

**Submission
No 25**

**INQUIRY INTO UNSOLVED MURDERS AND LONG-TERM
MISSING PERSONS CASES IN NEW SOUTH WALES
BETWEEN 1965 AND 2010**

Name: Mrs Debbie Bonds
Date Received: 16 March 2026

Mrs Debbie Bonds

16th March 2026

Committee: Portfolio Committee No. 1 - Premier and Finance

Re: Submission to the Parliamentary Inquiry into Unsolved murders and long-term missing persons cases in New South Wales between 1965 and 2010

As the mother of a missing person I am making this submission as there were problems with the reporting process and the handling of the case.

Myself and my family were unfortunately was thrust into a world which was totally foreign to us, the world of a missing person. This is a truly stressful and traumatic time for everyone associated with the missing person, something that you could never fully understand until you have to go through it.

Summary of Key Points

- Reports made to the police of missing persons need to be taken seriously and treated with compassion.
- Families require better access to any or all of the information regarding the missing person's case.
- Better communication with authorities to families as to the status of the case.

Personal Experience

When my husband went to report our son as missing, the officer told my husband that our son's parole officer would have to be advised first that he was missing and if he had no luck with them to then return and then make the report. Our son had recently been released from jail and had a no contact ADVO against him preventing him from contacting his previous partner and their children. The fact that we did not know where he was should have raised alarm bells as they could have been in danger. The officer did go away for several minutes to look up the computer but did not change his view on the matter; he refused to take the report. Our son's mobile phone was still ringing at this stage.

I went to the police station the next day to report our son as a missing person and by then his phone had stopped ringing. The opportunity to 'ping' his phone, to check for location, was lost. This could have saved many man hours and much heartache for the family.

A search was carried out the next day by police staff and volunteer SES workers. They searched our 100 acre, heavily wooded property for around 3 hours before calling off the search. The search was apparently called off because the police said that they had received reports that our son had been sighted by members of the public. Upon further investigation these unconfirmed reports could not be verified, there was no supporting evidence that these sightings were accurate. The search should have continued.

With little communication from the police we contacted Search Dogs Sydney. They immediately took action, sent out questionnaires and arranged a further search of our property and surrounding areas based on information that we had given them.

A police officer contacted our daughter to say that they were going to conduct another search of the property and coldly told her that they were looking for a body. We are still at a loss to understand why our daughter was contacted with this information; she was not the missing person reporter. Search Dogs Sydney had been searching for 3 days before the police returned to conduct another search this time using a cadaver dog. I do feel that the police only conducted this search because we had sought the help of an external organisation.

Our son's body was located on a neighbouring property. He had been there for some time as he was in a severe state of decomposition and his date of death is listed as between 9th December and 29th December 2025. My husband tried to report him missing on 11th December 2025.

Swift action may not have changed the outcome but we will never know and we have to live with that thought every single day!

I have recently learned through a chance conversation with the Coroner that although our son was a missing person, that was located deceased, the fact that he was missing was not reported to the Coroner by the police. The Coroner also mentioned that she has rejected the police report and that the police should have been in touch with the family to inform us of what had been happening: they have absolutely not been in touch.

Suggested recommendations

I recommend the Committee consider making a brochure of the process of locating a missing person. Most families have no idea of the process and as it's a time of heightened emotion and you are not always thinking clearly. It should have provision to write down the names and phone numbers of people significant to the case. If there is a process that is to be followed it should be set out in a brochure, it can then be referred to at any given time

alleviating the need for unnecessary contact with the authorities. The expectations of the authorities should be set out and help relieve anxiety. I feel that this would also make the authorities accountable for their actions or lack of actions.

I would also recommend that a separate entity be formed to deal with missing persons. To be a missing person is not a crime and does not necessarily need to be dealt with by the police. The police have a lot of different things to deal with and I they cannot possibly be trained adequately to deal with every issue they are presented with.

I thank the Committee for examining this critical issue and trust that these suggestions will assist in improving outcomes for missing persons and their families.

I consent to this submission being published with my name.

Debbie Bonds
