



New South Wales Police Force

Body Art & Modification Policy

**Workforce Relations & Reform
People & Capability Command**

NSW Police Force (NSWPF) Body Art & Modification Policy

This policy was developed to outline the standards expected of NSWPF employees and police recruits in relation to body art and modification, to ensure the professionalism and/or image of the NSWPF is not brought into disrepute.

In order to promote a professional and positive image to the community all NSW Police Force (NSWPF) employees have a duty to maintain appropriate standards of dress, grooming and conduct. Likewise, all police recruits seeking employment with NSWPF will be expected to reflect and uphold the organisational image and values.



NSW Police Force

People & Capability Command PRACTICE GUIDE Body Art & Modification

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1. INTRODUCTION

Body art and modification standards have been established by the NSW Police Force (NSWPF) to maintain a professional image that is consistent with the:

- *Code of Conduct & Ethics*
- *Statement of Values*
- *Customer Service Charter*
- *NSW Police Force Dress Policy.*

The NSWPF Recruitment Branch seeks to attract and recruit high quality individuals who represent the community in terms of gender, cultural and linguistic diversity and Aboriginality. As part of the recruitment process professional suitability applicants will be expected to meet the body art and modification standards outlined in this Policy.

Some employees and police recruits may already have tattoos or other forms of body art as defined within this Policy. Nevertheless, the NSWPF expects that the nature, location, prominence and appearance of existing body art is such that it would not bring the professionalism and/or image of NSWPF into disrepute.

In the application of this Policy consideration will be given to work health and safety, cultural and/or ethno religious issues where appropriate in accordance with relevant Anti-Discrimination and Work, Health & Safety legislation.

2. SCOPE

This Policy applies to all NSWPF employees and police recruits. As part of professional suitability, police recruits will need to satisfy the body art and modification standards outlined in this Policy.

3. DEFINITIONS

Employee	Police officers, administrative employees (this includes temporary employees, Special Constables (Security) and members of the Police Band who are employed under the <i>Police Act 1990</i>
Police recruit	Professional suitability applicants, re-appointment and professional mobility applicants and students enrolled in the Constables Education Program.

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Body art and modification

Modifying, decorating, changing or altering the appearance and/or form of the body through attachments to body piercing, tattooing, branding, cutting, insertion of implants and dental ornamentation

4. BODY ART AND MODIFICATION STANDARDS

While it is acknowledged that body art and modifications have become a more acceptable part of modern culture, the significance and sensitivity of the policing function means that NSWPF employees must abide by the standards outlined in this Policy.

4.1 Prohibited body art and modification

4.1.1 Prohibited locations

Any form of body art or modification that is on the face, scalp, ears, neck or hands of an employee or police recruit is prohibited under this Policy. For the purpose of this Policy, a small and non-offensive tattoo may be accepted behind the ear, on the hands or on part of the neck. These tattoos will be assessed by the Manager of the Recruitment Branch on a case by case basis.

Regard will be given to cultural and/or ethno religious issues where appropriate in accordance with Anti-Discrimination legislation.

4.1.2 Prohibited forms of body art and modification

Regardless of the location employees are prohibited from having any form of body art and/or modification that:

- (a) a reasonable person would conclude indicates the employee has an association: *with a person, group or organisation that is involved in (or perceived to be involved in) activity that is incompatible with activity conducted on behalf of the NSW Police Force. These associations create a conflict of interest between the individual's responsibility to the NSW Police Force and their personal relationships/private interests.* ([Procedures to Manage Declarable Associations](#)), and/or
- (b) a reasonable person would consider offensive. In terms of what constitutes offensive the same principles apply as would for an offensive picture, e-mail or poster in the workplace, and/or
- (c) implants which create abnormalities or dental ornamentation (exemptions to this are medical modifications such as reconstructive surgery).

All body art will be evaluated on a case-by-case basis, but examples of prohibited body art include, but are not limited to:

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- those that are commonly associated with illegal gangs, criminal behaviour and racism;
- graphic depictions of sexual actions or nudity;
- tattoos of slogans that amount to racial, ethno religious, homophobic or sexual vilification; and
- tattoos in languages other than English depicting words or phrases that, when translated into English, a reasonable person would consider offensive.

4.2 Exemptions under this Policy

4.2.1 General

The definition of body art and modification as defined under this Policy is not intended to capture forms such as:

- small non-offensive tattoo behind the ear, on the hands or on part of the neck
- standard cosmetic tattoos (e.g., eyebrow tattoos)
- standard cosmetic or medical modifications (e.g., augmentation for cosmetic or medical reasons)
- standard ear piercing.

4.2.2 Employees performing covert duties

Employees performing covert duties may be permitted to display their body art and/or modification or wear additional jewellery with the express consent of their Commander if it is considered appropriate during police operations. However, any such consent granted to an employee performing covert duties is limited to the duration of the covert operation and as such consent granted by NSWPF may be withdrawn at any time.

5. APPLICATION OF THIS POLICY

Employees and police recruits will be expected to comply with this Policy and meet the required standards from 29 November 2013, the original date of publication.

5.1 Compliance standards for existing employees

5.1.1 Prohibited body art and/or modification acquired after publication of this Policy

Existing employees will be in breach of this Policy for any prohibited body art or modification acquired after the original date of publication of this Policy unless exceptional circumstances exist.

