



# MEDIA RELEASE

Hon. John Hatzistergos MLC  
Attorney General  
Minister for Citizenship  
Minister for Regulatory Reform

---

\*Embargoed 5am Thursday August 5, 2010

## HELP FOR FAMILIES AND FRIENDS OF MISSING PERSONS

Frontline professionals such as GPs and social workers will benefit from new guidelines to help them provide better support and assistance to families and friends of missing persons.

“When a loved-one goes missing, people often turn to their GP, psychologist or social worker for emotional support,” NSW Attorney General John Hatzistergos said

“That is why it is vitally important that these frontline professionals have the best training and advice before they come face to face with family or friends of missing persons.

“Developed in consultation with families of missing persons, the new guidelines better explain the trauma and uncertainty felt by people left wondering what has become of a loved one.”

The NSW Government’s Family and Friends of Missing Persons Unit developed the Promoting Connectedness Guidelines to give frontline professionals the resources they need to understand what a person is going through and to be able to refer them to specialist services.

The Government set up the Families and Friends of Missing Persons Unit in 2000 to help people develop strategies to cope with their situation.

“The stress of not knowing what has happened to someone can cause sleeplessness, affect work performance and lead to family tensions,” Mr Hatzistergos said.

The launch of the Promoting Connectedness Guidelines coincides with National Missing Persons Week this week from August 1-8 2010. The theme of Missing Persons Week is: *When Someone Goes Missing, a Day Spent Waiting is a Day Lost.*

“The theme dispels the myth that people should wait 24 hours before reporting someone missing. You should contact police immediately if you have concerns for someone’s safety and you don’t know where they are,” Mr Hatzistergos said.

The Families and Friends of Missing Persons Unit has helped almost 300 families and fields almost 70 enquiry calls per month since it began operating in 2000.

“Our unit is the only service in Australia that operates with the sole purpose of providing free counselling and other practical and emotional assistance to families and friends of missing people,” said Sarah Wayland from the Families and Friends of Missing Persons Unit.

The Families and Friends of Missing Persons Unit can provide referrals to search agencies and can assist with the emotional anxiety of reunions if a person is found.

The unit recently established a support group that provides monthly opportunities for families to come together to share their experiences of living with the disappearance of a loved one.

Approximately 11,000 people are reported missing to police in NSW each year. Over 99 per cent of missing people are located. In NSW, there are currently 592 people listed as long term missing.

For more information: [www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/missingpersons](http://www.lawlink.nsw.gov.au/missingpersons) or [www.missingpersons.gov.au](http://www.missingpersons.gov.au)