

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

Organisation: The Missed Foundation

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Inquiry into Unsolved Murders and Long-Term Missing Persons Cases in New South Wales (1965–2010)

Submission to the NSW Parliament

Portfolio Committee No. 1 – Premier and Finance

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Contents

Contents	1
1. Executive Summary	2
2. Context	2
2.1 About The Missed Foundation	2
2.2 The Growing Scale of Missing Persons in Australia	3
2.3 A Misclassification With Real Consequences	3
2.4 A Whole-of-Community Response	3
2.5 The Legal and Financial Cost of Not Knowing	4
3. Response to the Terms of Reference	5
3.1 Current and Emerging Developments in Policy, Practice and Technology	5
A Legislative Framework That Has Not Kept Pace	6
Théo Hayez and the Cost of Legislative Inaction	6
Police Training and Ambiguous Loss	7
No Mandatory Family Liaison for Long-Term Cases	8
3.2 Impediments in the Criminal Justice System	9
Access to Information Over Time	9
Equity in Investigation and Support	9
3.3 Clusters and Possible Links Between Unsolved Cases	10
3.4 Progress of Police Investigations, Including Task Force Fenwick	10
3.5 Human Remains Identification, and the National DNA Program	10
The Human Cost of Systemic Deficiency: The Case of Ursula Barwick	10
The National DNA Program: Progress and Discontinuation	11
3.6 Any Other Related Matters	12
A Growing Need with No Funded Response	12
4. Summary of Recommendations	13
References	14

1. Executive Summary

The Missed Foundation welcomes and strongly supports the NSW Parliament's inquiry into unsolved murders and long-term missing persons cases. This inquiry represents a critical — and long-overdue — opportunity to examine the systemic gaps that have left thousands of Australian families without adequate investigation, support, or answers, in some cases for decades.

Missing persons and unsolved murders are not primarily policing matters. They are profound community issues with wide and lasting human consequences. Research shows that for every person reported missing, at least 12 others are directly and profoundly affected — family members, close friends, and others whose lives are fundamentally disrupted (Henderson et al., 2000). With more than 57,000 Australians now reported missing each year (AFP, 2025), this represents an enormous and growing population of people in need of coordinated, specialist, and compassionate support. That support does not currently exist at the scale or quality required.

The psychological harm experienced by families of missing persons is well-documented. It is known as ambiguous loss — a form of disenfranchised grief in which a loss remains unresolved and largely unrecognised by the world around them. The literature consistently describes this as one of the most severe and protracted forms of grief a person can experience, characterised by chronic psychological distress in the absence of social support or clear closure (Boss & Yeats, 2014; Lenferink et al., 2019; Wayland & Maple, 2020).

The Missed Foundation is the only organisation in Australia providing lived experience-led, specialised support to families of long-term missing persons. We have been doing this work for thirteen years, without government funding, because no funded equivalent exists. We work alongside families navigating investigations, coronial processes, and the particular grief of not knowing — and we are regularly called upon by senior police, GPs, psychologists, and crisis counsellors who do not know where else to direct families in these circumstances.

Our position on this inquiry is clear: the system as it currently stands is failing families. It is failing them through inadequate investigative tools, poor family communication, the absence of independent specialist support, and a fundamental misclassification of missing persons as primarily a policing issue rather than a community health and social one. This submission sets out the evidence for that failure and offers practical recommendations for reform.

2. Context

2.1 About The Missed Foundation

The Missed Foundation was established in 2013 by Loren O'Keeffe, following the disappearance of her brother Daniel in 2011. Originally founded as the Missing Persons Advocacy Network (MPAN), the organisation grew directly from Loren's experience of searching for Daniel and encountering the profound gaps in support available to families of missing persons in Australia. As other families in similar circumstances began reaching out for guidance, it became clear that the need was far broader than one family's experience — and that the gap could not go unfilled.

