

'onya Oz: man cleared of charge after calling pig (police) a 'prick'

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An Australian student who called a police officer a "prick" has been cleared of verbal abuse charges after a judge ruled that the word was in "common usage" and therefore not offensive.

Henry Grech insulted the senior constable during an argument at a Sydney railway station last year but the offensive language case against him fell apart after the magistrate said the word was in common use.

"I consider the word prick is of a less derogatory nature than other words and it is in common usage in this country," Robbie Williams, the Waverley Local Court magistrate, told the court on Monday.

"A police officer on a number of occurrences would hear words like this used on a much worse scale.

"Police officers would be used to this type of language," he said, according to a report in Sydney's Daily Telegraph.

State police said while swearing might be common, it could still be offensive and the decision viewed police officers as "second class citizens".

"Police shouldn't be punching bags for society, nor should they be open to this sort of abuse," said Peter Remfrey, the New South Wales Police Association secretary.

Mr Grech's lawyer, Nick Hanna, acknowledged on Tuesday that the case had "caused a bit of a storm".

"His honour was not condoning my client's alleged behaviour whatsoever," he told a press conference. "He simply made a finding of law."

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