

# The Missed Foundation



Annual Report 2024

# Executive summary



For me, 2024 was the year the organisation finally started to feel settled. With our first bequest, global uptake of our resources and the hiring of our very first member of staff, lived experience champion and former board member Lili Greer, we now have a predictable future ahead of us, albeit just a couple of years at a time.

Alongside our cherished long-serving and new monthly and regular donors, throughout the year much-needed funds were raised by supporters who organised events including Lili's 12 for Tina charity dinner in Sydney, and SenateSHJ's 17-member strong Melbourne Marathon team. This support allowed us to progress with our big picture goals, work closely with 43 Australian families - providing everything from graphic design, strategic communications, search support, facilitation of pro bono legal advice and media guidance - as well as respond to calls for assistance from a Ballarat school reeling from the high-profile disappearance of Samantha Murphy.

Indiana's Purdue University covered my travel expenses to attend and present at the 2024 Cold Case Symposium in Florida. During the symposium, we had top US organisations engaging with our work, almost 100 sets of The Hope Narratives were sold on the spot, and Missed was such a hit that we were invited back for the 2025 event.

Our Ambiguous Loss Masterclass continues to be embraced by families and professionals alike. The online masterclass has been viewed over 1500 times, and has been translated into Spanish thanks to an Ireland-based bilingual PhD student with experience in service support for families of missing people in Mexico.

Beyond the dozens of Australian families we supported throughout 2024, we also provided various resources and opportunities to loved ones abroad outside of the US Cold Case Symposium. With freshly translated, printed and produced Spanish collateral in tow for the symposium, we facilitated a very moving workshop for Mexican group, Familias Buscadoras de Yucatán.

Another highlight from the year was meeting the mother of 19-year-old California woman, Julie Garciacelay, who disappeared in North Melbourne in 1975. Though now 93, and with little faith her daughter's case will be resolved, we were able to arrange a plaque, tree planting and church service which was livestreamed to her home amongst the Californian redwoods where I was able to sit next to her, holding her hand.

MinterEllison's guidance helped us licence and trademark The Hope Narratives™, prompting us to make a second edition of the tool and then engage a manufacturer in China, which allowed us to reach thousands of users internationally.

Our long-awaited new website went live, we commenced the media guidelines project in collaboration with Prof. Sarah Wayland and Everymind - hosting focus groups with families, journalists and police media units - and we welcomed former Deputy State Coroner Jacqui Hawkins to the Board.

The work we've done inspired more creative work in 2024, in the form of the book *Gone* by esteemed author Glenna Thomson, and a brilliant production called *The Comprehensive A-Z of Missing Persons in Australia* by the WA Youth Theatre Company.

We continue to receive referrals from institutions like Griefline, Beyond Blue, Services Australia and police and health professionals generally. Despite a positive meeting with the Chief of Staff for the Assistant Minister for Health the Hon. Ged Kearney MP after we learned our budget submission was unsuccessful, it seems our leaders aren't willing to recognise the impact of this cause. To date, The Missed Foundation has not received a cent of state or federal government funding.

Generous Australians continue to fuel this charity, and this year we received a branded vehicle (leased through a small Melbourne business for a year) to help us get around and spread awareness.

On this note, we would like to thank each of our individual and corporate donors for their support in 2024. Without you, the assistance we provide to families of missing loved ones would be severely limited.

My Auntie Irene's bequest (the biggest single influx of funds in our 12 years) has afforded us some breathing room for the meantime, but our quest for sustainable funding continues.

Onwards and upwards,

Loren O'Keeffe  
Founding CEO

# 28,000

impressions on new website

# \$303,776

in donations

# 2,238

subscribers

# 129

birthday and anniversary  
messages sent

# 1,542

views of the Ambiguous  
Loss Masterclass



Actor Jaimee Whirledge as Loren O'Keeffe in The Comprehensive A-Z of Missing Persons Australia (credit: Dan Grant)

# Family assistance

## Case study: Ruth



Throughout 2024 Loren met with Helen Thomas who - after making The Easey Street Murders podcast based on her 2022 book - is producing a podcast on the 1975 North Melbourne disappearance of 19-year-old Californian woman Julie Garciacelay. In August, Helen mentioned Julie's elderly mother Ruth wanted a plaque for Julie before she died.

