Chapter 12 – Missing Persons

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12.1 Introduction

Definitions

For the purpose of this chapter, the following definitions apply:

**Authorised assistant**

for missing person powers see s. 11A: ‘Who is an authorised assistant for missing persons powers’ of the PPRA.

**High risk missing person**

means a missing person classified as ‘High Risk’ upon completion of the ‘Risk Assessment Guidelines For Missing Persons’ when entering a QPRIME missing person occurrence. See s. 179C of the PPRA for when a missing person is high risk for the purpose of a missing person warrant.

**Known vulnerability**

includes a person:

(i) affected by:

(a) dementia and related illnesses

(b) a known medical condition or a physical or intellectual disability

(ii) believed to intending self-harm; or

(iii) who is a child.

**Missing person**

means a person, whether an adult or child, reported to police whose whereabouts are unknown and where there are fears for the safety or concerns for the welfare of that person and a police officer makes reasonable inquiries to contact and locate that person and the persons whereabouts remain unknown (see s. 179B: ‘Who is a missing person’ of the PPRA).

**Missing person scene**

means that part of a place in which missing person powers may be exercised.

**Missing person warrant**

see section 179J(1).

**Responsible officer**

see s. 179A ‘Definitions for part’ of the PPRA.

Purpose

This chapter is designed to provide a procedural framework for police in respect to missing persons.

This chapter is not designed to provide advice for prolonged searches for missing persons.

Police have a common law authority to make all necessary inquiries to protect and preserve life. A process also has been developed which requires approval to publicise particulars of missing persons in the media. Exceptions include where the missing person is wanted for absconding on bail and certain circumstances under the Family Law Act (Cwlth).

12.2 References to legislation

Frequent reference to legislation is made which impacts on the contents of this chapter. This chapter should be read in conjunction with those statutes, which can be accessed from the legislation page on the Service Intranet.

12.3 General information

The Service has a responsibility to protect life. When a person is reported missing inquiries will be made by officers to locate or ensure the safety of that person.

To support this function, the Missing Persons Unit, State Crime Command, is responsible for the state-wide overview, coordination and analysis of information in relation to missing persons.
12.3.1 Missing Persons Unit
For details of the Missing Persons Unit roles and functions, refer to their website on the Service intranet.

12.3.2 Release of information to the media
The Service recognises the right of privacy of individuals. Before releasing personal particulars or images of a missing person to the media, members are to comply with s. 12.3.3: ‘Authority for media release’ of this chapter. During the investigation or when making inquiries regarding a missing person, a member may show a photograph of the missing person to members of the public.

The media should be involved to assist in the location of a missing person and include where:

(i) the missing person is a child;
(ii) concerns exist that the missing person may not have the freedom or ability to voluntarily return home;
(iii) the physical or mental state of the missing person may be such that the missing person would not be able to consciously make a decision to return home;
(iv) such release may immediately cause the missing person to come forward; or
(v) the investigation is such that community assistance is necessary to locate the missing person.

12.3.3 Authority for media release
When an officer determines the assistance of the media is required to locate a missing person, the officer is to:

(i) contact the OIC of their station or establishment, or if that officer is not on duty,
(ii) their senior supervising non-commissioned officer; and
(iii) advise that officer of the circumstances and request permission to release particulars and image of the missing person to the media.

When an officer receives a request for a media release, the officer is to:

(i) consider the safety of the missing person;
(ii) consider the likelihood of locating the missing person;
(iii) request consent for the release of missing person information from the missing persons parents, relatives or inquirer (authorised person); and
(iv) if granted, complete and upload a QP 0950: ‘Missing Person Media Authorisation’ into the missing person occurrence. (Consent is not required for a missing child in out of home care (see subsection’ Child in out of home care reported missing’ of s. 12.4.1: ‘Responsibility of officer who receives a report’ of this chapter)); and
(v) give a direction to the officer making the request as to what action should be taken.

Where media release is authorised
Where a media release is authorised, the actioning officer is to:

(i) contact Media and Public Affairs Group to initiate the media release;
(ii) cause the
   (a) OIC, Missing Persons Unit;
   (b) the district officer or supervising commissioned officer;
   (c) the requesting officer; and
   (d) Crime Stoppers;

to be advised of the media release as soon as practicable;

(iii) ensure that a copy of the media release and photo is attached to the QPRIME missing person occurrence; and

(iv) advise the authorising person that the media release has been distributed.

Where the officer making the decision was not the OIC of the station or establishment, that officer is also to be advised.

Restrictions
Officers are to comply with s. 121: ‘Restriction on publication of court proceedings’ of the Family Law Act (Cwlth), which places restrictions on the publication of identifying information under the Act. When considering the release of information to the media, care is to be taken not to infringe the legislation. Particulars of Family Law proceedings are to be included in the QPRIME missing person occurrence.
See also, s. 5.6.12: ‘Information released by police seeking public assistance in the investigation of incidents and crimes’, ‘Images (including photographic)’ section of the MSM.

**Officers should liaise with missing person’s parents, relatives or inquirer**

In authorising the release of particulars of a missing person the OIC of a station or establishment, or if that officer is not on duty, the senior supervising non-commissioned officer, should liaise or direct another officer to liaise with the missing person’s parents, relatives or inquirer with a view to minimising any misunderstandings.

### 12.4 Missing person occurrence

#### 12.4.1 Responsibility of the officer who receives a report

**Missing person is of a known vulnerability**

ORDER

Where the person is of a known vulnerability (see Definitions of this chapter), a QPRIME missing person occurrence is to be created in all instances.

**Missing person is not of known vulnerability**

Where the missing person is not of a known vulnerability, the reporting officer is to be satisfied there exists a reasonable and justified concern for the safety or welfare of the person.

**Inquiries of missing persons not a policing function**

Missing person inquiries relating to family tree searches, child support issues or persons known to be homeless (see s. 6.3.11: ‘Homeless persons’ of this Manual) are not a policing function.

