

MISSING PERSONS GUIDANCE SHEET

This guidance sheet is designed to assist family and friends of missing persons, navigate the police system to ensure all the facts and circumstances related to the disappearance are accurately conveyed to police.

INTRODUCTION

When a person goes missing, the circumstances must be appropriately evaluated to determine the correct response.

- Under-reaction can result in severe harm or death to the missing person
- Over-reaction and doing too much is wasteful of resources and potentially an unwarranted intrusion on an individual's privacy.

MISSING PERSON DEFINITION

A missing person (MP) is anyone who is reported missing to police:

1. whose whereabouts are unknown, and
2. there are fears for the safety or concern for the welfare of that person



MYTH BUSTER – YOU DO NOT NEED TO WAIT 24 HOURS TO REPORT A PERSON MISSING TO POLICE

INFORMATION TO PROVIDE POLICE

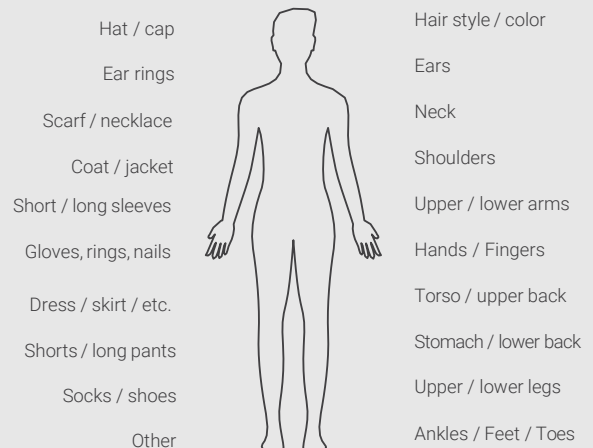
The Australian Federal Police suggest the following information needs to be provided to assist with the investigation.

- Full name, including nick names and alias names
- Date of birth and age
- Home address and phone numbers
- Vehicles or bicycles used including make, model, registration, colour & condition
- Employment or school information including address
- A recent, clear and coloured photograph of the person missing.
- Their physical appearance, including height and any identifying features (tattoos, scars, etc.)

- What they were wearing when last seen
- Their last known whereabouts
- Intended arrangements (travelling by bus to the local shopping centre, going to the gym etc.)
- Habits and places, they may frequent
- Their social media accounts/use (think Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, Snapchat)
- Telephone and banking information (Mobile phone provider, bank account details)
- Any behavioural changes
- Personal, medical or emotional problems they may have experienced before they went missing
- Medication the person may use and what is used to treat (conditions, allergies, prescriptions)
- Name and contact details of their doctor and counselling professionals
- If the person has been reported missing before, the circumstances and where they were found
- List of family members, intimate partners, past and present
- Lists of friends, acquaintances, and anyone else who might have information or clues about the person's whereabouts. (Include telephone numbers and home or work addresses)

Start at the top and work your way down.

Where possible describe specific characters, tattoos, scars, injuries, piercing etc.





FACT – THE MAJORITY OF PEOPLE WHO ARE REPORTED MISSING ARE LOCATED SAFE AND WELL WITHIN THE FIRST 48 HOURS

ASSESSING THE RISK

Each police jurisdiction in Australia has its own set of procedures used to evaluate the risk of a missing person's safety and welfare. This initial assessment process determines the urgency of the investigation and resource allocated to locate the missing person.

Providing clear and concise information about the missing person's personal circumstances and the environment to which they are exposed, is an effective way to assist police in determining the risk to a missing person.



PERSONAL CIRCUMSTANCE

- Does their age make them particularly vulnerable?
- Is their behaviour out of character?
- Any life-threatening illness or requiring medication?
- Any mental health issues?
- Have they attempted suicide before?

ENVIRONMENTAL

- Any significant life event (e.g. suicide/death in family, bullying, loss of job)?
- Relationship issues or breakdown?
- Victim/perpetrator of Domestic Violence
- Living with family or others who may be using violence and/or abuse?
- Victim of, or involvement in a crime?
- Any financial pressures?
- Adverse weather conditions likely to put them at risk?
- Notable items missing or left behind (e.g. wallet, passport, jewellery, computer, clothing or frequently used possessions)

OTHER FACTORS

- Are there any other factors that may influence the risk?

RISK RATING

Generally, if the answer to any of the above is 'Yes' police will consider an urgent response to the case. This will include notifying a supervisor and making a more detailed evaluation.

In circumstances where the missing person is also the victim of domestic or family violence, police will consider the risk rating to be extreme. The police supervisor and detectives will be notified to oversee the investigation.

RECORDS YOU NEED TO KEEP

When you report a family member or friend missing, it is essential you also keep records about who took your report.

- Officer's name
- Rank
- Registered number
- Email address
- Contact phone number
- Name of Police Station
- Police report number
- Time/date of the report
- Report classification, i.e. missing person



IT IS VITAL POLICE RECORD THE INCIDENT AS A MISSING PERSONS REPORT. IF YOU HAVE CONCERNS, IMMEDIATELY REQUEST TO SPEAK WITH A POLICE SUPERVISOR

CUSTOMER SERVICE

All police jurisdictions in Australia have customer service guidelines to ensure police officers provide the highest level of professional service. If you are unhappy with the level of customer service, calmly communicate your concerns to the officer taking your report.

If you are still not satisfied, request to speak with the station supervisor or duty officer. In most jurisdictions, this will generally be a Sergeant or Inspector of Police.

References:

1. Australian Federal Police, 'Missing Persons' (2017) (<https://missingpersons.gov.au/>).
2. AMBER Alert Europe, 'Understanding and Managing Risk in the Context of Missing Persons' (23 January 2017) (<https://ftp.amberalert.eu/risk/risk-assessment.pdf>).