

# Involving community to spread the message

In 2004, the National Missing Persons Unit (NMPU) established a design competition with the Canberra Institute of Technology (CIT) presenting students with the opportunity to put their creative skills to the test and work on a genuine design brief for the annual National Missing Persons Week.

Based on the success and high level of entries received in the first and second year of the competition, Federal Agent Fiona Crombie, coordinator of the NMPU, is optimistic that the competition will run for many years.

"We have an initial agreement with CIT for five years," she said. "We don't want the concept to become dated so we decided that a five-year trial with a review at the end would be a good start."

Mr Jim Sullivan, coordinator and course convenor for the CIT design school, believes writing the competition into the course syllabus helps the students to understand the briefing process and work to a client's needs.

"The competition allows the students to work on a real project," he said. "They learn to listen and work to a real design brief, something they would be required to do in the workplace."

The competition is open to final-year graphic design students, and while they are not required to enter the competition, they must complete the assignment as an assessable item in their syllabus.

The lead up to National Missing Persons Week begins eight months earlier, with a conference where committee members decide on a theme. From there a design brief is compiled for the students with a verbal briefing given in March.

"The theme for 2004 was *Missing: the Right to Know* which was a particularly hard theme for the students to conceptualise," Federal Agent Crombie said. "It was pleasing to see how much thought had gone into each design concept with the majority of entries easily being suitable for the week."

*"The students get to work on a real design brief and potentially have their work seen by thousands."*

"This year our theme is *Talk PLEaS don't walk*, where the PLEaS stands for Prevention, Location, Education and Support. The message we want conveyed is that while we accept that for different reasons people decide to 'opt out' for a while, before you go, please think about it and if there is someone you can talk to, do."

The students were asked to design a graphic representation for use on a poster, flyer and milk carton advertisement, with the winner gaining wide exposure of their design across Australia.

"The competition benefits both the students and the NMPU," Federal Agent Crombie said.

"Firstly the students get to work on a real design brief and potentially have their work seen by thousands. But the benefit to the NMPU is that we get a broad range of design concepts to choose from,

something that wouldn't happen by using conventional methods."

The NMPU was originally located within the Australian Bureau of Criminal Intelligence (ABCI) and was transferred to the AFP on 1 July 2003 with Federal Agent Crombie becoming the coordinator in December 2003.

"The ABCI contracted a commercial design agency to produce posters for the week," she said.

"The posters were really brilliant, however, we decided to take a different approach and engage the community.

"The students cover a wide age group and the response has been overwhelming. They provide a different way to look at the topic of missing persons, and it helps to gain an understanding of how the topic is perceived in the public," she said.

The competition is judged by the National Missing Persons Unit and members from the AFP Marketing and Communications team.

