

OFFICIAL



**NSW Police Force**

**OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER**

18 November 2023

F/2023/31026

The Hon. Michael Daley MP  
Attorney General  
GPO Box 5341  
SYDNEY NSW 2001

[office@daley.minister.nsw.gov.au](mailto:office@daley.minister.nsw.gov.au)

Dear Attorney

On 18 April 2023, NSW State Coroner Magistrate Teresa O'Sullivan finalised the inquest into the death of Gordon Copeland.

The State Coroner made six recommendations to the NSW Police Force (NSWPF). The recommendations, along with the NSWPF position on each of the recommendations are detailed in the attached table.

The NSWPF has made considerable improvements and effort into training, community engagement and other matters related to policing and the Aboriginal community.

The NSWPF is committed to continuing to build and improve relationships with First Nations people.

Yours sincerely

**Karen Webb APM**  
**Commissioner of Police**

OFFICIAL



## NSW Police Force (NSWPF) response - Inquest into the death of Gordon Copeland

Recommendation	NSWPF response
<p>To the Commissioner of the NSWPF:</p> <p>1. That the NSWPF review their training in relation to the history of First Nations Peoples to ensure that it is as comprehensive as possible in relation to the history of colonisation and the ongoing impact of colonisation on First Nations peoples today. Where possible, Aboriginal Liaison officers should be engaged in delivering ongoing training for Police.</p>	<p>The NSWPF offers training specific to working with and engaging with the First Nations communities. These training packages are available to all staff throughout the NSWPF with additional packages offered to staff to enhance their skills and to practically apply their knowledge of First Nations culture in the workplace and community.</p> <p>Specific training packages are also delivered to Commands and regular localised training sessions conducted within Police Area Commands and Police Districts. These are led by the Aboriginal Engagement Officer and Education Development Officer in conjunction with the Aboriginal Community Liaison Officer and the First Nations communities.</p> <p>Aspects of trauma informed communication is also contained in the 'Working with Aboriginal Communities' workshop which is under review to include updates and enhancements regarding:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Cultural considerations when working within Aboriginal communities regarding missing persons</li> <li>○ Trauma informed care and communication</li> <li>○ The history of First Nations Peoples, including colonisation and intergenerational trauma.</li> </ul>
<p>2. That the NSWPF consider providing officers with training on trauma-informed communication with families, particularly First Nations families, when they are concerned about a missing person.</p>	<p>Refer also recommendation 1.</p> <p>At the next 2024 Missing Persons Conference, an invitation to speak has been extended to Mr Copelands' family (or representative), the Aboriginal Coronial Information and Support Program representative, Coronial Jurisdiction and/or the Coronial Support Officer, Aboriginal Legal Service.</p> <p>The Missing Persons Registry is working with the Police Academy to provide video messages from subject matter experts and additional training to Detectives, first responders and Academy students.</p>

<p>3. That the NSW Police Force review their training, for both recruits and current employees, in relation to critical decision-making training, to improve critical thinking in situations such as the preliminary search along the river.</p>	<p>Students at the Police Academy receive training that currently addresses risk assessment and critical decision making across the Decision making &amp; problem solving module.</p> <p>The NSWPF is also developing updated training on the Missing Persons SOPs that will include critical decision-making training.</p>
<p>4. That the New England Police District (NEPD), encompassing Moree Police, conduct a review of the available rescue resources, taking into account their unique environment, including the river systems, to determine what further rescue equipment should be kept at stations and in vehicles.</p>	<p>The NEPD has two marine vessels positioned at Inverell and Tingha, with both vessels utilised during the search for Gordon Copeland. To supplement these resources, Marine Area Command has allocated a trailer boat to Moree/Muingindi. This vessel will be utilised in small creeks, rivers and water reservoirs within the Moree Sector of the NEPD.</p> <p>In addition, the Coroner's findings and recommendations will be raised at the next Region Emergency Management Committee (REMC) meeting for New England.</p>
<p>5. That the NEPD, encompassing Moree Police, conduct a review of the available training courses, taking into account their unique environment, including the river systems, to determine whether further courses should be offered to police.</p>	<p>A review has been completed and a number of NEPD Police have undertaken the NSWPF Inland – Regional Small Boat Course. This allows them to operate Police vessels to better support person searches and compliment combat agencies during periods of flooding.</p>
<p>6. That the NSWPF review their formal debriefing to determine if it is adequate to provide NSW Police with the necessary advice and support after experiencing a trauma like Gordon's death, particularly to determine what can be learnt and how officers can support each other.</p>	<p>Policies relating to formal debriefing within the Critical Incident Guidelines have been reviewed and are considered appropriate.</p> <p>In addition, NSWPF personnel involved in Potentially Traumatic Events (PTEs) are provided with same day psychological first aid through our state-wide external providers. The psychological first aid is provided through the Incident Support process, which comprises face to face support with an experienced clinician.</p>

	<p>NSWPF personnel involved in a PTE are provided with ongoing support. Supervisors are also informed of any concerns so they can better manage their staff post incident. Additional support services are available, which include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• EAP Incident Support and general counselling;</li><li>• General support from Peer Support Officers; and</li><li>• General support from Police Chaplains.</li></ul> <p>NSWPF is presently preparing a PTE Policy and Policy Statement, which provides a service-wide approach to prevention and management of psychological risks to employee's health, following exposure to, or involvement in a PTE.</p> <p>A central component of this policy is "psychological first aid" to assist a person who is distressed following their exposure to a PTE. A training module is being made in respect of psychological first aid, which is intended to form part of mandatory online learning.</p>
--	--