The Missed Foundation's mission is to alleviate the financial, emotional, and psychological impact on the families and friends of missing persons through direct support, awareness, and advocacy. We are a registered charity operating across Australia, with a volunteer board drawn from law, mental health, communications, and social policy.

2.2 The Growing Scale of Missing Persons in Australia

When The Missed Foundation was established in 2013, approximately 30,000 Australians were reported missing to police each year. That figure has now risen to more than 57,000 — an increase of 90% in just over a decade, and is a figure that represents more than 150 Australians reported missing every single day (AFP, 2025). While the majority of those reported missing are located within a short period (Sveticic, Too & De Leo, 2012), around 1–2% go on to become long-term missing persons cases (Siddiqui & Wayland 2021). It is those cases, and the families left navigating them, that this inquiry most directly concerns, and for whom the current system is most profoundly inadequate.

The mental anguish experienced by loved ones in these circumstances is known as ambiguous loss — a form of disenfranchised grief where the loss is unclear, unresolved, and often unsupported by wider society. Families experience severe and chronic psychological distress comparable to other forms of traumatic bereavement, but without the social recognition that typically accompanies death (Boss & Yeats, 2014; Lenferink et al., 2019; Kennedy et al., 2022). An extensive body of literature documents both the impact of living in this liminal space and the ways in which families attempt to navigate it (Henderson et al., 2000; Wayland et al., 2016; Wayland, 2019; Wayland & Maple, 2020).

2.3 A Misclassification With Real Consequences

A foundational problem in how Australia responds to missing persons is that the issue has been framed, funded, and governed almost entirely as a policing matter. This is a misclassification with serious consequences.

The reality is that approximately 85% of missing persons cases relate to mental health, and less than 1% are criminal in nature (Missing People, 2022; Porfyri & Tarantili, 2025; Bricknell, 2017). Yet the policy, legislative, and resourcing frameworks governing missing persons in Australia are built primarily around policing and criminal investigation.

This means that the families of the vast majority of missing persons — those whose cases are not criminal, but who are nonetheless experiencing profound and lasting harm — fall into a gap between systems. They are not 'victims of crime' in a legal sense, and so cannot access the support infrastructure designed for that cohort. But they are experiencing one of the most traumatic forms of grief known to psychology, and they need coordinated, sustained, specialist support. That support does not exist in any funded, systemic form in Australia today.

2.4 A Whole-of-Community Response

Addressing the full impact of missing persons in Australia requires a fundamental shift in how we think about the issue. Missing persons is not a problem that police can or should solve alone. It is a community issue that demands a cross-sector response involving all

levels of government, the health and social services system, the corporate sector, the media, emergency services, and community organisations (Gambier-Ross et al., 2023).

Each sector has a role to play: government in funding specialist services and legislating for better investigative tools; health services in providing coordinated, long-term care; the media in responsible and equitable coverage; and community organisations — including The Missed Foundation — in providing the lived experience-led support and advocacy that no other part of the system can offer. A system built on that collaborative foundation would be better equipped not only to respond to missing persons cases but, in some circumstances, to prevent them.

RECOMMENDATION 1

That missing persons be formally reframed in policy, funding, and governance as a community health and social issue — not solely a policing matter — and that a national cross-sector framework be developed, bringing together government at all levels, health and social services, emergency services, media, and community organisations in a coordinated response.

2.5 The Legal and Financial Cost of Not Knowing

The financial and legal consequences of a loved one going missing are substantial, cumulative, and almost entirely unacknowledged by the current system. These costs fall on every family of a long-term missing person, regardless of the circumstances of the disappearance. They include managing a missing person's financial obligations, significant legal costs to obtain Letters of Administration, privately funded searching and awareness campaigns, and time lost from employment — all without any formal recognition or pathway to assistance.

Historical research estimated the cost of missingness at \$72 million, including \$19 million in lost lifetime earnings (Henderson et al., 2000). More recent estimates put annual costs at \$30.9 million to the government, \$211.3 million to private agencies, and \$14.1 million directly to families (Missing Persons Advocacy Network, 2020). Despite these figures, almost none of that investment reaches the families bearing the greatest burden.