For loss of contact and family tracing inquiries outside Australia, refer to the Red Cross, Tracing, Refugee and Asylum Seeker Services for assistance.

**Officer receiving a report of a missing person**

An officer receiving a report of a missing person, except for:

(i) an Australia resident missing overseas; or  
(ii) a resident of another Australian state or territory missing from that state or territory (see the relevant subsections of this section),

is to immediately:

(i) ascertain from the inquirer the person is actually a missing person (see Definitions of this chapter);  
(ii) query QPRIME to ascertain if any previous records about that person exist;  
(iii) prior to the termination of the officer’s shift, create a missing person occurrence in QPRIME and enter all required information (see ‘Information required for a missing person occurrence’ on the Missing Person Unit (MPU) page on the Service Intranet). The reporting officer is to include sufficient details to substantiate the person being recorded as missing;  
(iv) complete the Missing Persons Template and associated Risk Assessment located within the occurrence;  
(v) activate a missing person flag against the person in the QPRIME occurrence;  
(vi) where appropriate, assign a QPRIME ‘Be on the lookout’ task to stations and establishments in areas where the missing person is likely to go;  
(vii) where suspicious circumstances exist, obtain:  
(a) a DNA sample from an appropriate family member of the missing person. Treat any biometric samples obtained as an evidence sample;  
(b) details of the person’s current:  
   - medical practitioner/s; and  
   - attending dentist and dental records;  
and enter details of these records in the QPRIME occurrence;  
(viii) initiate inquiries aimed at locating the missing person and enter the result of those inquiries and other relevant information in the QPRIME occurrence;  
(ix) where the missing person is a school-aged child:
(a) contact the child’s school regarding the child’s attendance record, their networks and any other information which may assist the investigation. Where the child attends a State school and a representative cannot be contacted, officers should contact the Child Safety Director, Department of Education (see SMCD); and

(b) if the child attends a school with a school-based officer (see s. 1.7.8: ‘Police in schools’ of this Manual), where appropriate, direct the officer to make inquiries amongst the school’s community to identify information which may assist the investigation;

(x) notify the shift supervisor, DDO or patrol group inspector of the missing person, the circumstances surrounding the disappearance and any action taken; and

(xi) where the officer cannot create the missing person report prior to the termination of the shift, provide the relevant details to their shift supervisor, DDO, patrol group inspector or OIC who are to ensure the report details are entered and all necessary action and inquires subject of this section to be made as soon as practicable.

Officer receiving a missing person report

An officer receiving a report of a missing person should:

(i) obtain full particulars of the missing person (see ‘Information required for a missing person occurrence’ on the MPU page on the Service Intranet);

(ii) obtain a recent photograph of the missing person;

(iii) if the informant is not the parent, and if appropriate, notify the parents of the incident;

(iv) assess whether the missing person is a person of a known vulnerability; and

(v) if the missing person is the subject of a court order under the Family Law Act (Cwlth), advise the guardian a warrant must be obtained from a family court by the guardian who has custody. (The warrant authorises police to remove the child if there is a need to use force. This function is usually performed by officers of the Australian Federal Police (AFP) and is attended to by an officer of the Service when an officer of the AFP is unavailable).

In cases where a search is required to obtain evidence of the commission of an offence, a search warrant should be obtained under s. 150: ‘Search warrant application’ of the PPRA.

The provisions of s. 160: ‘Search to prevent loss of evidence’ of the PPRA should also be considered where evidence of the commission of an offence may be concealed or destroyed unless the place is immediately entered and searched.

See ‘Missing person process chart’ of the MPU page on the Service Intranet.

Where the person reported as missing is an international home-stay school student, see s. 5.9: ‘International homestay school students’ of this Manual.

Child in out-of-home care reported missing

The Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women (DCSYW) has published guidelines in relation to the requirements on agencies providing care services to children in out-of-home care when a child goes missing from their placement (see MPU on the Service Intranet).

If the occurrence relates to a child in out-of-home care, in addition to the requirements of this section, the reporting officer should:

(i) obtain a completed ‘Missing Child Checklist’ from the carer or the DCSYW staff member and upload the checklist into the QPRIME occurrence;

(ii) ensure a risk assessment relating to the missing child is completed and uploaded into the QPRIME occurrence;

(iii) include the classification of ‘child in care’ in the child’s QPRIME occurrence involvement tab;

(iv) notify or cause to be notified the Child Safety Service Centre (CSSC), or the Child Safety After Hours Service Centre (CSAHSC). Officers are to obtain the name and contact details of the officer advised and include that information in the QPRIME occurrence;

(v) ascertain whether DCSYW have contacted the biological parents of the child and identify if they had any information. It is the responsibility of DCSYW to contact the biological parents of the missing child;

(vi) consider the provisions of s. 166: ‘Offence to refuse contact with child in custody or guardianship’ of the Child Protection Act;

(vii) access the Our Child portal for information to assist with avenues of inquiry;

(viii) where a media release is to be issued:

(a) telephone the CSSC or CSAHSC; and

(b) send an email to the CSAHSC, including whenever practicable an image of the child (see SMCD),
to inform them of the media release; and
(ix) where it is necessary to identify the missing child as a child in out-of-home care in a media release, the
authorisation of DCSYW is required.

Where a media release is to be issued, QPS Media and Public Affairs Group is to advise the DCSYW Media Unit of the
media release.

Resident of Australia missing overseas

If the occurrence relates to a resident of Australia missing overseas the officer receiving such report is to make thorough
inquiries with the informant to establish the:

(i) person is a missing person;
(ii) matter is not simply a lack of contact; and
(iii) informant is not seeking only to establish the whereabouts of a person.

