

# Geelong missing persons cases mount as devastated family shares story

Countless Geelong families are left bearing an emotional cross that comes with having a relative go missing — with no explanation why. These cases continue to baffle authorities.

**Jessica Coates**

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Whenever Barwon Heads man William Ness sits down to have a cup of tea or a hot chocolate, he dedicates it to his son Daymon.

It's a tradition started by his late wife Elise, after their son Daymon went missing during a walk in Nitmiluk National Park, 23km northeast of Katherine in the NT in October 2020.

The 30-year-old Melbourne man was believed to be going for a walk along one of the hiking trails in the popular NT park, and had been travelling alone.

“I send him a little thought or prayer,” he said.

“My wife always used to say ‘find something they liked, or you liked to do with them, and each time you do it send them a little prayer’.”

It's understood Daymon was staying in Katherine on the way to Alice Springs to meet some friends.

“He'd had a Skype call with friends the night before, and was taking precautions,” Mr Ness said.

“Daymon told them if he wasn't back for their call at 5pm, to notify the authorities.”

An extensive six day ground and air search later failed to locate him.



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Wanting to carry on his son's legacy, his father signed on to help other families process their long-term loss by helping develop a new therapeutic tool.

"Daymon was a very caring, intelligent, supportive person," Mr Ness said.

"He was extraordinarily generous with his time, and it was a privilege and blessing to have him as a son."

The Missing Persons Advocacy Network (MPAN) – founded by Geelong woman Loren O'Keeffe – this week launched a series of 145 cards aimed at helping families navigate ambiguous loss.

"When a loved one goes missing, there is no right way to deal with it," Ms O'Keeffe said.

"You oscillate from hope to hopelessness, overwhelmed by the physical, mental and emotional burden, often feeling no one understands what you're going through."

Ms O'Keeffe said the cards allowed users to connect their emotions to people with similar lived experiences.

The cards – called the Hope Narratives – were developed in a two-day workshop Mr Ness took part in.

"Through these sessions, we shared our thoughts and stories and what it was like to experience this kind of ambiguous loss," he said.

"I'm hoping it's a tangible way for people to support each other as they process."



Offering a listening ear to others in need, Mr Ness implored members of the public to treat the loved ones of long-term missing people without judgment.

"This isn't the kind of loss you understand unless you've been through it," he said.

"Support is important. You need to have people around you who are positive, won't judge and can help keep you focused."

The launch coincides with the beginning of National Missing Persons Week.

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AFP acting assistant commissioner specialist protective command Jason Kennedy said more than 53,000 Australians were reported missing last year.

“Young, old, family members, and loved ones all from a range of cultures have one thing in common – the daily fears, hopes and endless questions they leave behind,” he said.

“NMPW is supported throughout the missing persons sector and within the broader community to bring much needed awareness and hopefully answers for those left behind.”

Moving forward, Mr Ness said the last thing his son would have wanted was for his loved ones to give up on life.

“Daymon would not have wanted the people he loved to stop living our lives,” he said.

“The best love you can give, is to live your life for them. Because that’s exactly what they would want.”

Anyone with information on a missing person should contact Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.