For the majority of families whose loved one's disappearance does not involve suspected criminal activity, there is no financial assistance available. Victim support services require a crime threshold that most families cannot meet. There is no equivalent scheme, no parallel pathway, and no formal recognition of their legal and financial need.

The financial and legal burden on families of long-term missing persons is not a new phenomenon. While the cases of Ursula Barwick, Michelle Pope, and Denny Smith differ in their specific details, the institutional gap they have all encountered is the same. These families are united by a shared lack of formal support that has remained unchanged for decades.

“The emotional and financial impacts during this time were significant... it was difficult to comprehend that there was no legal way for me to represent and speak for [Ursula’s mother].”

— Dianne Panov, aunt of Ursula Barwick

“I estimate that between Mum and I we spent around \$40,000 in travel, accommodation, printing and online advertising to try and generate interest in Ursula’s case. My relentless pursuit of the truth also took me away from my business which suffered a significant loss in income.”

— Melissa Pouliot, cousin of Ursula Barwick

“The biggest challenge was getting a death certificate – had to have the coronial process to get that resolved. A long, drawn-out process.”

— Jeff Pope, brother of Michelle Pope

“Our family has had to invest time and money into raising awareness, organising events, printing materials, and trying to reach as many people as possible in the hope that someone knows something. Time off work, travel, and the ongoing effort to keep the search active all come at a cost. There is little to no financial support available for families in this situation, yet we are expected to carry this weight indefinitely.”

— Mel Bowen, cousin of Denny Smith

RECOMMENDATION 2

That the NSW Government establish a financial support scheme for all families of long-term missing persons, regardless of whether foul play is suspected. The scheme should be modelled on existing victim services and include: practical financial assistance; support with travel to coronial hearings; contribution to legal costs associated with the disappearance; and interim support for families of suspected crime victims who are unable to access victim services while awaiting a death certificate and the completion of coronial proceedings.

3. Response to the Terms of Reference

The following section addresses each term of reference, drawing on The Missed Foundation’s thirteen years of direct experience supporting families of long-term missing persons in NSW.

3.1 Current and Emerging Developments in Policy, Practice and Technology

A Legislative Framework That Has Not Kept Pace

The Missed Foundation strongly supports a review of current policy, practice, and technology in this area, and wishes to highlight several significant shortcomings and opportunities.

In terms of policy and practice, the most fundamental reform required is a shift in how missing persons cases are classified and governed. As outlined in Section 2.3, the current framing of missing persons as primarily a policing matter means that the vast majority of families — whose cases do not involve criminal activity — are underserved by a system not designed for them. Policy reform must recognise missing persons as a community health and social issue, and fund the support services accordingly. Community organisations with specialist expertise, including those led by people with lived experience, must be recognised as essential parts of the response ecosystem, not optional extras.

The Missed Foundation is also acutely aware of the gap between the investigative tools available in criminal investigations and those available in missing persons cases. This gap has real and documented consequences, as illustrated by the case of Théo Hayez.

Théo Hayez and the Cost of Legislative Inaction

Théo Hayez was an 18-year-old Belgian backpacker who disappeared from Byron Bay, NSW, on 31 May 2019. The coronial inquest into his disappearance, presided over by State Coroner Teresa O'Sullivan and concluded in 2022, heard critical evidence about the role of digital and telecommunications data in missing persons investigations, and about the legislative barriers that prevented investigators from accessing that data promptly.

Investigators were eventually able to use Google location services and mobile phone tower data to track Théo's movements on the night he disappeared. That data proved crucial to understanding what happened. But the inquest heard that accessing it was far harder than it should have been: NSW Police's investigative powers in missing persons cases are significantly more limited than those available in criminal investigations, and mobile phone and cloud-based technology is not referenced in the Coroner's Act at all. Counsel Assisting the Coroner described the situation as a jurisdictional "grey area", and the inability to access geo-fencing data that might have identified others in the area that night was described as "an unacceptable situation" (O'Sullivan, 2022, p.41).