If the reporting officer’s inquiries establish the person is missing overseas they should:

(i) complete a missing person occurrence in QPRIME;
(ii) include in the occurrence advice to the MPU that Interpol, Canberra is to be advised of the person missing
overseas;
(iii) commence the QPRIME workflow to the MPU;
(iv) maintain contact with the informant as per the policies and procedures contained in this chapter; and
(v) if available, hand to the informant a copy of the web page ‘What to do when someone is missing overseas’,
issued by the Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade (DFAT) (www.smartraveller.gov.au).

The MPU should:

(i) email particulars of the occurrence to Interpol, Canberra for referral to DFAT; and
(ii) update the occurrence to reflect the missing person is recorded as a missing person overseas and reported
to Interpol for referral to DFAT.

The missing person flag attached to the person will remain active pending the person being located.

Resident of another Australian state or territory reported as a missing person to Queensland police

If the occurrence relates to a resident of another Australian state or territory and the missing person is believed to be
missing from that state or territory, the reporting officer should:

(i) complete a missing person occurrence in QPRIME;
(ii) include in the occurrence advice to the MPU that the MPU in the state where the person resides and is believed
to be missing from is to be advised of the missing person occurrence; and
(iii) commence the QPRIME workflow to the MPU;

The MPU should:

(i) email details of the occurrence, including the QPRIME occurrence reference number, to the relevant state or
territory for investigation;
(ii) update the QPRIME occurrence that the relevant state or territory has been advised; and
(iii) update the occurrence to reflect the missing person is recorded as a missing person in the relevant state or
territory.

The missing person flag attached to the person will remain active pending the person being located. The investigating
officer from the state or territory where the person resides and is believed to be missing from will maintain contact with
the informant.

12.4.2 Responsibility of shift supervisor, district duty officer or patrol group inspector

Each shift supervisor, district duty officer (DDO) or patrol group inspector is to:

(i) ensure particulars of the missing person and other relevant information resulting from inquiries, including any
vehicles or vessels of interest, have been entered onto QPRIME, including entering a flag against the missing
person;
(ii) ensure dissemination of the information has been arranged (if appropriate);
(iii) ensure the QPRIME missing person occurrence of a missing person receives immediate and continued
attention;
(iv) assess the risk of the missing person in accordance with the Risk Assessment Guidelines for Missing Persons (available on the Missing Persons Unit (MPU) web page on the Service Intranet) and enter this risk into the QPRIME occurrence under the priority field and complete the supervising officer section of the risk assessment form;

(v) supervise the immediate investigation;

(vi) where a child protection and investigation unit is established and the missing person is a child, cause the OIC of that unit to be advised as to the circumstances of the missing child;

(vii) ensure the OIC of the CIB, regional duty officer, DDO, patrol group inspector and the MPU are advised if the missing person occurrence:

(a) is suspicious;

(b) is out of character; or

(c) relates to a person of known vulnerability (see Service Manuals Definitions).

Depending on the circumstances consideration should be given to the urgent release of information to the public through the media or other appropriate means, see s. 12.3.2: ‘Release of information to the media’ of this chapter;

(viii) ensure the particulars of any missing person are brought to the attention of the OIC of the station or establishment, the relieving shift supervisor or DDO, and the station intelligence officer;

(ix) consider the need for a search in accordance with s. 17.5: ‘Search and rescue’ of this Manual; and

(x) where applicable consult with the OIC MPU to consider if the assistance of the Behavioural Specialist Unit, State Intelligence Group, Intelligence and Covert Services Command should be sought.

12.4.3 Responsibility of officers in charge of stations and establishments

Officers in charge of stations and establishments are to:

(i) ensure the officer who receives the missing person report, complies with all relevant parts of s. 12.4.1: ‘Responsibility of the officer who receives a report’ of this chapter;

(ii) check, and where required, assign a QPRIME missing person occurrence task to an officer or OIC of another station or establishment, for investigation or continuing inquiries;

(iii) ensure missing person occurrences are finalised as soon as practicable when missing person is located;

(iv) ensure if a major investigation is commenced into the missing person’s disappearance the investigation is to be the responsibility of the region where the missing person’s last confirmed physical sighting has been recorded;

(v) ensure the OIC of the Missing Persons Unit is advised of any unidentified bodies or skeletal human remains located;

(vi) maintain a register of services, agencies or organisations which are available to support missing persons and families of missing persons;

(vii) ensure at the conclusion of twelve months if the missing person has not been located and the person is reasonably suspected of being deceased, the reporting officer or other nominated officer completes a ‘Report to State Coroner, missing person – suspected reportable death’ (QP 0608) within the QPRIME missing person occurrence as outlined in ‘Report to coroner where missing person reasonably suspected of being dead’ of this chapter; and

(viii) ensure the provisions of this chapter are adhered to.

12.4.4 Responsibility of an officer detailed to investigate a missing person occurrence

An officer to whom a QPRIME missing person occurrence has been assigned is to assume responsibility for the case management and is to:

(i) make all necessary inquiries aimed at locating the missing person while updating the QPRIME occurrence, including an entry into the Occurrence Enquiry Log with a record of the results of their inquiries;

(ii) if the missing person is a child in out-of-home care, access the Our Child portal for information to assist with avenues of inquiry;

(iii) obtain formal statements from all witnesses within the stipulated 60-day period (refer s. 2.13: ‘Statements’ of this Manual)

(iv) maintain regular contact with the informant/parents (where appropriate), at least weekly for the first two months of the investigation and then maintain contact as the officer considers necessary;

(v) send specific advice of the particulars of the missing person to the OIC of a station or establishment where the missing person is likely to visit. Such advice is to include a request for a reply to the inquiry;
(vi) where the officer is unable to continue inquiries in relation to the QPRIME occurrence, advise the OIC of the station or establishment by completing the QPRIME task;

(vii) continue to liaise with the overviewing officer at the Missing Persons Unit (MPU), as required;

(viii) where a missing person investigation extends across multiple regions, actively liaise with the coordinating officer at the MPU;

(ix) if, after 60 days, the missing person has not been located, arrange a DNA evidence sample (if not already obtained) from a family member of the missing person and enter the details in the QPRIME occurrence;

(x) consider the provisions of s. 12.4.6: ‘Report to coroner where missing person reasonably suspected of being dead’ of this chapter;

(xi) advise the informant/parents (where appropriate) of the result of police investigations and the action taken, and update the QPRIME occurrence accordingly; and

(xii) if, at the conclusion of 12 months, the missing person has not been located, complete a QP 0608: ‘Report to State Coroner (missing person – suspected reportable death)’ within the QPRIME occurrence, and forward the QP 0608 together with a copy of the complete file to the OIC, MPU through the applicable chain of command.