Loren, aware of the Garciacelays' Lutheran faith, contacted Melbourne's St Johns and promptly met with Pastor James Wunderlich at the Southbank church. Confident his church committee would approve the laying of the plaque, Helen sourced the wording from Ruth, and Missed coordinated the plaque through South Melbourne's Scotia Engraving.

Pastor James was so moved by Ruth's story that he very kindly also offered to plant a tree of her choosing and host a memorial service for Julie that he could livestream so Ruth, who lives in California, could participate. The Sydney Morning Herald's Wendy Touhy wrote a feature, and several other outlets

(approved by Ruth) covered the story and attended the actual service, along with a few dozen compassionate Melburnians who remembered Julie's story.

The timing of the service aligned so that Loren, en route to Florida for the Cold Case Symposium, could physically be there with Ruth. She brought copies of the Order of Service Missed Creative Director Maricarmen designed, and Julie's Japanese maple (a tree popular in her Californian hometown) was planted by Pastor James and Helen as Missed families, supporters, our wonderful SenateSHJ partners (who coordinated and fronted media on our behalf) and Loren, Ruth and her caring neighbours watched on.

**It was a very moving ceremony, and something which Ruth said God had 'kept her alive to see'.**



Images: Pastor James blessing Julie's tree as Ruth and Loren watch on via the livestream, Ruth and Loren during Julie's service, Julie's plaque and The Age article about Julie.



# Family assistance



Our friend Heesco (who painted a mural of Tej as part of our Unmissables initiative in 2017) kindly created a beautiful portrait to mark his 30th birthday



Community search efforts for a missing mum

## Media and communications

In 2024, we coordinated a number of media releases, interviews and visual assets to generate significant coverage for missing loved ones and their families. This included coverage relating to missing Ballarat mother Samantha Murphy, the very successful launch of Casefile's new podcast series Niamh (the product of our 2020 introduction of the Casefile team to the family), and national TV, print and radio coverage for Julie Garciacelay (the Easey Street developments of July shone a much-needed light on this cold case).

We also had strong National Missing Persons Week media for the family of a missing man with special needs, billboards for a QLD woman, comprehensive planning and execution for 50th anniversary coverage for a missing NSW woman whose family is seeking an inquest, correspondence with WA Police on behalf of a family regarding the status of a reward for their missing loved one, and supporting a family in crisis after media reported the discovery of a high-profile Victorian woman's body.

In the wake of particularly disappointing behaviour by producers at Southern Pictures, we supported a family member with specific requests regarding their involvement in a program produced by the company in 2023. We also referred SBS Insight producers to two of our families who featured in the Citizen Sleuths episode that aired in April 2025.

## Emotional support

Over the course of a year, we sent over 120 personalised texts and emails to individuals and families on their missing loved one's birthday and/or anniversary.

Each family in our network has a different set of circumstances and needs, and the relationship with Missed is determined by the family's involvement. In 2024, examples of how we've provided emotional support include attending a 4-day interstate search, coordinating a very special gift for a missing loved one's milestone birthday, fulfilling a dying mother's wish (see Case study: Ruth), attending lobbying events and sharing dozens of coffees, lunches and dinners with families we support. We also referred a number of families to specialised ambiguous loss counsellors.

## Opportunities for meaning-making

We know from Dr. Pauline Boss that the most effective way to manage ambiguous loss is to make meaning from it. In June, Missed invited families to be involved with a focus group facilitated by Prof. Sarah Wayland. Seven family members spent a half-day together in Sydney sharing their experiences with the media in relation to their missing loved one's story. The insights given will shape the development of much-needed guidelines for the safe reporting on missing persons in Australia to protect vulnerable families from additional harm.

**In lieu of being able to find their missing loved one, the importance of being able to contribute to the bigger picture cannot be overstated.**

Another way some families gain a sense of purpose is through connecting with others to lend their advice/share their experience. A woman whose partner had disappeared overseas in recent months asked if we could connect her to anyone local who understands her predicament, and one such family member was more than happy to share her experience. Another woman whose loved one's remains were discovered a few years ago has maintained her connection to Missed and accepts all requests to be introduced to families with similar circumstances and challenges as she considers it a chance to help others in her loved one's memory.