Among the nine Recommendations the Coroner recommended that technology companies such as Google be required to provide police with device location and activity data promptly in missing persons cases. Those recommendations have not been implemented (O'Sullivan, 2022, pp. 50–53). Théo's cousin Lisa Hayez has since noted publicly that families in subsequent high-profile cases have paid the price for that inaction. The Missed Foundation urges this inquiry to examine the status of those recommendations and to advocate for the legislative reform necessary to give NSW Police the tools they need from the earliest hours of a missing persons case.

RECOMMENDATION 3

That this inquiry examine the current implementation status of all nine Recommendations from the 2022 coronial inquest into the disappearance of Théo Jean Hayez, and advocate for the legislative reform necessary to give NSW Police and coronial investigators access to digital, telecommunications, and cloud-based data in missing persons cases on equivalent terms to criminal investigations.

Police Training and Ambiguous Loss

Families consistently report that their interactions with police, particularly as cases become long-term and investigations stall, add to (rather than alleviate) their distress. This is not solely a matter of resource constraints. It reflects a systemic absence of training in the particular psychological reality of ambiguous loss, and in the communication practices that support rather than harm families navigating it.

“The single worst time of my life. The Police didn’t want to know about it... if I summed up the police experience, zero empathy is probably the way to describe it.”

— Jeff Pope, brother of Michelle Pope

“Police reassured us... saying they were doing everything they possibly could to find her. They also suggested maybe she didn’t want to be found. She was old enough to live her own life, maybe we needed to leave her alone.”

— Dianne Panov, aunt of Ursula Barwick

“Our experience has felt isolating and emotionally exhausting. Communication has not been consistent, most of the time we have felt like we were left in the dark, unsure of what was happening or what steps were being taken. As a family, you are already dealing with fear and grief, and the lack of clear updates only adds to that stress.”

— Mel Bowen, cousin of Denny Smith

In this context, The Missed Foundation has developed an Ambiguous Loss Masterclass (2023a) in collaboration with Prof. Sarah Wayland (a leading researcher in this field) which is available for immediate implementation. Integration of this training, alongside the specialised Advanced Skills Training (The Missed Foundation & Wayland 2023b), into the NSW Police Academy curriculum and into the ongoing professional development of officers working in missing persons and family liaison roles would represent a low-cost, high-impact reform.

RECOMMENDATION 4

That the NSW Police Academy integrate mandatory training on ambiguous loss into both initial training and the ongoing professional development of officers in missing persons and family liaison roles. The Missed Foundation’s Ambiguous Loss Masterclass, developed in collaboration with Prof. Sarah Wayland, is available to support this immediately.

No Mandatory Family Liaison for Long-Term Cases

There is currently no mandatory, structured family liaison framework within NSW Police for missing persons cases that reach the long-term threshold. Families are left to initiate contact themselves, chase investigators for updates, and navigate complex bureaucracies without dedicated support.

This is a consistent pattern encountered by The Missed Foundation across cases and jurisdictions. While the NSW Police Missing Persons Registry provides investigative support, there is no equivalent policy ensuring families receive proactive, regular, and trauma-informed communication.

“Most communication is very ‘one way traffic’ – me calling them. They have shown complete reluctance to get involved and investigate anything that has come up.”

“Another point worth mentioning is the new DNA collection process/database. Once again, I drove the process of adding family members to the database. I organised the meetings, people & collection with family members. This was done through the AFP initially, they then passed me back to NSW Police. When the initiative was created, why didn’t the NSW Police contact me & set up a process to gather this data? It’s a gap in the system.”