The report should include the results of the police investigation into the cause and circumstances of the missing person’s disappearance. Where appropriate, a request is to be included for the State Coroner to hold an inquiry into the cause and circumstances of the disappearance of such missing person.

Duties of OIC Missing Persons Unit

The OIC, MPU upon receipt of the QP 0608, is to:

(i) review the contents of the QPRIME occurrence;

(ii) where considered necessary, initiate further inquiries;

(iii) where considered appropriate, complete a report with a request to the State Coroner to direct a coroner to hold an inquest into the cause and circumstances of the disappearance of the missing person (see s. 28: ‘When inquest may be held’ of the Coroners Act); and

(iv) forward that report together with recommendations to the State Coroner.

Where reports and forms are submitted and/or other actions are taken, the QPRIME occurrence is to be updated reflecting this fact.

Interstate inquiries into a missing person

When interstate inquiries need to be made, the officer to whom the QPRIME occurrence has been assigned should:

(i) refer all relevant information to the Police Communications Centre, Brisbane by QPRIME task, for the information to be forwarded interstate for inquiries. Details of the message and any response are to be recorded in the QPRIME occurrence; and

(ii) forward photograph(s) to the interstate police who will be making inquiries on behalf of the Service.

During investigations into missing children, the officer should be aware of:

(i) child abuse indicators (see Chapter 7: ‘Child Harm’ of this Manual);

(ii) whether the family is recorded on the Department of Child Safety, Youth and Women, Child Protection Information System (see s. 7.3.6: ‘Checks of the Integrated Client Management System (ICMS)’ of this Manual); and

(iii) any order/warrant which may be in existence under the provisions of the:

   (a) Family Law Act (Cwlth);
   (b) Child Protection Act; or
   (c) Public Health Act.

12.4.5 Responsibilities of intelligence officers

District intelligence officers are to analyse any trends relating to missing persons. Where identified, the information is to be communicated to the district officer or patrol group inspector and the regional intelligence officer.

12.4.6 Report to coroner where missing person reasonably suspected of being dead

The State Coroner requires notification as soon as a missing person is reasonably suspected of being deceased. Investigating officers who reasonably suspect that a missing person is deceased are to consult with the Missing Persons Unit (MPU), State Crime Command.
It is the responsibility of the MPU to provide notification by report to the Coronial Support Unit as initial advice. See also s. 8.5.24: ‘Missing person reasonably suspected of being deceased’ of this Manual.
Also see s. 8: ‘Reportable death’ defined’ of the Coroners Act.

12.5 Located missing persons

12.5.1 Responsibilities of officers regarding located missing persons

Child in care located by carer/child safety officer

There is no requirement for officers to sight and interview children in care who return to their placement or are otherwise located safe and well by the carer/child safety officer. The carer or child safety officer will advise police by telephone the child has been located.

An officer who receives information a missing child in care has been located and is satisfied the information is accurate should enter the details regarding the location of the missing person and all relevant particulars onto the QPRIME missing person occurrence prior to the termination of that shift, including:

(i) completing a QP 0653: ‘Missing person located report’, noting the details of the informant;
(ii) expiring the missing person flag against the person in the occurrence;
(iii) changing the status of the missing person to Missing; Located; and
(iv) starting the workflow to the Missing Persons Unit.

Located missing persons – general

An officer who locates a missing person or receives information a missing person has been located (other than a child in care) and is satisfied that the information is accurate should:

(i) whenever practicable, interview the located missing person to ascertain the circumstances surrounding the disappearance;
(ii) enter all relevant particulars of the location onto the QPRIME missing person occurrence prior to the termination of that shift, including:

(a) completing a QP 0653: ‘Missing person located report’;
(b) expiring the missing person flag against the person in the occurrence;
(c) changing the status of the missing person to Missing; Located; and
(d) starting the workflow to the Missing Persons Unit;
(iii) if the missing person is a child:

(a) during the interview of the child, attempt to gain intelligence regarding where the child had gone, who the child had been with etc. which may be beneficial for any future occurrences or investigations;
(b) following the interview, complete the QP 0653 including the location found, any known associates, linked addresses and any other relevant information;
(c) consider possible child harm indicators or possible offences and submit a child harm occurrence on QPRIME, include where possible, the reasons for the disappearance and link the child harm occurrence to the missing person occurrence and task it to the local CPIU for information;
(d) and is at risk of harm (see s. 9: ‘What is harm’ of the Child Protection Act) remove the child to a place of safety and make an application for a temporary assessment order in accordance with s. 7.4.3: ‘Assessment orders’ of this Manual;
(e) submit a Police Referral (see s. 6.3.14: ‘Police referrals’ of this Manual) for counselling services, if considered appropriate;
(f) not remove a child from the custody of one parent or guardian to give that child to the other parent or guardian when the child is not subject of any court orders; and
(g) if the child is subject to a Child Protection Act order, immediately notify the location to the Child Safety Service Centre, or the Child Safety After Hours Service Centre;
(iv) modify any vehicle(s) or vessel(s) of interest entry on QPRIME;
(v) have the inquirer/parents advised that the missing person has been located, subject to the authority to disclose whereabouts; and
(vi) if the missing person is the subject of a Mental Health Act warrant, see s. 13.18.28: ‘Mental Health Act warrants’ of the Manual.

