

What is 'use of force'?

The law gives NSW police power to use 'reasonably necessary' physical force in some situations, for example, when it is required to arrest someone.

What did LECC's review find?

We reviewed 210 police records of times when police used force, as well as all relevant policies and training, and found:

- Widespread inconsistencies in record keeping
- Under-reporting of the use of force
- At least 1 error in 73% of reviewed records
- Gaps in policies and training
- A lack of quality assurance processes
- Firearm use had the greatest proportion of inconsistent or under-reporting

Why reporting matters

Accurate reporting about use of force helps police management, the public and the NSW government know whether police are using their powers appropriately and effectively. It also helps the NSW Police Force identify areas for improvement.

What will the NSW Police Force do now?

In September 2022 the NSW Police Force acknowledged the inconsistencies we found, and supported the majority of our recommendations. They also told us they will develop new policy, guidelines and training about how officers should record and verify use of force. We will monitor this work and report on its progress.

Did you know?

Use of force' means police using:

- Kicks
- Punches (defensive strikes)
- Wrestling
- Pushing (check drilling)
- Firearms
- Capsicum spray
- Tasers
- Wrist locks
- Batons (defensive strikes)
- Trained dogs and horses
- Restraints

What action did LECC take?

In March 2022 we made 11 recommendations to the NSW Police Force to help improve:

- Instructions to officers about what should be reported and when
- Training about recording use of force
- Operational database functionality
- Quality assurance processes