

WA police officers stood aside after allegedly abandoning boys outside town

The three officers also allegedly verbally abused the two 14-year-olds in South Hedland before dropping them between town and Two Mile Camp



Three police officers in remote Western Australia have been stood aside after being accused of abandoning two teenage boys between South Hedland and Two Mile Camp. Photograph: Kim Christian/AAP

By Calla Wahlquist

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Three police officers in remote Western Australia have been stood aside over allegations they verbally abused two 14-year-old boys and abandoned them outside town.

The boys were allegedly picked up by police at South Hedland, 1,500km north of Perth, following a reported disturbance on 11 June.

The police then dropped the boys off somewhere between the town and Two Mile Camp, an Indigenous community about 3km away.

An investigation was launched after their families complained.

In a statement, WA police confirmed the internal affairs unit was investigating the alleged incident, and that three officers had been stood aside.

“It has been alleged the officers drove them to the outskirts of South Hedland between the town site and an area known as Two Mile Camp,” the statement said.

“The investigation into the conduct of these officers, in relation to their actions towards the teenagers, is ongoing.

“The three officers have been stood aside from operational duties.”

South Hedland is the police station where the Yamatji woman, Ms Dhu, was held before her death in custody on 4 August 2014.

Most of the 11 officers in the chain of custody for Dhu, whose first name is not used for cultural reasons, have since left the station after turnover unrelated to her death. All told a coronial inquest into her death that they did not believe the station had an issue with racism.

Security footage of Dhu’s last hours, which the coroner ruled would not be publicly released, showed police officers expressing disbelief at her asking to go to hospital for a third time, before handcuffing and dragging her limp from from her cell.

Pilbara’s police superintendent, Paul Coombes, told the West Australian that the incident involving the two boys followed “a relentless series of issues” in Port Hedland which officers felt made policing difficult.

He said he had ordered a separate review to identify if there were any “cultural” issues at the police station.

“Obviously we don’t want to have any allegations of misconduct against any police officers,” he said.

“It is concerning that police officers overstepped the mark, if that is what has occurred.”

According to the North West Telegraph, police in South Hedland have been targeting youth crime and picked up 84 unaccompanied children, aged three to 14, over four consecutive nights in March.