12.5.2 Non-disclosure of the whereabouts of a missing person
An officer locating a missing person is to keep the whereabouts of that missing person confidential if:

(i) the missing person is of or over the age of eighteen years and requests confidentiality. There is no objection to advising the inquirer/parent that the missing person has been located safe and well; or

(ii) the missing person is under the age of eighteen years, and disclosure of the whereabouts may endanger the safety of that person, the officer is to seek a direction from the shift supervisor or OIC of the station or establishment.

A shift supervisor or an OIC of the station or establishment to whom a request is made not to disclose the whereabouts of a missing person under the age of eighteen years, is to:

(i) direct that the missing person’s whereabouts be disclosed to the inquirer/parent if satisfied the disclosure would not endanger the missing person;

(ii) if it is considered disclosure of the whereabouts of the missing person may endanger that person, direct no such information be released, until the safety of the missing person can be ensured;

(iii) if such danger exists, and satisfactory arrangements cannot be made with the inquirer/parent, cause the matter to be referred to the nearest Child Protection and Investigation Unit for attention, or consider action under the Child Protection Act (see Chapter 7: ‘Child Harm’ of this Manual); or

(iv) if the missing person is subject of a Child Protection Act order, advise the Child Safety service centre which has the responsibility for the care of the child.

12.6 Amber alerts

Definitions
For the purposes of this section:

Amber alert
means a process that involves the urgent broadcast of relevant information through the media and other means to the public to facilitate the search for, location and the safe recovery of an abducted child or high risk missing child.

Abducted child
means a person under the age of eighteen years who:

(a) is reasonably suspected of having been abducted or taken away by a person; and

(b) there appears to be an imminent risk of death or serious harm to them.

It is irrelevant whether the person taking the child has lawful custody of the child, or whether the person has obtained the consent of a parent/guardian to take the child.

High risk missing child
means a person under the age of eighteen years who:

(a) is missing in concerning or suspicious circumstances; and

(b) there appears to be an imminent risk of death or serious harm to them.

See s. 179C of the PPRA for when a missing person is high risk for the purpose of a missing person warrant.

Rationale for an amber alert
An amber alert is intended for time critical situations. While it can be a very important tool in helping to locate a child, it is not always appropriate in every circumstance. The inappropriate use of amber alerts could undermine the credibility, integrity and effectiveness of the system.

When considering the activation of an amber alert the circumstances and risk factors of each case should be appraised on its’ own merits.

For an alert to be issued there should be:

(i) sufficient descriptive information available to make an amber alert effective; and

(ii) reasonable grounds for believing an amber alert will assist in the location and safe recovery of the child.
See ‘Amber alert guidelines’ on the Communications Group web page on the Service Intranet for further details.

### 12.6.1 First response officers

**ORDER**

When a report is received that a child is missing, the first response officer is to respond and investigate in accordance with the provisions of this chapter and s. 2.4: ‘Incident management’ of this Manual. Additionally, the first response officer is to establish whether the circumstances suggest an abducted child or high risk missing child.

#### Suspected abduction or high risk missing child

In cases of a suspected abducted child or high risk missing child, the first response officer is to:

(i) obtain sufficient descriptive information about the child, abductor and/or any vehicle used;

(ii) treat the report as a major investigation; and

(iii) immediately notify the:

   (a) regional duty officer (RDO);
   
   (b) patrol group inspector; or
   
   (c) detective inspector.

Where practicable, investigating officers are to liaise with the child’s parents, relatives/inquirer to obtain permission to release particulars of the child and other associated matters for an amber alert.

Officers are to advise the RDO, patrol group inspector or detective inspector if the child is subject of proceedings/orders under the **Child Protection Act**, **Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act** or **Family Law Act** (Cwlth) (see subsection ‘Child in out of home care reported missing’ of s. 12.4.1: ‘Responsibility of officer who receives a report’ of this chapter).

Members of the immediate family of the child, and the child, are victims under the **Victims of Crime Assistance Act**, and where appropriate officers are to comply with the provisions of this Act and s. 2.12: ‘Victims of crime’ of this Manual.

### 12.6.2 Regional duty officer, patrol group inspector or detective inspector

A RDO, patrol group inspector or detective inspector advised of a suspected abducted child or high risk missing child is to:

(i) establish whether the report is in fact an abducted child or high risk missing child based on the information available; and

(ii) consult with the regional crime coordinator (or if unavailable a supervising superintendent) in each instance who will determine whether or not an amber alert is to be implemented.

Where a regional crime coordinator (or supervising superintendent) approves an amber alert, the RDO, patrol group inspector or detective inspector is to:

(i) make inquiries with the first response officer or immediate family, if known, to ascertain whether they have been subject to proceedings under the **Child Protection Act**, **Domestic and Family Violence Protection Act**, and **Family Law Act** (Cwlth), and also whether the child may be subject to the provisions of those Acts, and if so, how the child is subject to the provisions of those Acts;

(ii) contact the:

   (a) State Duty Officer or Duty Officer, Brisbane Police Communications Centre; and

   (b) relevant police communications centre, or in areas not covered by a police communications centre the OIC of the police station where the incident occurred, and provide:

   (a) advice that approval has been obtained from the regional crime coordinator (or supervising superintendent) to implement an amber alert;

   (b) sufficient information relating to the alert;

   (c) contact details of the appointed investigating officer and, where an investigation centre is established, those details; and

   (d) advice that a broadcast is required to be sent via a local and state-wide message relating to the amber alert including the contact details for incoming information, and to implement the applicable regional or district instructions relating to an amber alert.