— Jeff Pope, brother of Michelle Pope

“Communication has not been consistent, and most of the time we have felt like we were left in the dark, unsure of what was happening or what steps were being taken. As a family, you are already dealing with fear and grief, and the lack of clear updates only adds to that stress.”

— Mel Bowen, cousin of Denny Smith

This absence is particularly harmful for children and young people, who are often the last to receive information and lack specialist support to understand the disappearance. A dedicated family liaison framework must include provision for age-appropriate communication within these families.

“I was fifteen... I would sit in my bedroom, shivering myself into a frenzy that Ursula was cold and didn’t have somewhere safe to sleep. There was nothing, nothing I could do to help find her. I was powerless.”

— Melissa Pouliot, cousin of Ursula Barwick, on her experience as a child

“For the children in our family, especially Denny’s children, the impact is heartbreaking. They are trying to make sense of something that has no answers, while absorbing the fear and grief around them.”

— Mel Bowen, cousin of Denny Smith

RECOMMENDATION 5

NSW Police establish a mandatory, structured family liaison framework for long-term missing persons cases, requiring proactive and regular communication delivered by officers with dedicated training in trauma-informed and ambiguous loss-informed engagement. This framework should include a specialist Child Family Liaison role for cases involving children or young people in affected families.

3.2 Impediments in the Criminal Justice System

Access to Information Over Time

The Missed Foundation does not work within police investigations and is not in a position to speak to specific investigative decisions. We do, however, wish to highlight one significant and under-recognised impediment: the difficulty families face in accessing information about their loved one's case as time passes.

Families of long-term missing persons, particularly those whose investigations have stalled, are frequently unable to access coronial briefs, investigative summaries, and other documentation that could help them understand what is known. For families already carrying an enormous psychological burden, the process of seeking this information is often experienced as yet another barrier. After a reasonable period of time, and with appropriate safeguards, families should have a right to access this information. The process of seeking it should not add further trauma to people who have already waited long enough.

"I do not have access to the coronial report prepared by Kings Cross Detectives and I had nobody to guide me."

— Dianne Panov, aunt of Ursula Barwick

RECOMMENDATION 6

That a clear right of access be established for families of long-term missing persons to coronial briefs and relevant investigative documentation, after a reasonable time period and with appropriate safeguards, with a process that is straightforward, trauma-informed, and does not place the administrative burden on families.

Equity in Investigation and Support

The Missed Foundation's experience across thirteen years of supporting families suggests that the level of investigative attention and family support a missing persons case receives can be influenced by factors that should be irrelevant: the public profile of the case, the cultural background or socioeconomic status of the family, and geographic location (Stillman, 2007; Lam et al. 2023; lafolla, 2025). This consistent pattern of disparity across a decade of service warrants formal examination.

RECOMMENDATION 7

That an equity audit of investigative resource allocation and family support provision across missing persons cases be conducted, to identify and address any disparities linked to public profile, cultural background, socioeconomic status, or geographic location.

3.3 Clusters and Possible Links Between Unsolved Cases

The Missed Foundation does not work on police investigations and is not able to contribute substantively to the analysis of clusters or links between specific cases in the Southern Highlands, Inner Sydney, Newcastle, or the North Coast. We also note that our organisation was not in existence during the period covered by this inquiry (1965–2010).

We strongly support the principle of thorough, well-resourced, and independent review of cold cases, including clustering analysis. We urge the committee to ensure that the families of those affected are supported throughout any such process by independent specialist services that sit outside the investigative process.

RECOMMENDATION 8

That an independent cold case review mechanism be established, underpinned by a trauma-informed, family-centred approach, providing families with oversight, accountability, and meaningful participation in the review of long-term unresolved cases.

3.4 Progress of Police Investigations, Including Task Force Fenwick

The Missed Foundation does not work within police investigations and is not positioned to comment on the specific progress of Task Force Fenwick or other investigations.

We note, as a general principle, that families of long-term missing persons and unsolved murder victims are often the last to receive information about the progress of investigations. Any review of investigative progress must include a parallel review of how families have been communicated with, and what independent support they have been offered, throughout the investigation. Progress reviews without parallel family communication reviews will not serve justice.

