

‘Tell us the truth’: marchers demand answers from NSW police on missing Aboriginal man Gordon Copeland

Hundreds of people rally in Moree amid claims the 22-year-old was pursued by police before jumping into Gwydir River



Demonstrators in Moree on Wednesday call for information on what happened to Aboriginal man Gordon Copeland, who went missing 18 days ago after allegedly running from police.

Lorena Allam
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About 250 hundred people have marched to demand “answers” from New South Wales police about what happened to a young Aboriginal man who has been missing for 18 days since he allegedly ran from police and went into the Gwydir river.

The 22-year-old Gomeroi man, Gordon Copeland, has been missing since the early hours of Saturday 10 July after last being seen by police.

Hundreds of people, including his extended family and his pregnant partner, marched through the main street of Moree in north-west NSW, chanting “resume the search” and “Gordon’s life matters” amid claims he was pursued by police before jumping into the river.

“All we can do is continue the search, with the help of all you fellas out there,” his cousin Lesley Fernando told the crowd. “You’ll speak for Gordy, he’s not here to tell his story – we will use your voices to let his story be told. Stand with us, everyone, we need you right now.”

NSW police said a critical incident team was investigating “all circumstances surrounding the incident”, overseen by the professional

13 July saying officers had seen a black hatchback speeding through Moree about 2.30am on Saturday 10 July and later found the car bogged near a bridge on the Carnarvon highway.

“Officers attempted to speak with a man at the scene, however, he allegedly ran from police and was seen entering the Gwydir River,” a police spokesperson said at the time.

A search by emergency services including the Rural Fire Service and the SES failed to locate Copeland. A further search involving police divers and additional volunteers was also unsuccessful. Last week, police said the search had been “scaled down” while the matter was being investigated.

Copeland’s grandmother, Stella Fernando, said Wednesday’s rally was the start of the family’s determination to “fight for justice”.

“We will get justice for him,” she said. “Even if this is going to be a long fight.

“We want answers about what happened to my grandson, and we want the police to tell us the truth.”

“They should be out looking for him, and helping us by giving us answers about what really happened to him.”

NSW police said the coordinated search ended 13 days ago. They are now appealing for public assistance to locate Copeland.

“Since the coordinated search concluded on Thursday 15 July 2021, New England police have committed to continue searches of that area, utilising local staff, the dog unit, and both small boat and drone-trained officers to search the waterways,” police said in a statement after the rally.

“These searches will continue with the assistance of specialist resources.

“Despite extensive searches of the area, Gordon has not been located and detectives continue to conduct inquiries into Gordon’s whereabouts.”

