

AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE CADETS: YOUTH SAFETY

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The source policy for the Australian Defence Force Cadets (ADF Cadets) specific youth safety policy is the Defence Youth Safety policy suite in Youth Policy Manual (YOUTHPOLMAN) Part 1. The four primary policies specify:

- a. Defence Youth Safety Commitment Statement
- b. Defence Youth Safety Governance
- c. Defence Youth Safety Risk Management
- d. Defence Youth Safety Incident Management, Responding and Reporting.

1.2 The youth safety commitment policy details the Defence approach and commitment to youth safety, the four contexts in which Defence interacts with youth, the principles that underpin youth safety action, and key roles and responsibilities.

1.3 The youth safety governance policy details the Defence focus on consistent application of youth safety policies, procedures and practices.

1.4 The youth safety risk management and responding and reporting policies provide direction for Defence youth safety risk and incident management.

1.5 The ADFC operates within, and is subject to, the Defence Youth Safety Framework. The ADF Cadets youth safety policy supplements the policy suite in YOUTHPOLMAN Part 1. It details action and provides direction specific to the ADF Cadets context.

PURPOSE

1.6 The purpose of this policy is to provide specific guidance to ensure ADF Cadets youth safety actions are consistent with the overarching youth safety principles and commitments articulated in YOUTHPOLMAN Part 1.

1.7 This policy details the actions required to:

- a. prioritise and promote youth safety risk management appropriate to the ADF Cadets;
- b. ensure all adults involved in ADF Cadets activity demonstrate their commitment to youth safety through their agreement to undertake their responsibilities in accordance with the ADF Cadets code of conduct (Adults);
- c. ensure all adults involved in ADF Cadets activity complete the mandated suitability screening action in accordance with the ADF Cadets Suitability Screening Guide prior to their acceptance as a volunteer ;
- d. ensure all ADF Cadets adults members complete youth safety training appropriate to role and responsibilities;;
- e. maximise proactive engagement with parents, guardians and other responsible third parties involved in the protection of young people;
- f. ensure the involvement of cadets in creating and maintaining a youth safe environment;
- g. ensure ADF Cadets members, Defence Approved Helpers (DAH), Defence personnel, cadets, their families and the wider community know what to do if
- h.

- i. they have concerns about youth safety in the ADF Cadets context and the process for reporting ADF Cadets youth safety incidents; and
- j. ensure all breaches of the policies, relevant codes of conduct are reported and managed in accordance with the ADF Cadets Youth Safe Behaviours policy, Defence Youth safety Incident Management policy and Incident Management Guide.

AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE CADETS PROGRAM

1.8 The ADF Cadets is one of four Defence contexts in which adults interact with young people under the age of 18. Interactions in this context are routinely between cadets under the age of 18 and:

- a. Officers and Instructors of Cadets (OOC/IOC) and Defence Approved Helpers (DAH);
- b. Cadets the aged 18 or over; and
- c. Defence personnel engaged in cadet activities.

RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN ADULTS AND PERSONS UNDER THE AGE OF 18

1.9 All cadets under the age of 18 are by legal definition 'children' and because of their age and physical and emotional immaturity are considered vulnerable and prone to be less risk averse than adults. For this reason the law regards those adults who have, or assume, responsibility for their care and supervision as owing them a special duty of care as detailed in Defence youth safety policy Relationships between adults and youth under 18.

1.10 Defence considers all Defence personnel as well as all ADF Cadets adult members (OOC, IOC, DAH, and cadets over the age of 18) responsible for providing 'special care' to cadets under the age of 18 particularly as it relates to sexual interaction.

1.11 Regardless of individual state or territory legislation that defines age of consent, Defence does not tolerate any sexual interaction between adults and persons under the age of 18 as detailed in Defence youth safety policy - Relationships between adults and youth under 18.

1.12 Any adult associated with ADF Cadets activities (Defence personnel, OOC/IOC, DAH and adult cadets) who breaches the prohibition against sexual interaction with cadets and/or other minors will be subject to administrative or disciplinary action. They may also be subject to criminal action, depending on the state or territory jurisdiction.

AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE CADETS CULTURE AND GOVERNANCE

YOUTH SAFETY CULTURE

1.13 Creating a youth safe organisation means taking all reasonably practicable measures to keep young people under the age of 18 safe from harm, abuse or neglect. Creating a youth safe organisation is also about creating an environment in which:

- a. everyone, adults and young people alike, feel confident to report incidents or events of abuse or harassment;
- b. young people know that persons to whom they report will provide immediate support, comfort and assistance to them; and

UNCLASSIFIED

- c. cadets and other minors who have been exposed to harm, abuse, or neglect, know that they are entirely without blame for the situation in which they find themselves.
- 1.14 To create an ADF Cadets youth safe culture requires the cadet organisations to:
- a. incorporate youth safety in all vision, mission and role statements;
 - b. feature youth safety in internal and public program messaging; and
 - c. make specific provision for the safety of youth with disability as well as youth from indigenous and culturally or linguistically diverse backgrounds.

YOUTH SAFETY GOVERNANCE

1.15 Effective ADF Cadets youth safety governance means youth safety responsibilities are clearly defined for each role undertaken by each member, helper and cadet as they relate to:

- a. individual compliance with ADF Cadets youth safety requirements and direction, particularly compliance with suitability screening requirements before members are accepted and volunteers are approved and registered;
- b. individual compliance with code of conduct requirements;
- c. immediate and appropriate action when behaviour is at odds with the code of conduct;
- d. individual compliance with youth safety training requirements;
- e. adhering to both legislated and Defence reporting requirements; and

UNCLASSIFIED

Accountable Officer: Chief Joint Capability

Policy Officer: Head Reserve and Youth Division