

NSW police officer charged over alleged assault during arrest of Indigenous teenager

Constable charged 11 months after footage surfaced showing officer tripping a 16-year-old boy and slamming him face-first on to bricks



A NSW constable has been charged over an alleged assault during the arrest of an Indigenous teenager in Surry Hills in June last year.

Michael McGowan and Laura Murphy-Oates

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The family of an Indigenous teenager who was allegedly assaulted by a police officer in Sydney last year have welcomed the decision to lay charges, saying they want the law to be “applied with fairness and justice”.

On Tuesday police confirmed an officer had been charged with assault occasioning actual bodily harm and common assault, 11 months after footage surfaced of him allegedly tripping a 16-year-old Indigenous teenager while arresting him, slamming the boy face-first on to bricks.

The officer involved, a constable who has worked for New South Wales police for three years, was placed on restricted duties in June after police professional standards launched an investigation into the incident.

In a statement, police said the officer was issued with a court attendance notice on Tuesday for assault occasioning actual bodily harm and common assault.

The officer is due to appear before Downing Centre local court on Thursday 24 June 2021. Police said in a statement that the officer’s employment was “under review”.

The footage of the incident showed the boy standing metres away from the officer as someone said: “I don’t need to open my ears, I’ll crack you across the jaw, bro.”

The officer then approached the boy, using his leg to sweep the teenager’s feet from under him while his arms were held behind his back, causing the teenager to slam face-first into the ground.

In a statement, a spokesperson for the boy’s family said they were “happy with the way this is now proceeding, legally and fairly”.

“We know we cannot discuss the details of this case now that charges have been laid,” they said.

“We as a family cry and share the grief and pain of the families who have had the lives of their young Black sons and daughters taken away from them violently by police and custodial authorities.

“Aboriginal people across Australia have been unfairly treated, racially vilified, and systematically oppressed since 1788.

“We look forward to the law being applied with fairness and justice.”

The footage caused outrage when it was released, taking place amid worldwide Black Lives Matter protests following the murder of George Floyd by a US police officer. In a statement, the chief executive of the Aboriginal Legal Service, Karly Warner, said the organisation “welcome this step towards justice”.

“Aboriginal people are too often the target of systemic racism and police mistreatment,” she said.

“We are routinely harassed, stopped, questioned and searched by police for no reason. We are refused bail at higher rates and disproportionately pursued through the courts for minor offences.

“You can’t have justice without accountability. Police should be subject to the same laws that apply to the community.”