

Press Release
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Immediate Publication

ON-LINE SYSTEM TO HELP MISSING 'AT RISK' PERSONS

Early identification of missing persons with any form of memory loss or confusion is the centrepiece of a new on-line management system supported by Victoria Police through its statewide intranet and planned mobile data terminals.

The launch today of 'Safe Return Home IDAssist' will provide a safety net for 'at risk' people who may go missing, by helping police and others to locate and assist them in the shortest time possible.

Its focus is people with Alzheimer's disease, dementia, intellectual disability, developmental disability, memory loss or mental illness.

'IDAssist' was developed by Melbourne company, Applied Aged Care Solutions, and is the result of four years of research with the aged care industry and emergency services around Australia.

The self-managed system can be updated at any time, via the Internet, anywhere in Australia or overseas.

The system contains a wealth of identifying knowledge on the 'at risk' person, including their photograph, a detailed description, medical conditions, critical medications, functional impairments, relevant life history, behavioural information, and contact details of family members, carers and treating medical personnel.

Managing Director of Applied Aged Care Solutions, Dr Richard Rosewarne, said self-management means the registrant, family, carer or other authorised person has total control over the information flow into the system, and can set limits on who can access it and the extent of the access.

There is a high level of privacy and security with 'IDAssist'.

"Around 6,500 people are reported missing to Victoria Police each year, and many more are missing but unreported," Dr Rosewarne said. "We estimate that about 20 percent have some form of dementia."

"The challenge for us was to develop a system that made their identification easier and quicker, because the longer they are unaccounted for the greater the risk of harm. In addition, the information in the system can assist police to better support the person, once in their care."

He said the system was already working successfully with Tasmania Police and negotiations are currently underway to expand the program into Queensland and Western Australia.

"Wandering and missing persons problems are not restricted to one age group, disability or mental condition," Dr Rosewarne said.

He said the information also assists police to act with greater sensitivity to people whose disability may not be readily identified, and whose actions could be misunderstood or misinterpreted.

Among the organisations that would benefit from 'IDAssist' are aged care services, respite services, supported accommodation, nursing services, retirement villages, and Home and Community Care services.

Registration costs are \$110 per person per annum including GST, with discounts available for group registrations. There are also discounts for two and three year options.

Dr Rosewarne paid tribute to Victoria Police and Alzheimer's Australia Vic. for their commitment to developing better ways to assist 'at risk' people.

“Alzheimer’s Australia Vic. has greatly assisted the introduction of ID Assist in Victoria through their long-term support of the project and advocacy efforts,” he said.

“We value our community partnership with Victoria Police which will benefit ‘at risk’ people, their families, carers and supporting organisations throughout Victoria.”

- Further information on Safe Return Home ID Assist is available on 1800 11 22 01 or www.SafeReturnHome.com.au

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Issued by: Dr Richard Rosewarne, Safe Return Home
(03) 9817 6999 or 0419 399 836

Michael Krape, Michael Krape Consulting
0403 135 880