Note: Depending on the location of the incident, it may be appropriate to contact more than one police communications centre, e.g. Brisbane, Logan, Gold Coast, VKG Newcastle;
(iii) contact Media and Public Affairs Group and provide the relevant media officer with sufficient information to enable an amber alert to be implemented;

(iv) update the regional crime coordinator (or supervising superintendent) of the amber alert details and any other pertinent information;

(v) consider appointing an investigating officer, who has direct knowledge of the circumstances, as a dedicated liaison officer (see s. 12.6.4: ‘Appointed liaison officer’ of this chapter);

(vi) as the information surrounding the circumstances of the amber alert change, or the child is located, ensure that information and/or notification of the child’s location are communicated promptly to:

(a) Media and Public Affairs Group; and

(b) the relevant police communications centre; or

(c) in areas not covered by a police communications centre, the officer in charge of the police station where the incident occurred;

(vii) ensure the QPRIME missing person occurrence is updated with all relevant information by members who have responsibilities under this policy. This should include whether the amber alert assisted in locating the child (e.g. information received from public who heard alert); and

(viii) ensure a significant event message is submitted in a timely manner.

12.6.3 Regional crime coordinator (or supervising superintendent)
Regional crime coordinators (or if unavailable, a supervising superintendent) are responsible for:

(i) approving the activation of an amber alert;

(ii) advising the Detective Superintendent, Child Abuse and Sexual Crime Group, State Crime Command that an alert is being initiated;

(iii) conducting a debrief of the amber alert with relevant stakeholders as per normal incident response improvement processes. The records relating to an amber alert debrief should be appropriately maintained; and

(iv) reporting the outcomes and/or recommendations (positive or negative) identified in the debrief to:

(a) their assistant commissioner;

(b) Detective Superintendent, Child Abuse and Sexual Crime Group, State Crime Command; and

(c) Superintendent, Commander, Communications Group, Community Contact Command.

12.6.4 Appointed liaison officer
The appointed liaison officer is responsible for:

(i) relaying accurate and timely descriptive information to police communications centre(s) and Media and Public Affairs Group; and

(ii) being the single point of contact to ensure alert information is clarified and that timely updates are provided.

12.6.5 Detective Superintendent, Child Abuse and Sexual Crime Group, State Crime Command
When advised of a pending amber alert, the Detective Superintendent, Child Abuse and Sexual Crime Group, State Crime Command should:

(i) provide assistance to the regional crime coordinator (or supervising superintendent) in the form of advice; and

(ii) provide staff to attend the Brisbane Police Communications Centre to establish a Minor Incident Room for the reviewing and processing of information received from the public about the amber alert.

12.6.6 Child Abuse and Sexual Crime Group, State Crime Command officers
Officers requested by the Detective Superintendent, Child Abuse and Sexual Crime Group, State Crime Command to assist with an amber alert, should:

(i) contact the State Duty Officer or Duty Officer, Brisbane Police Communications Centre (BPCC) and request a Minor Incident Room be stood up and advise an estimated time of arrival for staffing;

(ii) attend the BPCC and staff the Minor Incident Room; and

(iii) assist regional investigators by reviewing and processing calls taken by BPCC and/or Policelink call-takers.

12.6.7 Police Communications Centres
Communications centres operating outside of the Brisbane metropolitan area (or in areas not covered by a police communications centre, the officers in charge of those police stations) are to ensure the State Duty Officer or Duty
Officer, Brisbane Police Communications Centre is advised of an impending amber alert immediately upon being notified by the regional duty officer, patrol group inspector or detective inspector.

12.6.8 Brisbane Police Communications Centre and Policelink

The State Duty Officer or Duty Officer at the Brisbane Police Communications Centre (BPCC) advised of an impending amber alert is to ensure:

(i) local amber alert instructions developed by the Manager, BPCC are implemented when necessary;
(ii) the Minor Incident Room is stood up in preparation for attending Child Safety and Sexual Crimes Group, State Crime Command officers;
(iii) Policelink is advised of an impending amber alert and that call-takers may be required to resource their incident room;
(iv) the amber alert local instruction processes are monitored and working;
(v) the staffing levels in support of an alert at BPCC and Policelink are monitored;
(vi) the information taken by BPCC and/or Policelink is being transferred to the Minor Incident Room;
(vii) a local and, where appropriate, a state-wide message is broadcast relating to the amber alert including the contact details for incoming information;
(viii) liaison with QPS Media regarding the status of broadcasts; and
(ix) liaison with Policelink to ensure calls being taken by Policelink call-takers are being transferred to the Minor Incident Room at BPCC.

The Policelink supervisor advised of an impending amber alert is to:

(i) comply with local instructions regarding amber alert and disseminate information to the BPCC Minor Incident Room; and
(ii) liaise with the State Duty Officer or Duty Officer, BPCC to ensure the systems and processes implemented are working effectively.

12.6.9 Media and Public Affairs Group

The Manager, Media and Public Affairs Group is to ensure:

(i) protocols are developed, maintained, and reviewed as required, between the Service, the media, and other agencies/organisations which may be involved in amber alerts;
(ii) local instructions are developed to ensure that amber alerts are implemented without delay. The procedures should include the maintenance of contact lists of media and other agencies/organisations which may be involved in various localities, forms which are to be used to transfer information to the media, agencies/organisations, and other relevant matters;
(iii) consideration be given to the requirements of s. 12.3.3: Authority for media release’ of this chapter; and
(iv) media officers with sufficient expertise or experience are made available to ensure that when a regional duty officer, patrol group inspector, detective inspector or regional crime coordinator (or supervising superintendent) contacts Media and Public Affairs Group for the purpose of implementing an amber alert, and that the media officer:
   (a) confirms that the alert has been approved by a regional crime coordinator (or supervising superintendent);
   (b) implements an alert without delay;
   (c) maintains appropriate liaison with the regional duty officer, patrol group inspector, regional crime coordinator (or supervising superintendent) or appointed liaison officer and other areas of the Service whilst the alert is active; and
   (d) consults with the regional duty officer, patrol group inspector, detective inspector, regional crime coordinator (or supervising superintendent) or appointed liaison officer in relation to the type of media and/or agencies/organisations to be provided with the information relating to the alert.

