

# Police Perjury Trial Continues in Downing Centre Court

The perjury trial over the shooting of Sydney man [Adam Salter](#) continued this week, with the barrister for police officer Sergeant Sheree Bissett telling the court his client did not lie to the Police Integrity Commission.

Adam Salter was living in Lakemba, NSW in 2009 when police were called to the home by his father, who reported that his 36-year-old mentally ill son was stabbing himself.

Present at the scene were four police officers who, it is alleged, later collaborated in [fabricating a lie](#) that would exonerate the shooter, Sergeant Bissett, for her deadly act.

The court heard that when Adam walked towards the sink which had a knife, Bissett drew her gun and fired at his back, causing his death.

The court previously heard that the [four officers](#) – Sergeant Bissett, Constable Aaron Abela, Sergeant Emily Metcalfe and Senior Constable Leah Wilson – deliberately gave false evidence to the Police Integrity Commission (PIC) over the events at the Salter home.

## Police Coverup

The officers were seen smoking and talking outside the Salters' home [after the shooting](#), when they allegedly concocted their story.

During the PIC inquiry, the officers gave statements which were significantly different to the consistent accounts given by the ambulance officers and Mr Salter's father.

Sergeant Bissett claimed Constable Abela was “struggling” with Adam who had lunged towards him.

Constable Abela’s version was different – that there was some contact with Adam, but it was “just an instantaneous reaction where my arm just came out to stop him”. He then proceeded to state that he grabbed the Adam’s left arm in two places – just above the elbow with his right hand and just below the elbow with his left.

Officer Wilson’s testimony was different again – that officer Abela placed his right hand on Adam’s shoulder before Bissett fired the fatal shot.

Officer Metcalfe’s evidence was different once again – that Abela was holding Adam around his upper torso when the shot was fired.

Due to these and other inconsistencies, the officers were charged with lying to the PIC.

### **Police Mishandle Mental Illness**

This is not the first time Sydney police have been accused of mishandling a situation involving the imminent danger of a mentally ill person.

Other [New South Wales police shootings](#) include the killing of Elijah Holcombe, who was shot dead in Armidale the same year.

[Mr Holcombe](#) was only 24 and a student at university when he was tracked down by plainclothes police officers who attempted to apprehend him because of reports that he was suffering a mental health breakdown. He fled to an alleyway where he was killed by the officers, who later claimed they were acting in self-defence.

Nor is this the first time police have been charged with perjury for [lying about their behaviour](#) on the job, or other forms of misconduct. In fact, 50 NSW police officers are

currently [facing serious criminal charges](#) including sexual assault, child rape and domestic assault.

The trial over the shooting of Adam Salter continues.

## **Mental Health Clinicians Now On Call in WA**

Last year, the Western Australian police force announced a plan to “decriminalise” mental health by diverting those suffering from mental health conditions away from the criminal justice system.

Traditionally, police have been expected to deal with the complex issues surrounding mental health while carrying out their duty to protect the public and enforce the law. Police can face difficult situations with minimal training on how to deal with mentally ill people, and have been quick to resort to heavy-handed tactics – even deadly force.

With the number of call outs related to mental health doubling between 2007 to 2014, it is now more important than ever that the police receive the proper training and assistance required to de-escalate potentially dangerous situations.

The WA initiative has seen \$6.5 million diverted from existing budgets to provide mental health clinicians to work alongside police on the beat and on call-outs.

Police Commissioner Karl O’Callaghan said the program would allow for people to be clinically assessed and properly dealt with at the scene, hopefully keeping them away from the back of police vans.

Last year the Victorian Government pledged to establish a similar program, targeted at providing [urgent mental health support](#) in the community while reducing pressure on the police force. The program aims to provide emergency care to those in a critical state due to mental illness.