



LOGIN



SUBSCRIBE



The West Australian

WA News Crime

Missing WA people: 'Tormenting' search for loved ones who vanished leaves more questions than answers

**Jessica Evensen** The West AustralianSun, 26 October 2025 5:00AM [Comments](#)

Jessica Evensen



Lisa Govan (left) and Rigby Fielding (right) both went missing in WA. Credit: Supplied



When her brother went missing 10 years ago, the little things like the unpaid phone bills added to Stephenie Fielding's anguish.



Rigby was last seen in August 15, 2015, after visiting an associate on Goderich Street, in East Perth – about a week after the two of them returned home from a family trip to Port Hedland.



Rigby was 53, had just retired from his culinary career, and had moved home to care for his sick mum and Down Syndrome sister, Tina.

Ms Fielding recently recounted how Rigby had phoned their mother to say he was on his way home, but never returned.

“Mum rang me and said, ‘Have you seen Rig? He was supposed to come home,’” she told The Sunday Times.

WA's biggest courts and crime stories to your inbox

Sign-up to our weekly newsletter for free

SIGN UP

“I remember being instantly concerned, but also at the same time I was just trying to reassure mum saying, ‘he’ll be fine.’

“But Rig wouldn’t just leave her, he wouldn’t leave my sister without preparing dinner, especially when he said he was on his way back.”

Rigby was officially reported missing about four weeks after his disappearance. Then that December, Rigby’s clothes, bag and mobile phone were found abandoned in The Spectacles, a dense wetland reserve in Kwinana about 33km south of Perth, sparking a homicide investigation.

Ms Fielding believes her brother met with foul play.

“I know my brother was on dating apps, and I know in the past he had met someone who bashed him and robbed him,” she said.

“The only thing that would have stopped him from coming home is if he had met someone on a spur of the moment thing, which is what he used to do.”



Stephanie Fielding has spent 10 years advocating for her brother's disappearance. Credit: Andrew Ritchie/The West Australian

She described the past decade as “tormenting” and her pain had worsened over time.

“The whole thing of ‘time heals’ is bullshit – the longer it goes on, the more tormenting it is,” she said.

“The passage of time isn’t kind, it feels worse, it feels heavier and it weighs you down.”

There are 369 long-term missing persons – someone not seen or heard from in more than 90 days – in WA and countless family members in a similar position to Ms Fielding, but without formal support.

While families in Victoria and NSW can use various missing persons advocacy groups, including the Centre for Missing Persons Australia and The Missed Foundation, WA lacks a local advocacy group dedicated to supporting families of long-term missing persons, and keeping their loved ones on the public radar.

Ms Fielding said these groups – often kick-started by other families of missing people – offered a sense of comfort and community.

“(These organisations) are giving back to the community by those who have gone through that loss themselves, so they know what people need to hear and they know those tangible things that help,” she said.

“You’re talking to people that get it, they understand how you’re feeling and what you’re going through.

“Every State needs a place to go . . . I think (they should be) modelled on these other services because their set up is perfect, and they’re coming from a place where they know what people need because they’ve been through it.”



 Rigby Fielding and sister, Stephenie Fielding. Credit: Supplied

She said these support networks offered tangible assistance, like helping cancel a phone bill or suggesting families hang up missing persons posters.

“(After he went missing), Rig’s phone bill kept coming in, and mum was getting really, really upset because it kept getting bigger and bigger,” Ms Fielding said.

"I ended up calling The Missed Network and I said, 'this is crazy, what do people do in this situation?'"

"They had been given a grant from Vodafone . . . and the billing stopped, but his phone line was kept open.

"That was a really great thing that came from helping other families, because we just kept paying my brother's phone bill because we didn't want to get in trouble, and it's just another cost that families don't need.

"They're just a good source of support, even just talking about, 'Have you tried this? Have you got a Facebook page? Did you put missing persons posters around your area?'"