12.7 Missing persons during disaster events

An event under the provisions of s. 16 of the Disaster Management Act may be natural or caused by human acts or omissions and is:
(i) a cyclone, earthquake, flood, storm, storm tide, tornado, tsunami, volcanic eruption or other natural happening;
(ii) an explosion or fire, a chemical, fuel or oil spill, or a gas leak;
(iii) an infestation, plague or epidemic;
(iv) a failure of, or disruption to, an essential service or infrastructure; or
(v) an attack against the State.

ORDER

Where there is a situation that constitutes one of the events as listed in s. 16 of the Disaster Management Act and concerns are held for the safety and whereabouts of a proportionate number of persons, investigating officers must contact the Detective Superintendent, Homicide Group, State Crime Command, who will determine if the Missing Person Unit is to be deployed.

The Missing Person Unit upon deployment will be in charge of the investigation for the missing person and, where necessary, can request any other specialist support sections to assist them.

12.8 High-risk missing person warrants

In most missing person investigations, police are allowed by consent of an occupier to enter a high risk missing person’s residence, place of employment or another place to conduct an investigation. However, consent may not always be forthcoming.

Chapter 7, Part 3A: ‘Searching places for high-risk missing persons’ of the PPRA allows a police officer to establish a missing person scene at a place to search for the missing person or information about the person’s disappearance.

A police officer can establish a missing person scene under a missing person warrant issued by a Supreme Court judge or a magistrate, or initially without warrant in urgent situations (see urgent situations of this chapter). In both situations an officer must obtain prior authorisation from a commissioned police officer.

12.8.1 Applying for a missing person warrant

A missing person warrant can only be applied for where the person is a high risk missing person in accordance with section s. 179C: ‘When a missing person is high-risk’ of the PPRA.

In such instances, the applicant police officer must be satisfied the missing person is:

(i) under 13 years of age; or
(ii) they reasonably suspect the missing person may suffer serious harm if not found as quickly as possible.

An officer, on approval from a commissioned officer, may apply for a missing person warrant where the officer reasonably suspects the occupier of the place cannot, or is unlikely to, provide consent for police to search the place for the high-risk missing person or for information about their disappearance.

Officers do not have to apply for a missing person warrant if the place is a public place while the public place is ordinarily open to the public. If in the course of a missing person investigation an officer is asked to leave a public place by the occupier, as the public place is no longer open to the public, the officer is to apply for a missing person warrant (see s. 179F: ‘Responsibility after establishing missing person scene before obtaining missing person warrant’ of the PPRA).

Levels of requisite suspicion or belief for missing person warrants

When making application for a warrant to establish a missing person scene, officers are:

(i) for the high risk missing persons residence, place of employment or vehicle, hold a reasonable suspicion; and
(ii) for any other place, hold the higher-level suspicion of reasonable belief.

Urgent situations

Where it is necessary, as a matter of urgency, to establish a missing person scene before obtaining a missing person warrant, a commissioned officer may authorise the establishment of a missing person scene. In such circumstances, an officer must apply to a Supreme Court judge or a magistrate for a missing person warrant as soon as reasonably practicable after establishing the scene.

ORDER

Prior to an officer applying for a high-risk missing person warrant in non-urgent circumstances or establishing an urgent missing person scene before a warrant is obtained, an officer is to seek authorisation from a commissioned officer. See s. 12.8.3: ‘Establishing an urgent missing person scene’ of this chapter.
12.8.2 Non-urgent applications for a missing person warrant

When an officer seeks to apply for a missing person warrant (see s. 179J: ‘Applying for a missing person warrant’ of the PPRA) in non-urgent circumstances from a Supreme Court judge or a magistrate, they are to:

(i) ensure the missing person is a high-risk missing person (see s. 179C: ‘When a missing person is high-risk’ of the PPRA);

(ii) hold a reasonable suspicion that the occupier of the place cannot, or is unlikely to provide consent for police to search the place for the high-risk missing person or for information about their disappearance;

(iii) hold the requisite suspicion that the missing person may be at the place or an inspection of the place may provide information about the person’s disappearance;

(iv) obtain authorisation from a commissioned officer prior to applying for the warrant;

(v) complete a form QP 1099: ‘Application for a missing person warrant (issued by a Supreme Court judge/magistrate)’ and form QP 1102: ‘A missing person warrant’;

(vi) complete a form QP 1100: ‘Notice to occupier of the making of an application for the issue of a missing person warrant by a Supreme Court Judge or a magistrate’ and if reasonably practicable, (see s. 179J(5) of the PPRA, if giving notice would frustrate or otherwise hinder the investigation), give notice of the making of the application to the occupier of the place;

(vii) apply to a Supreme Court Judge or a magistrate for the missing person warrant;

(viii) create a QPRIME Investigative warrant occurrence;

(ix) give a copy of both the missing person warrant and the Form 9: ‘Statement to occupier’ to the occupier as soon as reasonably practicable.

The commissioned officer authorising the application for a missing person warrant must:

(i) be satisfied the person is a high risk missing person;

(ii) be satisfied there are sufficient grounds for the applicant officer to hold the requisite level of suspicion to search the place for the missing person or for information about their disappearance; and

(iii) be satisfied it is reasonably necessary to exercise missing person powers at the place to search for the missing person or to gather information about their disappearance.

12.8.3 Establishing an urgent missing person scene

Section 179E: ‘Authorisation if, as a matter of urgency, it is necessary to establish missing person scene before obtaining missing person warrant’ of the PPRA allows the establishment of a missing person scene if an urgent reason exists before applying for a missing person warrant.