3.5 Human Remains Identification, and the National DNA Program

The Human Cost of Systemic Deficiency: The Case of Ursula Barwick

The case of Ursula Barwick illustrates the profound consequences of failing to match unidentified human remains with existing missing persons reports. Ursula was 17 years old when she was reported missing from the Central Coast in September 1987. Though she

died in a car crash on the Hume Highway only weeks later, she was buried under a different name; her identity remained unconfirmed for 31 years (Coroners Court of NSW, 2018).

A 2021 inquest examined Ursula's case alongside those of Gary Jones, Christof Meier, and Lionel Daveson, whose remains had similarly gone unmatched for decades. Across all four cases, Coroner Derek Lee identified a recurring theme of systemic deficiencies within the NSW Missing Persons Unit. He found these shortcomings contributed to "inadequate, inefficient, and in some cases a complete absence of investigation" for extended periods. In Ursula's case, a data entry error erroneously marked her file as 'located' between 1994 and 1999. The investigating officer later described the absence of active investigation prior to 2014 as 'inexcusable' (Coroners Court of NSW, 2021).

"When she was found NSW Police went silent and Ursula's family was left holding a secret that was impossible to bear. NSW Police Media would not release a short official statement that they believed Ursula had been found, and this put the family in a confusing position where we were unsure of what we could and couldn't say publicly."

— Dianne Panov, aunt of Ursula Barwick

The National DNA Program: Progress and Discontinuation

Ursula's case is representative of a broader 'Identification Gap'. At the time of the latest national case audit, there were approximately 750 unidentified human remains and 2,500 active long-term missing persons cases in Australia (Ward, 2022, p. 54).

The National DNA Program for Unidentified and Missing Persons, established by the Australian Federal Police in 2020, demonstrated what is possible when forensic resources are applied consistently. Over its duration, the program conducted testing on 99 unidentified remains and resolved more than 50 cases, including the identification of 19 long-term missing persons. However, despite this proven success, the program concluded in 2024 (AFP, 2024), leaving at least 650 unidentified remains still awaiting forensic resolution.

The Missed Foundation considers the cessation of this work a serious regression. The families of the now 2,700 Australians who remain long-term missing, and the hundreds of unidentified remains that await identification, deserve a sustained, properly funded national commitment to this work.

RECOMMENDATION 9

That the NSW Government advocate at a federal level for the National DNA Program for Unidentified and Missing Persons to be reinstated and permanently funded. In the interim, that NSW establish its own DNA identification program, ensuring that biological samples from families of the long-term missing are systematically collected and searched against unidentified remains as a matter of standard practice, in line with the recommendations of Coroner Lee (Coroners Court of NSW, 2021).

3.6 Any Other Related Matters

A Growing Need with No Funded Response

The Missed Foundation wishes to use this final term of reference to address what we consider the most important and most overlooked dimension of this inquiry's subject matter: the scale of human need that surrounds missing persons cases, and the absence of any funded specialist service to address it.

With 57,000 Australians reported missing each year, and research showing that at least 12 people are affected by each disappearance, there are potentially hundreds of thousands of Australians navigating ambiguous loss at any one time (Henderson et al., 2000; AFP, 2025). Among the estimated 2,700 long-term missing persons cases (AFP, 2025), a minimum of 32,400 people are living with the particular and protracted grief of 'unending not-knowing'. This is not a small cohort. It is a substantial community of people in need.

There are currently no government-funded services in Australia dedicated to providing specialist support to this population. The Missed Foundation is pioneering this work in a sustained, specialised, lived experience-led way and we do so without core funding, relying on the generosity of donors and volunteers.

We are referred to by senior police officers, GPs, social workers, psychologists, and counsellors from Beyond Blue and Lifeline. That pattern of referral from government-funded services to an unfunded charity is not a compliment to our work. It demonstrates gaps in the system.

