

Green Seat benches to keep memories alive

“It might jog someone’s memory ... so it might even solve something

Peter King

whose sister Gail is missing



Peter King and his wife Catt with a picture of Peter's sister Gail King, who was last seen at Minlaton in 1997.

Picture: Tim Joy

Missing not forgotten

Jacinta Round

Public benches preserving the memory of missing loved-ones will be installed in Adelaide's northwest as part of a project backed by the families of two women who vanished in separate high-profile cases.

The Green Seat Project is coming to South Australia through Queensland woman Sally Leydon's movement to bring awareness to missing persons – including her mother Marion Barter.

Ms Leydon, 53, said she founded the project, now a not-for-profit incorporation, with the installation of the first bench on the Gold Coast last October, almost three decades after her mother disappeared

at age 51 in June 1997 under suspicious circumstances.

"We don't have a grave, we don't have a memorial site so this is a really important initiative," mother-of-three Ms Leydon said.

She said there were more than 20 benches already installed or in the pipeline across Australia and one in Scotland in the UK.

Meanwhile, Port Adelaide Enfield Council at its August meeting unanimously approved a bid for the installation of the project's first two green seats in South Australia.

The seats, Ms Leydon said, were green to honour her mother's favourite colour.

She said the benches included an inscription with a

QR code directing people to The Missing Matter, an online collection of tributes from families of missing people.

"We get (families) to tell us why their missing person matters, because we felt it was really important to bring awareness to missing persons' stories and humanising them, instead of being another statistic or another number on a file," Ms Leydon said.

The brother and sister-in-law of Yorke Peninsula woman Gail King, a 28-year-old mother of two who was last seen at a home in Minlaton in 1997, have joined the project.

Gail's brother, Peter King, 53, of Blakeview, welcomed the installation of the benches in SA, saying it was important

for loved ones of missing persons to have somewhere to "reflect".

Mr King said he also hoped the QR code on the benches could spur a development in the cold case of his sister's disappearance and suspected murder.

"It might jog someone's memory. They might read it and think 'oh I might have seen something', so hopefully it might even solve something," Mr King said.

With less than a year until the 30th anniversary of Gail's disappearance, he said the pain of her absence "never goes away". "It's always in the back of your mind," he said.

The Green Seat Project's SA volunteer representative Kate

Walsh, a 47-year-old nurse and mother of two, was the one to present the deputation to her local council, saying she wants to install a seat in each local municipal area.

"The benches are a spin-off of the old-fashioned milk carton missing persons' (advertisement)," Ms Walsh said.

"They aren't a memorial bench for any particular person: they are for the missing."

Port Adelaide Enfield Mayor Claire Boan said locations for the seats were still being considered.

"We hope these seats provide a place of reflection and hope for families ... while also helping raise awareness of the impact of long-term missing persons," Ms Boan said.