## Practical support

In a crisis, practical support is a key component to emotional support and we are proud to have provided this support to dozens of Australian families throughout 2024. We connected families to pro bono lawyers to assist with everything from administering a long-term missing mother's affairs through to advising on developments in a brother's protracted coronial inquest. We also facilitated and administered fundraising for a family to have a large-scale mural painted of their missing child to mark the 30th anniversary of their disappearance.

# Advocacy

Another core element of our work is advocating for the rights and unmet needs of families and friends of missing people.

Throughout 2024, The Missed Foundation was asked to review the Queensland Crime and Corruption Commission's High Risk Missing Person procedures to improve policies and protocols, was invited to the AFP's National Missing Persons Coordination Centre's stakeholder meetings - where we encourage lived experience to play a central role in research and policy - and attended various vigils and lobbying events. Throughout all of our advocacy initiatives, a consistent message was communicated to stakeholders: the prevalence of missing persons continues to rise each year, yet there remains limited support for families affected by long-term cases.

Our website is the hub for people interested in and affected by this issue and we spent many months of the year on the long overdue website upgrade, finally launched in October. There's

been lots of positive feedback from users both here and abroad, and we've seen a significant uptake in our resources.

The family of a young woman whose case quickly became high-profile was very publicly supportive of our organisation, and particularly our foundation project, the Missing Persons Guide. They spoke at a number of public events and vigils, and the awareness they raised for the broader issues and the need for support like ours was far-reaching.

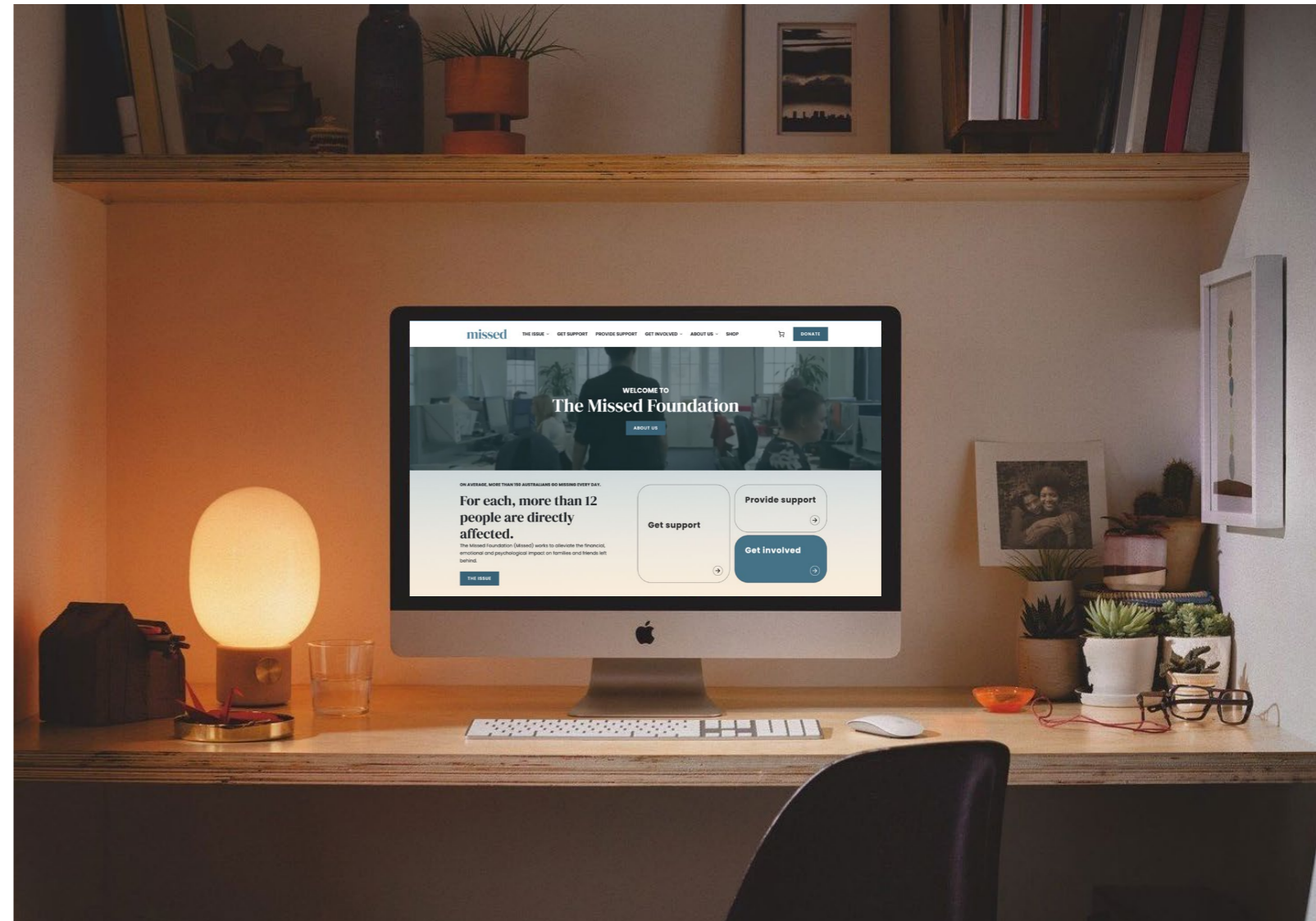
Advocacy is at the heart of our major, ongoing project around the development of media guidelines - to create a blueprint to ensure media representation and coverage is unbiased, accurate, respectful and trauma-informed.



