



# Parental Behaviour Factsheet

Parents<sup>1</sup> play an invaluable role in the ADF Cadets Youth Development Program.

Where would cadet units be without parents? Who would ferry cadets back and forth between parade nights, events and activities, wash uniforms and make sure cadets arrive on time? We all know that, if not for mums and dads, we would struggle to find enough OOC, IOC, and helpers. Without a doubt, they are an invaluable resource and an essential part of the success of the ADF Cadets program.

Occasionally, however, some parents become over-emotional, verbally abusive and sometimes even physically aggressive. It's important that the inappropriate actions of a few parents don't ruin the cadet experience for everyone else. So what can we do about it? What role do adults play? How about the ADF Cadets Organisations? How can parents successfully tread that line between supportive and aggressive?

## *Tips for parents:*

- **Be a good role model.** Young people watch and learn from you, so make sure you set a good example.
- **Try not to be critical of OOC, IOC, cadets or other adults.** Many are volunteers who give their time to make the ADF Cadets program possible for all our young people and some are just learning. If you have some constructive advice for them, leave it until after the unit activity or have a chat with the unit commander.

*For more tips go to our Parental Behaviour Code of Conduct, Parental Behaviour Commitment Statement on the Defence YouthHO website*

## *Inappropriate behaviour:*

- may include, but is not limited to, the use of foul language, and making threatening gestures and/or remarks directed at the cadet unit OOC/IOCs, other adults or other cadets;
- tends to concentrate on faults and failings rather than successes and or positives;
- diminishes everyone's enjoyment of the cadet unit activity/event.

**Be aware that abusive behaviour may be against the law.** Ask yourself, 'Would others be upset or offended by what I am saying or doing?' If the answer is yes then it's best to sit down and be quiet.

*The ADF Cadets program has a legal responsibility to address behaviours that offend community standards or are against the law (e.g. racial vilification, sexual harassment, criminal or common assault). If you witness behaviour that you think may be illegal, you should report it to the police. Similarly, if a bad situation escalates and becomes dangerous, activities will be suspended and the police may be required to intervene.*



### *Inappropriate behaviour by parents can result in:*

- their child/ren being withdrawn from the cadet program
- reduced membership to the cadet unit
- fewer people willing to volunteer; and/or
- an increased risk of legal action.

### *Tips for adults in the cadet program*

- **If the abuse is directed at you** try to stay calm, maintain your composure and explain that you will discuss the issue with them during a break or after the unit parade night or activity. Do not accept or ignore abusive, offensive or foul language.

**If an OOC/IOC or cadet is the focus of the parent's abuse**, you should try to defuse the situation. Talk calmly to the parent, acknowledge their frustration refer to the ADF Cadets behaviour policies and the Parental Behaviour Commitment Statement and explain the consequences if the behaviour continues. Make sure you document the incident and report it to the Cadet Organisation Headquarters.

- **If the abuse is directed at young people**, don't ignore a parent who verbally abuses their child on the grounds by assuming that '*it's none of my business*'. Speak to the parent privately before their behaviour gets out of hand — this will often prevent the situation escalating. Remind the parent about the Parental Behaviour Code of Conduct and the Parental Behaviour Commitment Statement. Document the incident and report it to the cadet organisation headquarters.

*Remember that children join the cadets program to have fun, develop skills and build their confidence. Be part of supporting this experience and, through your words and actions, encourage others to do the same.*

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<sup>i</sup> The term parent in relation to a young person means any person having parental responsibility or guardianship of a person under the age of 18. This includes legal guardians, responsible third parties and/or specified next of kin.

