is not exhaustive but an indication of some of the services that may be able to assist.

**"I would strongly advocate contacting all mentioned agencies in a parallel rather than sequential fashion. Often when someone goes missing overseas, there has been a lag (compared to locally) before anything amiss is noticed. So time to take action can become even more critical to try and locate someone." (from a family member)**



## International

### Missing Persons International Network

A network of international organisations that look for missing people and provide support to their families. Includes links to organisations across Europe.

[www.mpin.zaginieni.pl/EN/](http://www.mpin.zaginieni.pl/EN/)

### UK Missing Persons Bureau

Interactive world map with links to international organisations that may be able to assist if a friend or relative is missing abroad.

[www.missingpersons.police.uk/en/international/international\\_organisations](http://www.missingpersons.police.uk/en/international/international_organisations)

### Unidentified Persons

International listing by country of agencies that will assist with missing persons matters. Site is based in USA and also includes search information for USA. Site contains information on unidentified persons, missing persons and murdered persons.

[www.meyahna.tripod.com/pg10.html#EUR](http://www.meyahna.tripod.com/pg10.html#EUR)

## Canada

### Ontario's Missing Adults

Search information and support resources

[www.missingadults.ca](http://www.missingadults.ca)

### Association des familles des personnes assassinées ou disparues Canada

Information, support and counselling for families of homicide victims or where a person is missing and believed to be connected to a crime. French/English language Canadian site.

[www.afpad.ca/a-propos/services](http://www.afpad.ca/a-propos/services)

## Greece

### Omnibus

Concerning missing persons 18-60 years old. Provide psychological support to the family of the missing person, as well reconnection; legal consultation and research. Information, Track & Reconnect Service

[www.omnibus.gr/en/teams](http://www.omnibus.gr/en/teams)

## Ireland

### Missing in Ireland Support Service

Search and support focused organisation. Offers helpline and community education.

[www.missingpersons.ie](http://www.missingpersons.ie)

## New Zealand

### New Zealand Police Missing Persons

Police missing persons unit. Information on reporting, advice and support.

[www.police.govt.nz/missing-persons](http://www.police.govt.nz/missing-persons)

## Poland

### Itaka

A non-government organisation that helps to look for missing people, and offers support to families of missing people.

[www.zaginieni.pl](http://www.zaginieni.pl)

## Sweden

### Missing People Sweden

A search focused organisation which recruits volunteers. A number of branches nationwide.

[www.missingpeople.se](http://www.missingpeople.se)

## UK

### Missing People UK

A charity that provides support and assistance via a helpline to missing persons and their family members, assisting with the search process and reconnection.

[www.missingpeople.org.uk](http://www.missingpeople.org.uk)

### Missing Abroad

An organisation to assist British Nationals missing abroad (contains information about searching for someone missing overseas).

[www.missingabroad.org/what-can-missing-abroad-do](http://www.missingabroad.org/what-can-missing-abroad-do)

## USA

### United States Department of Justice

Information on reporting and identifying missing children and adults, including the following links:

[www.justice.gov/actioncenter/report-and-identify-missing-persons](http://www.justice.gov/actioncenter/report-and-identify-missing-persons)

- National Center for Missing and Exploited Children  
[www.missingkids.com/home](http://www.missingkids.com/home)
- FBI's Kidnappings and Missing Persons  
[www.fbi.gov/wanted/kidnap](http://www.fbi.gov/wanted/kidnap)
- NamUs National Missing and Unidentified Persons System  
[www.namus.gov](http://www.namus.gov)

“Use local resources that are available to you. Your local member of parliament (state and federal) can sometimes be of assistance. Some members of parliament have strong relationships with different countries; for example there used to be an Australian-Iranian Friendship Society of which an Australian member of parliament was a member. Developing useful relationships with people who have overseas knowledge and connections can help to navigate another country's bureaucracy, and consider cultural differences if you're planning to travel overseas as part of the search. In extraordinary circumstances they may also be able to make representations on your behalf.”  
*(from a family member)*

## Support in Australia

Families and Friends of Missing Persons Unit (FFMPU) is NSW government-funded and works with family members and friends of missing people in NSW, interstate and overseas. FFMPU does not search for people. We work collaboratively with search agencies.

FFMPU provides the following services:

- Free and confidential counselling, information and referral to family members and friends of missing people.
- Support by phone, face-to-face, or email from 9am – 5pm, Monday to Friday.
- Information and support groups.
- Online services including email, website and Facebook.
- Assistance and liaison at different times during a missing person's investigation including dealing with police, media, Coroner's Court, legal and financial issues, referral and support once a missing person has been located, or other issues.
- Information and publications on missing persons' issues.
- Organisation of missing persons' events.
- Professional development and clinical consultation to other professionals, and community education about missing persons' issues.

## Social media

### Families and Friends of Missing Persons (FFMPU) Facebook page

The FFMPU Facebook page allows for regular updates to be posted, resources and supportive information to be shared, and for families and friends to have an opportunity to share thoughts and feelings about living with the experience of a missing love one.

There are also numerous national and international Facebook pages that have been created to assist with the search and location of missing people. Some are generic search pages; others are created to search for individual missing people. These pages can be located through the Facebook search engine or through generic internet search engines using the identifiers of "missing person/people, country (and) Facebook".

Families and Friends of Missing Persons Unit contact details:

Phone [1800 227 772](tel:1800227772), (02) 8688 8173

Email [ffmpu@justice.nsw.gov.au](mailto:ffmpu@justice.nsw.gov.au)

Website [www.missingpersons.justice.nsw.gov.au](http://www.missingpersons.justice.nsw.gov.au)

Facebook [www.facebook.com/missing.persons.501](https://www.facebook.com/missing.persons.501)

Postal [Locked bag 5118 Parramatta NSW 2124](#)

If you are hearing or speech impaired, contact the **National Relay Service** on [1800 555 677](tel:1800555677).

If you require an interpreter, call the **Telephone and Interpreter Service** on [131 450](tel:131450). State the language you speak, and ask to be connected to FFMPU on [1800 227 772](tel:1800227772). FFMPU can arrange interpreters for phone or face-to-face appointments.

