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Dear Colleagues,

I am writing to all AAFC staff members to seek your assistance in maintaining and conveying the expectations and obligations incumbent upon all staff members when dealing with relationships between cadets and staff members (IOC/OOCs). This is a difficult subject and one which most people tend to avoid for fear of intruding into another's personal affairs when relationships develop between adult members of staff (ie AC/ACW(AAFC) and above), and cadets irrespective of age.

We are all well aware that a cadet of 18+ years of age is an adult and, technically, they are lawfully responsible for themselves. Personal maturity and life-skills are not so well defined and regulated. The AAFC and its staff members have an on-going duty of care and trust towards all cadets and their parents or guardians who rightfully expect the AAFC, ie its staff members, to protect their child's well being whilst undergoing the development and training for which we are well renowned. We are placed in that position of trust not only by parents but also the law, and therefore our community. It is highly inappropriate to say the least to betray that duty and trust (perhaps inadvertently but no less a betrayal), and compromise for personal satisfaction the standards of behaviour and role models that others in the AAFC strive to establish and maintain. The double standard eats away at our integrity, and your impartiality is immediately and seriously compromised.

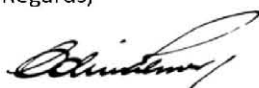
It is on this basis that I write to affirm that it is highly inappropriate, and unacceptable, for **any** AAFC IOC/OOC to conduct any form of personal relationship of any intimate nature with any cadet. The policy requirements are very clear – you are not permitted to take advantage of a cadet. The relationship between cadets and IOC/OOCs is very much akin to that of a teacher/student – it operates 24/7 – there is no 'sign off/sign in' capacity simply because a relationship exists outside of cadets. So that we all understand the AAFC's position where such a relationship is suspected; it is inappropriate for the focus to be centred on the cadet in such a situation. It will be the IOC/OOC who will bear the burden to resolve the conflict, and not the cadet because the duty lies with the officer or instructor.

Some may argue that what happens out of AAFC time is personal business. Well it is not. Anything that potentially compromises that trust, whether or not a uniform is worn either on a weekly parade, at camp or in the bush; is the AAFC's business. There is no magical line of acceptability of private concern whilst one of the people involved in an intimate relationship is a cadet, and the other is a staff member. If there is difficulty in understanding or accepting this duty, then the staff member needs to reassess their suitability and, hence, continuation in the AAFC.

One of the great leap forwards in maturity and responsibility for a cadet when they join the staff ranks of the AAFC is the psychological transition and awareness that one is no longer a cadet but a staff member. This transition is not always immediate or successful. The distinction between being a former cadet and being a new staff member can often be invisible to the staff recruit, or seem unimportant. This is where I need the help of the more senior and experienced staff members who can play an essential role in communicating the expectations of the AAFC to our less experienced members irrespective of rank. I need your courage and wisdom in conveying this message and ethos. I also need help from our more junior members to understand one of the less visible but very essential expectations of an AAFC staff member, and the new found duty expected of, and imposed upon, you as a staff member.

I know I can call upon your support with this delicate matter.

Regards,



COLIN PALMER

Group Captain (AAFC)

Commander-Australian Air Force Cadets