



# **NSW Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association. (NSWHPA)**

## **Concussion Policy**

**Website: <http://www.nswhpa.org/> Policies  
developed by NSWHPA Committee 22/23**

**Date of policy: June 2023**

**Due for review: June 2025**



## Executive Summary

The NSW Hang Gliding and Paragliding Association (NSWHPA) is a non-profit volunteer sporting organisation providing support to all NSW member pilots of Hang Gliding, Paragliding and Weight Shift Microlight Clubs. The sport's scope extends to member pilots engaged in other forms of flying such as motorised Hang Gliding and powered Paragliding.

The Association is the NSW branch of the Sports Aviation Federation of Australia (SAFA).

The standard protocol for flying our aircraft requires pilots to wear a helmet which in some, but not all cases substantially mitigates the risk of concussion caused by an impact to the head. Due to the nature of our sport, the risk of concussion does exist as a real possibility, particularly with heavy landings and accidents at launch.

Therefore, NSWHPA has distributed this policy to help SAFA pilots identify and manage the risks associated with concussion.

## NSWHPA Concussion policy

**Rationale** Concussion is the result of a significant knock / trauma to the head injuring / bruising the brain. This may result from impacting of their head with their own body part for example, their knee.

NSWHPA has an obligation to make members aware of the risks associated with concussion and its concomitant adverse effects upon flying our aircraft.

**Aims** This policy aims to provide ongoing organisational support to reduce member risk by increasing the awareness of concussion. That any person with suspected concussion receive timely and appropriate care and advice to enable them to safely manage their health and continue their long term participation in the sport.

**Our commitment** NSWHPA will increase members' awareness and understanding of concussion to further reduce the risks associated with flying after any kind of impact to the head - be it the force of the impact and/or the hardness of the surface being impacted upon or by.



NSWHPA recognises that in our sport it is not possible to supervise or monitor members and participants in the sport, so we encourage all members along with their family and friends to be mindful of the effects of concussion and its signs and symptoms, and be able to provide the appropriate support and advice.

The recommendation by the relevant authorities is **“If in doubt – sit it out.”** Often the best person to detect behavioural changes caused by concussion is someone who knows the person / patient that has sustained the head trauma.

## **Concussion Risk Management**

The NSWHPA has adopted the policies of the Australian Government Concussion in Sport Website. <https://www.concussioninsport.gov.au/>

There are three key steps to managing the risks associated with concussion - which should be an immediate response after an impact to the head, being

- 1. Identify**
- 2. Manage**
- 3. Assessment by medical personnel**



## 1. Identify

Any person who has suffered an impact to the head should be assessed for concussion. What are the signs and symptoms of concussion?

The obvious indication that there has been a significant injury and concussion is where the person loses consciousness, has a seizure or has significant balance difficulties.

**The signs** of concussion vary and may be difficult to detect. For example, the person may:

- appear normal apart from appearing vacant, dazed or stunned
- be disoriented and unable to recall recent information, eg. what day it is, other people's names that they would normally know; or be disoriented in terms of place and time etc.
- ask them repeatedly about for example, what happened or where their vehicle is parked; amnesia is common, and/or
- have difficulty concentrating and answering specific questions.

**Symptoms** of concussion can be very subtle and may present as nothing more than the person reporting that they do not 'feel right'. Concussed people often report these symptoms:

- visual disturbance
- feeling 'foggy', lethargic or slow
- having sensitivity to light or noise
- feeling dizzy or nauseous
- headache.



**2. Manage** Where there are no obvious or clear signs of concussion resulting from an impact to the head - it is highly recommended for the pilot to “**sit it out**” for his/her own safety and others - do not fly.

Sometimes when there are initially clear signs of concussion, that may abate only to return sometime later, in the absence of a qualified medical opinion/assessment the NSWHPA recommends to “**sit it out**” for the rest of the day.

While the responsibility for flight, outside of a student situation, is the responsibility of the pilot in command, it aids the safety of these sports to have any other pilots who may be a bystander aware of the signs and symptoms of concussion.

Instructors, Site Safety Officers, support staff and fellow pilots need to be alert for evidence that a person is behaving unusually or out of character, exhibiting signs of disorientation, clumsiness or loss of balance.

**3. Assessment by Qualified Medical Personnel** Loss of consciousness, seizure or balance difficulties are clear signs that a person has sustained a significant injury. Urgent and immediate medical attention is critical in these circumstances.

It is strongly recommended, that any person after experiencing an impact, particularly to the head, who is exhibiting symptoms of concussion or who is suspected of having concussion needs an assessment by medical personnel either ambulance or a medical practitioner.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading 'Michael Stott', is located in the bottom right corner of the page.