Lili with Elaine Johnson's sisters Helen and Wendy, lobbying outside NSW Parliament House



Media guidelines focus group: Prof. Sarah Wayland, Kat, Fee, Lisa, Lili, Sas, Promise and Kieron



# International engagement

Missing persons is a global crisis, with universal themes present despite the breadth of potential causes, including misadventure, dementia, mental health, foul play, migration, natural disasters, conflict and more.

**Regardless of the circumstances under which a loved one disappeared, it's the agony of not-knowing which bonds an incredibly diverse community of families and friends from all around the world.**

Our evergreen resources are therefore reaching an increasingly wide network, furthered by our invitations to events like the Cold Case Symposium (where Loren was one of 10 speakers, including 'Golden State Killer' prosecutor Anne Marie Schubert and Nicole Eckersley from the world's largest missing persons organisation, the National Centre for Missing and Exploited Children).

Loren presenting to academics, scientists, search and rescue and law enforcement professionals, advocates and families in the US

In January, we licensed the production of The Hope Narratives™ for therapists in the Middle East supporting families of loved ones missing as a result of the war. The tool has also been embraced by psychology and psychotherapy students.

We were approached by a mother in Ethiopia who is seeking to start a support group and shared that our Hope Narratives, What's Missing podcast and Ambiguous Loss Masterclass were very useful.

Swedish academic Rebecca Sternberg contacted Missed to see if our resources would be available to Swedish families whose loved ones are not found, as Missing People Sweden does not have non-ground search support currently available. We have since sent an information pack (including a set of The Hope Narratives, tangible Swedish-language samples of multiple sequences, a copy of Too Short Stories and the one-pagers of both ambiguous loss resources) and hope to collaborate with the charity in 2025.



Loren with symposium creators Purdue University's Dr Krystal Hans and Project: Cold Case founder Ryan Backmann

# International engagement

## Case study: Mexico

In March, Mexican woman Andrea Lopez Clinton, who is a doctoral candidate in clinical psychology, bought the Advanced Skills Training component of our Masterclass. Though now living in Ireland, Andrea has extensive experience in supporting families of missing people from a previous role at Mexico's National System of Family Services (DIF). She was so impressed by the course - acknowledging how useful it would have been in her previous role - that she introduced Loren to the then leader of the Mexican service, Miguel Ramirez. Over the course of the year, Andrea became such an avid supporter that she volunteered to translate and proofread The Hope Narratives (for the production of 200 units in China in July), the one-pagers for both The Hope Narratives and Ambiguous Loss Masterclass and the subtitles for both Masterclass videos.

Completely separate to this, a Mexican mental health organisation (SAK Fundación) came across The Hope Narratives and bought the tool for their staff and families.

Like a Mexican wave, we then connected with a newly formed collective of families in Mérida, called Familias Buscadoras de Yucatán, led by a formidable woman named Clarita whose extraordinary efforts led to finding her son's remains and founding the search and support group. Acutely aware of their economic barriers, we covered the cost of bus fares and catering for the members to come together on a Saturday morning in late October. The group invited us to a special mass in honour of their missing loved ones, after which we facilitated a workshop (thanks to our Creative Director Maricarmen who ran the session in Spanish) where mothers, fathers and brothers were able to share their experiences based on prompts from The Hope Narratives.