📷 Around 50 WA Police officers and SES volunteers search bushland near The Spectacles in Anketell as part of the investigation into the suspected homicide of 53 year old Rockingham man Rigby Fielding. Credit: Megan Powell/The West Australian

In June, Ms Fielding was part of a fresh police campaign offering a \$500,000 reward for any information that helps solve a long-term missing person's case.

"I was so positive that someone might come forward and either say they had seen him somewhere, or maybe dob someone in for that amount of money," she said.

"It's been a few months now since that was announced and nothing has come of that.

"It's just always in the back of your head, wondering where he is and what happened to him that day."

Central Queensland University trauma expert professor Sarah Wayland said families of missing people often found solace in others who shared a similar lived experience.

"Whilst we can engage with professionals or doctors to be able to get help with the things that are happening to us, talking to somebody that's also walked that same path is really powerful," she said.

"It doesn't necessarily mean that the other person will be able to give you new tips and tricks to manage what's happened, but that sense of being able to see yourself in someone else's journey can really make people feel like they're not alone."



 Lisa Govan, vanished from the Club Deroes clubhouse in Kalgoorlie in October 1999. Credit: unknown/supplied

Like Ms Fielding, Ginette Jackson has spent the last 26 years desperately searching for answers after her sister, Lisa Govan, vanished from the Club Deroes clubhouse in Kalgoorlie in October 1999.

The 28-year-old had been seen with gang members Andrew Edhouse and Trefor Atkinson in the hours leading up to her disappearance.

Her body has never been found, but police are treating her disappearance as a homicide.

No one has ever been charged and the family felt “frustrated and helpless when we can’t get answers,” Ms Jackson said.

“I also feel angry that there’s people out there that know what happened to Lisa, yet aren’t saying anything or providing any information,” she told The Sunday Times.

“I feel that the more time that passes, the less chance of finding Lisa’s remains and getting those responsible charged.”

She said her family often went “long periods” without any contact from WA Police.



 Pat Govan, mother of Lisa, and pictured with daughter Ginette Jackson, right, who is Lisa's sister, leaves court after Andrew Edhouse appeared via video link at the inquest into Lisa Govan's suspected murder. Credit: Danella Bevis/The West Australian

“We had one detective that was great and he would contact us every month to touch base, even if he didn’t have any new information to share,” she said.

“I believe in regular contact is important for reassurance, but I also understand that might be different for some other families who might not want that much contact unless there’s some news.”

Ms Jackson said her family had been in contact with other families of long-term missing persons, including Ms Fielding and the family of Hayley Dodd.

Ms Dodd was just 17 when she was killed by Francis Wark after luring her into his car while hitchhiking in the Wheatbelt's Badgingarra in 1999. Her body has never been found.

Ms Jackson said having a family member missing long-term was "a daunting and unique process."



Mounted police joined around 50 WA Police officers and SES volunteers search bushland as part of the investigation into the suspected homicide of 53 year old Rockingham man Rigby Fielding. Credit: Megan Powell/The West Australian

"It would be good to have a group that's experienced and knowledgeable to help and offer support along the way," she said.

"Having somebody to talk to that understands your feelings and that you can chat with would be good."

Professor Wayland emphasised the need for advocacy groups and community support.

"There's huge importance of that collective hoping of people with similar lived experiences to come together, not just to lean on each other, but if they think that

there are systems or institutions in the community that are doing the things that might assist them,” she said.

“Sometimes having more than one voice asking for change can be really powerful.”

WA Police said the force remained “agile with the capability to scale up or down our resources to meet operational demand.”

“Our focus remains on thoroughly investigating every report of a missing person, regardless of how long they have been missing,” a spokesperson said.



NEWS

Inside Virginia Giuffre’s traumatic final years in Perth

Rhianna Mitchell



CRIME

Fresh river search for murdered Aboriginal teen's body

Farid Farid

Get the latest news from thewest.com.au in your inbox.

[SIGN UP FOR OUR EMAILS](#)



To comment on this story and join the conversation, subscribe to The West Australian's [Everyday Digital package](#).

Are you already a subscriber?

[LOGIN](#)



FROM AROUND THE SITE

► [How WA therapy dog helps first responders in tough times](#)