



**Mark Speakman**  
Attorney General

## **MEDIA RELEASE**

Wednesday, 7 August 2019

### **MISSING PERSONS WEEK – STORIES NOT STATS**

The Families and Friends of Missing Persons Unit will pay tribute to the hundreds of families whose loved ones have disappeared, at its eleventh annual forum at Parramatta on Saturday 10 August.

Attorney General Mark Speakman said the forum, which for the first time is coinciding with Missing Persons Week, will help to raise awareness of unsolved cases across the state.

“The theme for this year’s Missing Persons Week is ‘Individuals not Statistics’, reinforcing the pivotal role the Unit plays in giving families and friends a voice to ensure their stories continue to be heard long after their loved one has gone,” Mr Speakman said.

“The Unit is a groundbreaking initiative unique to Australia, providing free and confidential counselling and support with trained psychologists and social workers to help children and adults deal with the trauma of being left behind.”

The Unit’s monthly meetings bring families together to share experiences and support each other through the uncertainty of not knowing where their loved one is.

The forum is held once a year to provide opportunities for families to hear about the work being carried out in the missing persons sector including updates from the Australian Federal Police, Legal Aid and the NSW Coroner’s Court, as well as the latest research.

Families and Friends of Missing Persons Unit coordinator Nicholas Szafraniec said around 50 families are expected to attend.

“The forum gives families of missing persons a chance to talk to experts on the frontline who work hard to find answers about their missing loved one. More importantly, it connects them with other people who understand their pain and suffering so they know they’re not alone,” Mr Szafraniec said.

Every year around 38,000 people go missing, but over 98 per cent are located within a short amount of time. The majority of those who go missing are aged between 13 and 17. For every person who goes missing, 12 people are directly impacted. Currently, the Unit is supporting 150 families in NSW.

For more information go to [www.missingpersons.justice.nsw.gov.au](http://www.missingpersons.justice.nsw.gov.au) or contact the free hotline on 1800 227 772.