

29 October 2020



## Australia's ethical hackers use cyber skills to find national missing persons

The National Missing Persons Hackathon returns today for a second year in a row, delivered through a successful partnership between AustCyber, the Australian Federal Police's (AFP) National Missing Persons Coordination Centre (NMPCC) and Trace Labs, to conduct a missing person capture the flag event during Australian Cyber Week 2020.

The event will see 650 participants, 150 judges and 75 volunteers gather across Australia and internationally via a virtual platform to generate new leads for national missing person cases on behalf of Australian police. This year's participant numbers are close to double that seen for the inaugural 2019 event.

Participants will use their cyber skills to gather open source intelligence (OSINT) on long-term missing persons using only information that is publicly available on the Internet.

12 missing persons have been selected from State and Territory police cases, with all leads generated on the cases handed to the relevant jurisdictions, via the AFP's NMPCC after the completion of the event.

Jodie McEwan, Coordinator NMPCC said, "The AFP is excited to once again partner with AustCyber and Trace Labs to bring this event to life for a second year. After last year's success, which saw over 40 new leads provided to State and Territory police, we are eager to see what successes come out of today."

"Our focus is to provide answers to families and loved ones of long-term missing persons, as well as to raise awareness on the issue and impacts of missingness in the Australian community. It is innovative events like this that allow us to continue supporting the investigators who undertake this important work," says Jodie McEwan.

There has been a keen interest by the community to support the event – which was the first large-scale, crowdsourced OSINT gathering of its kind in Australia for missing persons last year – with tickets selling out within two weeks.

Efforts to scale the event in 2020 included:

- free OSINT foundational training specifically developed for the Australian environment;
- a webinar series exploring the application of OSINT;

- a new website to provide up-to-date information to participants and an ongoing resource for the broader community; and
- setup of a livestream at the event to provide enhanced user experience for the day – including presentations, mentoring sessions and a live scoreboard.

Linda Cavanagh, National Network Lead at AustCyber and Founder of the Hackathon event said, “We continue to up our game with education and training being our sole focus for the participants this year. We want to provide every possible chance to find that one piece of crucial information that could resolve or unlock a missing person case for the families and loved ones.”

The concept of this crowdsourced platform originates from Canadian not-for-profit organisation [Trace Labs](#), who deliver monthly virtual events known as ‘Global OSINT Search Party CTFs’ which allow participation from around the world on global missing person cases.

“The Australian cyber community have always been big supporters of the Trace Labs mission”, said Adrian Korn, Director of OSINT Operations at Trace Labs. “With this year’s Hackathon, we’ve seen this support increase with a quick sellout in record time and active discussions on OSINT tools and techniques from participants.”

The National Missing Persons Hackathon is sponsored by four Australian businesses –Telstra, Commonwealth Bank, [FifthDomain](#) and [Secure Code Warrior](#) – with further support provided by [OSINT Combine](#), [Vault Cloud](#), [Cybermerc](#) and [AISA](#).

The partnership between AustCyber, the AFP’s National Missing Persons Coordination Centre and Trace Labs demonstrates the value they bring together, including:

- harnessing the Australian community to generate leads and assist police in their investigations on missing person cases;
- showcasing the different elements to cyber security such as careers, skills and the people who hold them;
- providing education and training in cyber security and awareness of an individual’s digital footprint; and
- demonstrating cyber security crowdsourcing as a technical value add element to law enforcement as well as a social value add element to the community.

The National Missing Persons Hackathon will be livestreamed from 10.00am to 7.00pm on 29 October. The general public can register and view the event by visiting: [www.cyberweek2020.austcyber.com](http://www.cyberweek2020.austcyber.com).

The National Missing Persons Hackathon is held during [Australian Cyber Week 2020](#), which runs from 26 – 30 October 2020.

## **Further information**

### **About AustCyber**

AustCyber – the Australian Cyber Security Growth Network – supports the development of a vibrant and globally competitive Australian cyber security sector and in doing so, enhances Australia’s future economic growth in a digitally enabled global economy.

AustCyber works to align and scale Australian cyber security research and innovation related activities in the private sector, research community, academia and across Australian governments. Charged with building infrastructure to support the growth of a sector, we work collaboratively across the Australian economy to support a range of other government initiatives related to Australia’s cyber security readiness and resilience.

Beyond our shores, AustCyber also works internationally with a range of partners to develop sustained export pathways for Australian solutions and capability. This further enables the rapidly growing Australian cyber security sector to tap into global hubs located within cyber security ‘hot spots’ around the world.

Website: [www.austcyber.com](http://www.austcyber.com)

### **Australian Federal Police’s National Missing Persons Coordination Centre**

The National Missing Persons Coordination Centre (NMPCC) is a non-operational arm of the Australian Federal Police (AFP).

The NMPCC was established in 2006 to drive national coordination in response to missing persons in Australia, and to complement the investigative role of State and Territory police.

Its mandate is to reduce the incidence and impact of missing persons in Australia and as a function of the AFP, the NMPCC is funded by the Federal Government.

Website: [www.missingpersons.gov.au](http://www.missingpersons.gov.au)

### **Trace Labs**

Trace Labs is a Not-For-Profit organisation with the mission of crowdsourcing the collection of Open Source Intelligence (OSINT) to generate new leads on missing persons cases to assist law enforcement.

The missing persons issue is worsening, requiring modern and scalable solutions at various levels to help mitigate risk to society. To solve this problem, Trace Labs built their "Search Party" platform to enable the collection and processing of OSINT at scalable levels through virtual operations and events known as OSINT Search Parties. This has evolved the concept of a typical search party where community volunteers are on the ground helping law enforcement look for missing people and have taken it online so that anyone around the world can help using their cyber skills.

Website: [www.tracelabs.org](http://www.tracelabs.org)

## **Media enquiries**

Tom Finnigan  
Phone: 0408 867 367  
Email: [tom@austcyber.com](mailto:tom@austcyber.com)

**List of the 2020 National Missing Person Hackathon cases are under embargo until the capture the flag event officially commences so as not impact the challenge for participants:**

### Western Australia

- NAME: **Phillip Richard JONES**  
URL: <https://missingpersons.gov.au/search/wa/phillip-jones>
- NAME: **Senada CECEZ**  
URL: <https://missingpersons.gov.au/search/wa/senada-cecez>
- NAME: **Stephen ANGEL**  
URL: <https://missingpersons.gov.au/search/wa/stephen-angel>

### Tasmania

- NAME: **Scott Paul MURPHY**  
URL: <https://missingpersons.gov.au/search/tas/scott-murphy>

### New South Wales

- NAME: **Qiuping YUAN**  
URL: <https://missingpersons.gov.au/search/nsw/qiuping-yuan>
- NAME: **Andrew OLPHERT**  
URL: <https://www.missingpersons.gov.au/search/nsw/andrew-olphert>
- NAME: **Luxing LI**  
URL: <https://missingpersons.gov.au/search/nsw/luxing-kevin-li>
- NAME: **Dylan DICKIE**  
URL: <https://missingpersons.gov.au/search/nsw/dylan-dickie>
- NAME: **Daniel STORT**  
URL: <https://missingpersons.gov.au/search/nsw/daniel-stort>
- NAME: **Lionel DAVESON**  
URL: <https://missingpersons.gov.au/search/nsw/lionel-daveson>

### Queensland

- NAME: **John Edward Joseph BROWN**  
URL: <https://www.missingpersons.gov.au/search/qld/john-brown>

# Media release



## Victoria

- NAME: **Elizabeth Karen MARSH**  
URL: <https://missingpersons.gov.au/search/vic/elizabeth-marsh>