We gifted 12 sets of the Spanish tool to Familias Buscadoras de Yucatán and sent five sets to the family of Erika Cueto - a woman who disappeared on the other side of Mexico 10 years ago (and whose family is very active and works closely with other families of missing loved ones).

Maricarmen and Loren with Familias Buscadoras de Yucatán after their regular church service





Actor Em Wells with image of Elaine Johnson, missed since 1980, in *The Comprehensive A-Z of Missing Persons Australia* (credit: Dan Grant)

# Community support and fundraising

We would like to extend our heartfelt thanks to all our dedicated community fundraisers, in-kind supporters, and donors whose generosity had a lasting effect on our mission this year.

We also genuinely appreciate any efforts to further community awareness for both this cause and our charity, of which there were some incredible demonstrations this year.

Early in 2024, SenateSHJ welcomed me into their new and enviable Collins Street office space and continued their invaluable strategic communication support, contributing significantly to the success of The Missed Foundation. They went above and beyond in 2024, by registering almost all Melbourne-based staff for the Melbourne Marathon Festival in October, and raised over \$14,000. Our customised running tops and post-run hydration were very kindly sponsored by Pirate Life Brewing.



In February, Glenna Thomson, author of Penguin-published novel *Gone*, pledged proceeds from the launch sales of her book to be donated to The Missed Foundation. She had apparently found our podcast *What's Missing* to be especially helpful in understanding the experience for families (*Gone* tells the story of a young woman who goes missing and the impact it has on her family members). Coupled with a generous opening paragraph in the acknowledgements section, this gesture further supports our cause.

The 12 For Tina charity dinner, held in June in Sydney, was a meaningful event where over 90 community members gathered to honour Tina Greer's memory and support The Missed Foundation. Through ticket sales and a raffle, the event raised over \$12,000.



Our brutally honest state-of-affairs EOFY video had an effect across our socials, leading to a number of donations, invitations and opportunities. One being that the owner of small Melbourne business YPG Risk, after seeing 'how exhausted Loren looked', provided a Suzuki Swift from his fleet for one year. The Missed Mobile has zipped all across Victoria since, which has spread both brand and cause awareness immeasurably.

Building manager Dexus supported us for National Missing Persons Week with an internal newsletter feature (to the 3000+ workers at 80 Collins Street), digital ads on rotation in the building's lifts, made the building's exterior lights blue (as per our brand), and even dedicated the building's weekly flower arrangements - and subsequent Friday afternoon auction bids to take them home - to Missed.



# Community support and fundraising



Actor Rachel Abelha (credit: Dan Grant)

November saw the opening night of *The Comprehensive A-Z of Missing Persons Australia*, an incredibly powerful theatre production by accomplished actor and playwright Grace Chow and the WA Youth Theatre Company, which we had the privilege of guiding and featuring in. The show was so well done that we encouraged our Perth-based families to see it (with complementary tickets) and calls for it to be played on the east coast had us provide support letters to producers with the hope to get it played by professional casts at Melbourne's Malthouse and Sydney's Belvoir theatres. It was the most profound, clever, impactful and creative project on missing persons that we've ever seen, and we look forward to its wider showing in the future.

To finish the year, December brought additional highlights, including the generosity of the Windsor Hotel and its restaurant customers. For every stay or meal, \$2 was donated to The Missed Foundation, offering a unique way for the community to support our mission. Melbourne's restaurant scene was once again prompted to consider the cause at a time of year that often focuses on families being together.

**As a charity that relies solely on the generosity of the community, we are incredibly grateful for the continued support of our donors, volunteers, and in-kind supporters.**

**Your contributions are vital to the success of our work and make a meaningful difference in the lives of those affected by missing persons.**



Loren and playwright Grace Chow on opening night

# Twelve years on, Missed is still 100% community-funded

We couldn't have achieved any of the initiatives we have - from the MissingPersonsGuide.com, to every creative iteration of The Unmissables, Missed Birthdays, The Hope Narratives™ and Ambiguous Loss Masterclass - without the support of our corporate partner SenateSHJ, our regular donors, and the incredible businesses and individuals that so kindly fundraise for Missed throughout the year.