When a police officer seeks to establish a missing person scene as a matter of urgency, they are to:

(i) ensure the missing person is a high-risk missing person;

(ii) hold a reasonable suspicion that the occupier of the place cannot, or is unlikely to provide consent for police to search the place for the high-risk missing person or for information about their disappearance;

(iii) hold the requisite suspicion that the missing person may be at the place or an inspection of the place may provide information about the person’s disappearance;

(iv) obtain the authorisation from a commissioned officer prior to establishing the missing person;

(v) establish the missing person scene and if practicable, electronically record any exercise of missing person powers;

(vi) complete a form QP 1100 ‘Notice to occupier of the making of an application for the issue of a missing person warrant by a Supreme Court Judge or a magistrate’ and if reasonably practicable, give notice of the making of the application to the occupier of the place;

(vii) as soon as reasonably practicable after establishing the missing person scene, apply to a Supreme Court Judge or a magistrate for a missing person warrant by completing a form QP 1099: ‘Application for a missing person warrant (issued by a Supreme Court judge/magistrate)’ and a form QP 1102: ‘A missing person warrant’;

(viii) give a copy of both the missing person warrant and the form 9 ‘Statement to occupier’ to the occupier as soon as reasonably practicable to do so (see s. 179O of the PPRA); and

(ix) create a QPRIME Investigative warrant occurrence;
The commissioned officer authorising the establishment of the missing person scene as a matter of urgency before a missing person warrant is applied for must:

(i) be satisfied the person is a high risk missing person;
(ii) hold the requisite suspicion the person may be at the place or an inspection of the place may provide information about the person’s disappearance;
(iii) be satisfied it is reasonably necessary to exercise missing person powers at the place to search for the missing person or to gather information about their disappearance; and
(iv) be satisfied as a matter of urgency that it is necessary to establish a missing person scene at the place before obtaining a missing person warrant.

12.8.4 Powers at missing person scene

Section 179P: ‘Power at missing person scene’ of the PPRA outlines the powers of a responsible officer for a missing person scene, or a police officer acting under their direction. The relevant officer may do any of the following in relation to the scene:

(i) enter the scene;
(ii) if reasonably necessary, enter another place to gain access to the scene;
(iii) perform any necessary investigation, including, for example, a search and inspection of the scene and anything in it for the missing person or to obtain information about the person’s disappearance;
(iv) open anything at the scene that is locked;
(v) take electricity for use at the scene;
(vi) remove or cause to be removed an obstruction from the scene;
(vii) photograph the scene and anything in it;
(viii) seize all or part of a thing that may provide information about the missing person’s disappearance.

However, if it is necessary to do anything at the missing person scene that may cause structural damage to a building, the thing must not be done unless a Supreme Court judge issues a missing person warrant before the thing is done and the warrant authorises the doing of the thing.

If practicable, police are to electronically record the exercise of any missing person powers.

For authorised assistant powers see s. 179P(3) of the PPRA.

12.8.5 Limitations of missing person scene

To ensure members of the public or other officers do not encroach into the missing persons scene, the responsible officer is to clearly:

(i) identify the missing person scene;
(ii) decide boundaries to protect the missing person scene; and
(iii) clearly identify the boundaries’ missing person scene,

when establishing the missing persons scene.

The responsible officer is to clearly identify the boundaries to the missing person scene with signage or police crime scene tape and restrict access to the scene to authorised persons (see s. 12.8.5: ‘Restricting access to missing persons scene’ of this section).

See s. 179G: ‘Deciding limits of missing person scene’ of the PPRA.

12.8.6 Restricting access to missing person scene

When the responsible officer has established a missing person scene the officer is to:

(i) take reasonable steps to ensure protect the place and anything at the scene from:
   (a) being damaged; or
   (b) interfered with; or
   (c) destroyed.

(ii) ensure people (including officers) not involved in the investigation unnecessarily enter the scene;
(iii) prevent unnecessary movement inside the boundaries of the scene;
(iv) provide safe passage through the scene to avoid or reduce the risk of damage to the property.
The responsible officer is to ensure any person (including other officers) unnecessarily enter the missing person scene unless:

(i) the person has a special reason (associated with the investigation) for entering the scene;
(ii) the person is invited into the scene by the responsible or investigating officer;
(iii) the person is an authorised assistant (see s. 11A: ‘Who is an authorised assistant for missing persons powers’ of the Responsibilities Code (PRC);
(iv) the presence of the person is necessary to preserve life or property; or
(v) the person is authorised by the responsible officer to enter the scene.

See s. 179H: ‘Restricting access to missing persons scene’ of the PPRA.

ORDER

The responsible officer is to ensure a record is made of any person who was present when the missing person scene was established or enters the place and the purpose of entry.

See s. 179H: ‘Restricting access to missing person scene’ of the PPRA.

See also s. 179Q ‘Powers of direction etc. at missing person scene’ of the PPRA.

12.8.7 When a place ceases to be a missing person scene

The responsible officer is to ensure all officers and persons aiding the investigation immediately leave the missing person scene:

(i) at the expiration of 48 hours after the scene was established, unless an extension is granted under s. 179M: ‘Duration, extension and review of missing person warrant’ of the PPRA;
(ii) if a judge or magistrates refuses to issue a missing person warrant for the place;
(iii) as soon as the responsible officer at the scene becomes aware the missing person:
   (a) has been found; or
   (b) is not a person who is likely to be high-risk; or
(iv) the responsible officer decides there is no longer a need to exercise missing person powers at the place.

See s. 179I: ‘When place stops being missing person scene’ of the PPRA.

ORDER

As soon as reasonably practicable the responsible officer is to or cause to be completed a QPRIME Investigative warrant occurrence (see s. 48A: ‘Missing person warrants–s 679(1)’ of the PRC).