The Missed Foundation has operated for thirteen years. In that time, the number of Australians reported missing each year has nearly doubled. The need for what we do has grown enormously. The funding has not come. This inquiry has an opportunity to change that.

Time-limited counselling alone does not meet the needs of families navigating what may be a decades-long experience of ambiguous loss. What is required is specialist, long-term, lived experience-led support available from the earliest days of a disappearance and throughout the years that follow. What is also required is the restoration of dedicated advocacy and case coordination roles — roles that once existed within the NSW Families and Friends of Missing Persons Service and that have since been lost.

"There has been no specialist support offered to help us navigate this kind of trauma. We have been left to carry it on our own, without guidance, without appropriate mental health care, and without recognition of how serious and long-lasting these impacts are. This is not just an emotional burden—it is a profound and ongoing mental health crisis for our family."

— Mel Bowen, cousin of Denny Smith

RECOMMENDATION 10

That the NSW Government provide sustainable core funding for specialist, lived experience-led missing persons support organisations, including The Missed Foundation, recognising that no equivalent funded service exists anywhere in Australia and that the need is growing. Funding should enable long-term, ongoing support, not time-limited counselling, for families navigating the particular grief of ambiguous loss.

4. Summary of Recommendations

The Missed Foundation respectfully puts forward the following recommendations for the committee's consideration:

- 1.** That missing persons be formally reframed in policy, funding, and governance as a community health and social issue, not solely a policing matter, and that a national cross-sector framework be developed, bringing together government at all levels, health and social services, emergency services, media, and community organisations in a coordinated response.
- 2.** That the NSW Government establish a financial support scheme for all families of long-term missing persons, regardless of whether foul play is suspected, modelled on existing victim services and including interim support for families of suspected crime victims awaiting a death certificate and the completion of coronial proceedings.
- 3.** That this inquiry examine the current implementation status of all nine recommendations from the 2022 coronial inquest into the disappearance of Théo Jean Hayez, and advocate for the legislative reform necessary to give NSW Police and coronial investigators access to digital, telecommunications, and cloud-based data in missing persons cases on equivalent terms to criminal investigations.
- 4.** That the NSW Police Academy integrate mandatory training on ambiguous loss into both initial training and the ongoing professional development of officers in missing persons and family liaison roles, with immediate implementation supported by The Missed Foundation's Ambiguous Loss Masterclass.
- 5.** That NSW Police establish a mandatory, structured family liaison framework for long-term missing persons cases, requiring proactive and regular communication delivered by officers with training in trauma-informed and ambiguous-loss-informed engagement, including a specialist Child Family Liaison role.
- 6.** That a clear right of access be established for families of long-term missing persons to coronial briefs and relevant investigative documentation, after a reasonable time period and with appropriate safeguards.
- 7.** That an equity audit of investigative resource allocation and family support provision across missing persons cases be conducted, to identify and address disparities linked to public profile, cultural background, socioeconomic status, or geographic location.

8. That an independent cold case review mechanism be established, underpinned by a trauma-informed, family-centred approach, providing families with oversight, accountability, and meaningful participation in the review of long-term unresolved cases.
9. That the NSW Government advocate for the reinstatement and permanent funding of the National DNA Program for Unidentified and Missing Persons at a federal level, and establish a state-level DNA identification program in the interim, ensuring systematic collection and cross-referencing of DNA samples as a matter of standard practice.
10. That the NSW Government provide sustainable core funding for specialist, lived experience-led missing persons support organisations, including The Missed Foundation, enabling long-term, ongoing support for families navigating ambiguous loss.

The families The Missed Foundation supports do not experience this as a policy problem. They experience it as a daily reality - of waking up without answers, of navigating systems not built for them, and of carrying a grief that the world does not always recognise or understand. This inquiry has the rare opportunity to change that. On behalf of those families, we respectfully urge the committee to act on it.

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