Authors Vikki Petraitis and Glenna Thomson with Loren at the launch of Gone

## Special individuals

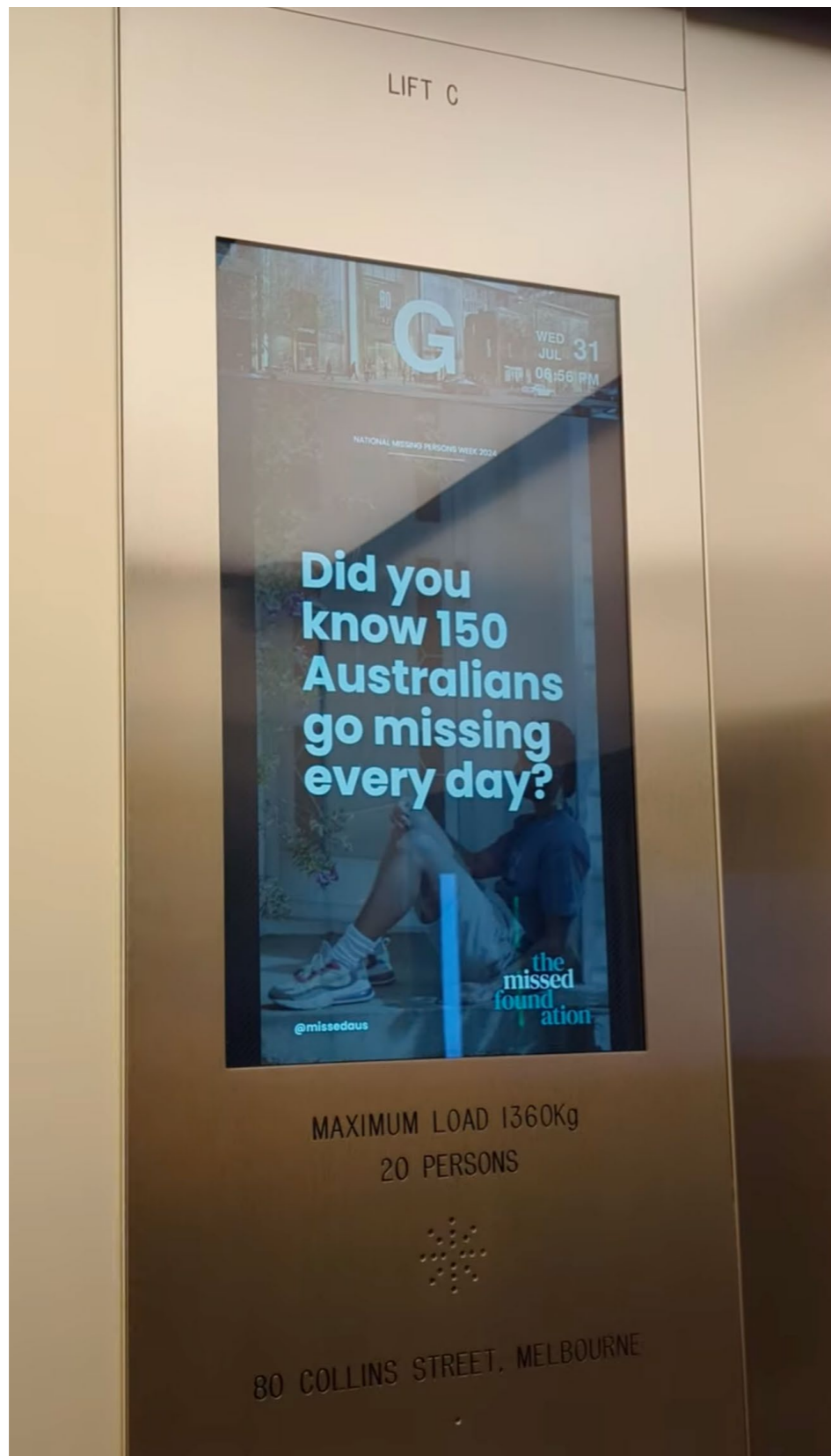
For small charities, all donations are appreciated beyond words. None more so than regular donations. In 2024, regular giving heroes included John T, Mike G, Katrina C, Nic S, Beth C, Luke K, Sydney P, Amy M, Jen J, Dylan R, Cassandra H, Dane H, Leisa H, Mike I, Bronwyn S, Anna C, Jo R, Alaska H, Peter W, Fionnuala H, Mark B, Alison M, Daniel C, Renee J, and Margi R.

