



## Media Release

**Monday 21 February 2022 | FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

### **NSW Police Safe Driving policy remains ‘shrouded in secrecy’ despite tragic deaths**

Redfern Legal Centre has called on NSW Police to release its 'Safe Driving' policy as a matter of urgency following the tragic death of a 16-year-old Indigenous boy, Jai Wright, who died on Sunday afternoon in Sydney after a collision with an unmarked police car.

Despite a previously identified spike in deaths following NSW Police pursuits, and numerous recommendations made by the NSW State Coroner in response to these tragic incidents, Samantha Lee, a police accountability solicitor at Redfern Legal Centre, says this critical public safeguard remains “shrouded in secrecy.”

“Although we do not know the complete details of Mr Wright’s death and whether in fact a police pursuit was involved, it stirs up memories of the tragic death of Thomas Hickey, and is a timely reminder of the issues around police pursuits.”

“Police motor vehicle incidents often occur in the context of police pursuits, and continue to have horrific consequences, impacting many including young people, innocent bystanders, ambulance services, witnesses, and even police themselves. But the NSW Police Safe Driving policy remains shrouded in secrecy and hidden from public scrutiny,” Samantha Lee said.

“NSW State Coroners have made numerous recommendations about safe driving in the context of police pursuits, but we still don’t know if NSW Police acted on these recommendations.”

“This tragic accident highlights again the urgent need to inform the public about whether any of the NSW State Coroners’ recommendations about safe driving have been adopted,” Ms Lee said.

Redfern Legal Centre says that a transparent and robust Safe Driving policy is needed to assist police to navigate complex and often highly charged and stressful situations, including police pursuits.

"A robust policy for police would not only support quick and accurate decision making, but will contribute to greater public safety by helping to prevent horrific collisions," Ms Lee continued

“Accidents like this have heartbreaking consequences. It’s time for NSW Police to let the public know what policies and procedures are in place to prevent such horrific incidents.”

RLC has made a list of recommendations made by the NSW Coroners Court since 2016 – 2021. This list is outlined overleaf.

**RLC Police Accountability Solicitor Samantha Lee is available for interview.**  
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## Coroners' recommendation from 2016 onwards

1. The dangers inherent in a police pursuit of a motorcyclist exceeding the designated speed limit be considered as part of the continuing review of the NSWPF Safe Driving Policy,
2. that consideration be given to reviewing the current version of the NSW Police Force Safe Driving Policy to ensure that it provides:
  - a) an unequivocal definition of the term "termination" as it relates to pursuits;
  - b) clear indication as to whether, and in what circumstances, amounts to termination of a pursuit;
  - c) and (c) for consistency in language and instructions to police officers in relation to when a pursuit is terminated.
3. that consideration be given to the establishment of a standard VKG broadcast at the termination of a pursuit to:
  - a) confirm the termination of the pursuit;
  - b) direct involved police officers to cease pursuing and stop following a pursued vehicle, and to return to driving at the legal speed limit;
  - c) and (c) remind involved police officers of the requirement for approval to be given before a pursuit is re-initiated.
4. Establishment of such a standard VKG broadcast to be incorporated into relevant training packages provided to both VKG Shift Coordinators and VKG dispatchers
5. Clarify language of the policy that guides police discretion in relation to the initiation and continuation of pursuits. There are some inherent ambiguities contained Safe Driving Policy, particularly in relation to the definition of a pursuit.
6. Release of new Safe Driving Policy
7. The NSW Police Force Safe Driving Policy (SDP) component dealing with police pursuits be reviewed, in the light of Australian and international experience and research, by a panel of independent experts appointed by the Minister with a view to establishing best practice for the NSW Police Force (NSWPF).
8. Consideration is given to amending the NSW PF Safe Driving Policy to require that, before a pursuit is commenced, the involved officer be required to give consideration the nature and handling capacity of the vehicle that is proposed to be pursued.
9. Developing a better understanding of the requirements of the Safe Driving Policy regarding pursuits amongst employees of the NSW Police Force to whom the Safe Driving Policy applies
10. NSW Police undertakes a full audit regarding the effectiveness of these training and educational initiatives