5.1.2 Prohibited body art and/or modification must be removed or covered when on duty

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Existing employees must conceal all existing prohibited body art and modification while on duty/during work hours.

An employee who is identified as having a prohibited form of body art and/or modification must enter into an agreement with their Commander/Manager as to the most appropriate manner of concealment while on duty. Consideration must be given to work, health and safety issues as part of any agreement reached.

5.1.3 Notification requirements

Employees must advise their Commander/Manager of any current body art and/or modification which may be a potential breach of this Policy. An appropriate record of such notification should be made by the Commander/Manager.

5.1.4 Right of review

The following review process applies with respect to the following:

Prohibited body art and/or modification

In circumstances where an employee wishes to challenge any determination by their Commander or Manager that they have body art and/or modification that is prohibited, they are able to seek a review by their Region Commander or equivalent.

Exceptional circumstances

Consideration of exceptional circumstances referred to under section 5.1.1 of this Policy will in the first instance be determined by the Commander, Recruitment, Transfers & Appointments with an escalation to the Assistant Commissioner, People & Capability Command where appropriate.

5.2 Requirement to remove or cover all body art and/or modification when attending formal police events

Employees with body art and/or modification must comply with the NSWPF Dress Policy and relevant Dress Orders when attending formal police events. Employees will also be required to remove any attachments to body piercing or other modification that is contrary to the Dress Policy.

A Commander or Manager has the discretion to require an employee to conceal their body art or remove any attachment to body piercing or other modification if considered

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reasonable and necessary to ensure the maintenance of a professional corporate image by all employees.

5.3 Compliance standards for police recruits

5.3.1 Notification requirements

Police recruits will be required to advise the recruitment branch of any body art and/or modification that may be prohibited under this Policy.

5.3.2 Professional suitability

Police recruits will be in breach of this Policy for any prohibited body art or modification and will be deemed not to meet professional suitability.

In cases where a police applicant is deemed to have a tattoo that does not comply with this Policy, the Manager of the Recruitment Branch may approve a Professional Suitability application to continue if the applicant agrees to the removal or modification of the tattoo prior to attestation from the NSWPF Academy. This agreement should be recorded at the recruitment stage as a conditional pass.

5.3.3 Right of review

Police recruits who are advised that they do not meet professional suitability may request a review where appropriate and as outlined below:

- Professional Suitability Applicants: review by the Manager, NSW Police Force Recruitment Branch and referral, where applicable, to the Professional Suitability Review Committee
- Students of the Constable Education Program (CEP): review by the Commander, Organisational Development Command and appeal, where applicable, to the Student Professional Suitability Review Committee.

6. RESPONSIBILITIES

6.1 Commanders and Managers

Are responsible for:

- appropriately recording any notifications made under paragraph 5.1.3 of this Policy
- ensuring that employees are made aware of this Policy and required standards that must be met.
- reinforcement of this Policy with employees as necessary.

6.2 Employees

Are responsible for:

- familiarising themselves with this Policy, and
- complying with required standards

An employee who fails to comply with this Policy or meet the required standards may be subject to managerial and/or disciplinary action.

6.3 Police Recruits

Are responsible for:

- familiarising themselves with this Policy, and
- complying with required standards

A police recruit who fails to comply with this Policy or meet the required standards will not meet professional suitability.

7. FURTHER INFORMATION

Advice and Contacts

For advice on application of this Policy for the professional suitability of a police recruit contact: NSWPF Recruitment Branch on 1800 222 122.

For advice on conduct issues arising from breaches of this Policy contact: Professional Standards Command on 9355 8370 or eaglenet: 48370

References

[Code of Conduct and Ethics \(Standards of Professional Conduct Booklet\)](#)

[Professional Suitability Policy & Procedures](#)

[NSW Police Force Dress Policy and Dress Orders](#)

[Respectful Workplace Behaviours Guidelines](#)

[Email and Internet Guidelines](#)

[Personal Use of Social Media Policy and Guidelines](#)

[Official Use of Social Media Policy](#)

[Work Health & Safety Act 2011](#)

[Anti-Discrimination Act 1977](#)

8. DOCUMENT CONTROL SHEET

Document Properties

Title	Body Art & Modification Policy
Subject	The body art and modification standards that must be met by employees and police recruits.
Command responsible	People & Capability Command
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Modification History

Version #	Version approval date	Author/Role	Summary of changes
1.0	29 November 2013	HR Policy	Original document.
2.0	27 February 2017	HR Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Update policy template Definition of hand and neck clarified Inclusion of offensive tattoos in languages other than English in examples of prohibited tattoos
3.0	16 November 2022	WR&R Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> References to HR Command removed and replaced with People & Capability Command. Position titles updated to reflect People & Capability Command structure Sections 4.1.1 and 4.2.1 amended to include non-offensive tattoos on hands or neck that may be permitted on a case by case basis. Section 5.3.2 compliance standards for student police updated.
4.0	23 March 2023	WR&R Policy	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Sections 4.1.1 and 4.2.1 amended to remove requirement for non-offensive tattoos on the neck to be covered by police uniform.