Not only did 2024 bring our first bequest, it also brought our first continuous pledge. We were brought to tears during a video call with one of our families, marking their missing loved one's 10th anniversary, pledging a donation of \$10,000 every year for the next 10 years. This tremendously meaningful, generous contribution to Missed will ensure our ability to continue our impact in the realm of missing persons for the next decade to come.



Loren with Working Drones Australia's Daniel Wood in Tasmania supporting Jason Sallèse's search for dad Nicola

# Ways you can help



## Spare a thought

When you see a missing person storyline, imagine the reality many families live with daily

## Spare some change

Consider a tax-deductible donation



## Hear our stories

Listen to our What's Missing podcast



## Educate yourself

Watch our Ambiguous Loss Masterclass ([missed.org.au/alm](https://missed.org.au/alm))



## Be moved

Watch our ep of ABC's critically acclaimed You Can't Ask That



Please follow us @missedaus and/or share your feedback, wisdom or say g'day: [hello@missed.org.au](mailto:hello@missed.org.au)

[missed.org.au](https://missed.org.au)



Parents of missing loved ones at Missed's workshop with Familias Buscadoras de Yucatán

## Balance sheet report

Cash mode  
30 Jun 2024

	<b>Total</b>
<b>Asset</b>	
<b>Banking</b>	
Operating Acct no447888368	77,449
<b>Total Banking</b>	<b>77,449</b>
<b>Fixed Assets</b>	
Term Deposit - Bank Aus #4427	240,000
<b>Total Fixed Assets</b>	<b>240,000</b>
<b>Total Asset</b>	<b>317,449</b>
<b>Liability</b>	
<b>Current Liabilities</b>	
PAYG withholdings payable	383
Superannuation payable	2,936
<b>Total Current Liabilities</b>	<b>3,319</b>
<b>Total Liability</b>	<b>3,319</b>
<b>Net Assets</b>	<b>314,129</b>
<b>Equity</b>	
<b>Current Earnings</b>	
Current year Surplus or Deficit	135,872
<b>Total Current Earnings</b>	<b>135,872</b>
<b>Retained Earnings</b>	
Retained surplus or Accumulated losses	186,831
<b>Total Retained Earnings</b>	<b>186,831</b>
Historical balancing	(8,574)
<b>Total Equity</b>	<b>314,129</b>

## Profit and loss report

Cash mode  
01 Jul 2023 - 30 Jun 2024

	<b>Total</b>
<b>4-0000 Income</b>	
4-2010 Donations received	136,617.10
4-2050 Bequest	167,159.52
4-4010 Sales of Goods	604.94
4-4013 Educational donations	1,938.38
<b>Total Income</b>	<b>306,319.94</b>
<b>Gross Profit</b>	<b>306,319.94</b>
<b>6-0000 Expense</b>	
6-0010 Accounting fees	863.05
6-0020 Advertising	167.64
6-0040 Assets Purchased incl computers less than 5000	60.00
6-0070 Bank charges	103.02
6-0085 Catering for Meetings	2,741.26
6-0400 Insurance	1,078.39
6-0490 Media Guidelines	1,287.05
6-0510 Postage & courier	489.86
6-0520 Printing & stationery	124.87
6-0600 Wages & salaries	98,523.16
6-0607 Superannuation expense	10,861.89
6-0680 Telephone	710.41
6-0700 Training and development	360.00
6-0711 Travel & Accommod Domestic	5,251.08
6-0712 Travel & Accommod International	3,173.82
6-6401 Fundraising	10,774.69
6-6402 IT	1,582.92
6-6403 Website	19,854.26
6-6404 Media	516.10
6-6405 Sundries	984.86
6-6406 Transport	2,311.31
6-6407 Ambiguous Loss Training	1,376.96
6-6408 Counselling	94.80
6-6409 Graphic design	2,900.00
6-6410 The Hope Narratives	740.08
6-6411 Payroll	3,516.40
<b>Total Expense</b>	<b>170,447.88</b>
<b>Operating Profit</b>	<b>135,872.06</b>
<b>Net Profit</b>	<b>135,872.06</b>

**the  
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