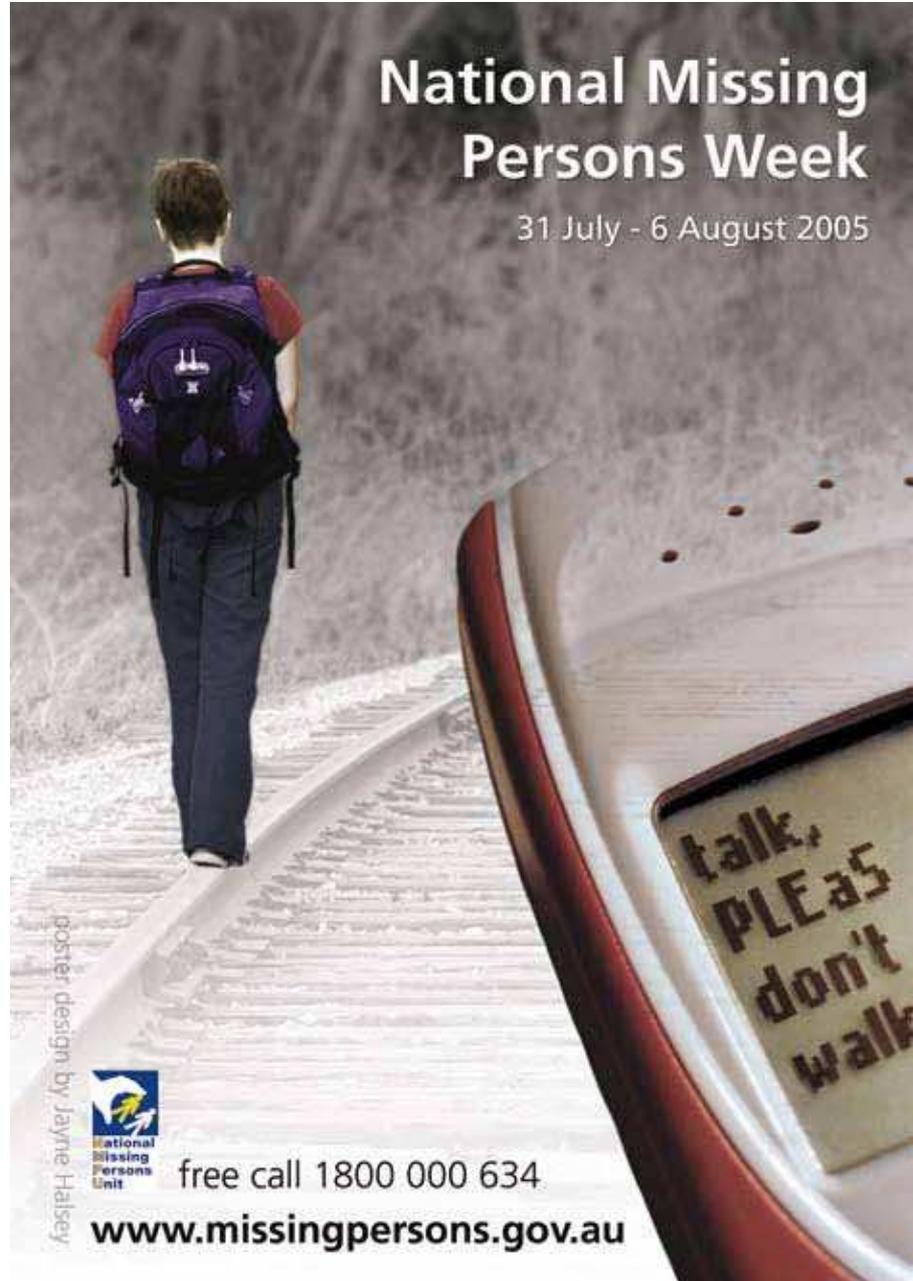
"Jayne Halsey has been chosen as the winner of the 2005 poster design competition," Federal Agent Crombie announced.

"Her design portrays this year's theme in an original way that both highlights the message and makes people think further about the issue.

"Although the entries we received were really strong again this year, with eight finalists being chosen, we felt that Jayne's design worked well across the different mediums we will be using," she said.

The poster design will have a print run of 5000 and will be depicted on 250,000 flyers to be distributed in statements sent out by police credit unions.

Jayne will receive a trophy and certificate at the national launch of National Missing Persons Week, which will be held in Veterans Park on Monday 1 August.



*Jayne Halseys winning entry*

The NMPU was again pleased with the high level of work submitted for the 2005 competition, although this made the task of choosing a winner difficult.

"When you are presented with more than 25 entries, all of exceptionally high standard, it is hard to pinpoint a winner," Federal Agent Crombie said.

In the second year of running the competition, the partnership with CIT has strengthened, with Mr Sullivan using the student's enthusiasm and output as a measure of success.

"The students embraced the project thoroughly as it presented many challenges in communication, technical, relationship and conceptual areas," he said. "It is working extremely well and helps the students build on their portfolio."

National Missing Persons Week will run from 31 July to 6 August with events being coordinated by Missing Persons Units across the country.