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## No apology over dancer's image

By Stephen Fitzpatrick

*Australian*

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The national indigenous dance academy is refusing to apologise for doctoring an image of the teenage daughter of famed -performer Russell Page to use for publicity material almost a year after she had hanged herself.

Rininya Johnson-Page, the youngest child of Page and fellow former Bangarra dancer Rayma Johnson, was found dead in a -Sydney park on Boxing Day 2013, just weeks after turning 18 and days after featuring in NAISDA's end-of-year show.

She had completed two years' study at the residential college, based at Kariong on the NSW central coast, but was considering deferring, according to family and friends.

A stunning image of Rininya and another dancer, Rika Hamaguchi, from that end-of-year event was used in the academy's 2014 student prospectus, in -contravention of well-accepted indigenous cultural practice of seeking the permission of families to publish images of the dead. Ms Johnson says she was never consulted.

However, worse was to come. A doctored version of the photograph, in which Hamaguchi's head was now stitched onto Rininya's body, was used in widespread publicity for the 2014 end-of-year show, including on the event's official poster.

Ms Johnson says she only learned of this in a text message from a family friend, leaving her puzzled as to why NAISDA had again not sought her permission to use a photograph of her dead daughter. She had no idea at this point it had been digitally altered.

But when she realised the -extent to which it had been manipulated, including being -rotated so that Rininya, with the other dancer's head on her body, was now facing downwards, she said that "you can only imagine my reaction â€‘ I felt beyond sick. I started to shake and cry".

This version appeared on -social media posts from NAISDA and the professional dance advocacy network Ausdance, as well as on the posters and in the fortnightly national Koori Mail newspaper.

After Ms Johnson made a formal complaint, NAISDA took steps to have the image withdrawn. It has since been removed from all promotional material and websites associated with NAISDA. Johnson has been pleading since then for a public apology - both for herself and to the Koori Mail - and an explanation for how the doctored image came to be created and approved.

She describes a note briefly posted on the NAISDA website eulogising her daughter as -inadequate and has rejected an offer to be involved this year in 40th - anniversary celebrations for the college, at which she was also a student, or for a proposed facility on the campus to be named after Rininya.

Koori Mail editor Rudi Maxwell, who unwittingly placed the offending image in her paper's November 5, 2014, edition after receiving it from a publicity firm, said this

week she was deeply distressed at having contravened well-established guidelines on the cultural sensitivities around pictures of the dead.

"I cannot understand why an indigenous organisation would send out an image that clearly breaches cultural protocols and is so insensitive," Maxwell said.

"Our strict policy on pictures of people who have died is that we -always honour the family's wishes and respect cultural protocols.

"If we don't have permission, we don't publish." Ms Johnson's two adult children, daughter Rikarli, 24, and son Rhimi, 26, are also affected. Their sister's death, which mirrored that of their father a -decade earlier, has been followed by others in the Page family, including uncle David Page, Bangarra's musical director, last month.

Ms Johnson, who gave The Weekend Australian permission to publish pictures of her daughter, says she can't grieve properly until the dispute is resolved. NAISDA declined to comment.