



## HEADQUARTERS AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE CADETS

### Office of the Commander

---

PO Box 1323, Kenmore QLD 4069 E-mail: cdr@aafc.org.au

#### ALL STAFF

#### INAPPROPRIATE AND UNACCEPTABLE RELATIONSHIPS BETWEEN STAFF AND CADETS

1. I am writing to all AAFC staff members to seek your assistance in maintaining and communicating the expectations and obligations incumbent upon all staff members when dealing with relationships between cadets and staff members (including instructors, officers and approved civilians). This is a difficult subject and one that most people tend to avoid for fear of intruding into another's personal affairs. However, when a relationship develops between a member of staff and any cadet, irrespective of age, it is a subject we all need to face head on.

#### Expectations

2. The underpinning rationale for what follows is that the AAFC and its staff members have an on-going duty of care and trust towards all cadets irrespective of age. Their parents or guardians rightfully expect the AAFC to protect their child's wellbeing whilst they are undergoing the development and training for which we are well renowned. We, as AAFC staff, are placed in a position of trust not only by parents but also by the community and, most importantly, by the law. I cannot stress strongly enough that it is highly inappropriate to betray that trust - even inadvertently - and compromise, for personal satisfaction, the standards of behaviour and the values that all in the AAFC strive to establish and maintain.

#### Directive

3. It is for this reason that I write to affirm that it is highly inappropriate, and unacceptable, for *any* AAFC staff member to **conduct any form of personal relationship of an intimate nature with any cadet**. The policy requirements as detailed in the Interim POLMAN Part 2, Chapter 7, paragraph 14 and 15, and my expectations, are perfectly clear – as a staff member you are not to take advantage of any cadet. I would add that the relationship between cadets and staff is very much akin to that of teacher/student – it operates twenty four hours a day, seven days a week – there is no 'sign off/sign in' capacity.

4. So that you all clearly understand the AAFC's position where such a relationship is suspected let me spell it out: in such a situation it is inappropriate for the focus to be centred on the cadet rather it must be and will be on the staff member who will bear the burden to resolve the conflict.

5. Some may argue that what happens out of AAFC time is personal business. Again, let me be perfectly clear, it is not. The AAFC's policies on these matters apply whether or not those involved are on duty at the time, and whether or not they are participating in a AAFC activity. If any of you have difficulty in understanding or accepting these policies, then you need to reassess your suitability and continued service in the AAFC. There cannot be, nor will there be, any exceptions.

### **Nil Excuse or Mitigation**

6. I can see no possible excuse or mitigation that would permit an intimate staff-cadet relationship to occur. Some examples of attempted “excuses” that have been heard before and are NOT acceptable include:

- a. “but the cadet consented”;
- b. “we only act on the relationship outside of cadets”;
- c. “the cadet’s is over the age of consent, and will be terminating soon anyway”;
- d. “there’s only a year’s difference in age”; and
- e. “the relationship existed before he/she became a staff member”.

7. None of these “excuses” are acceptable to the AAFC. In a situation where one individual is a staff member and the other is a cadet, **an intimate relationship is never acceptable**, no matter the background, no matter the depth or length of that intimate relationship.

### **New Staff**

8. The distinction between being a former cadet and being a new staff member can often be invisible to the staff recruit, or may seem to be unimportant. However, this change in status represents one of the great leaps forward in terms of the maturity and responsibility that a former cadet needs to demonstrate when they join the staff ranks of the AAFC. It is a difficult psychological transition and a challenge to self-awareness for an individual to appreciate that he/she is no longer a cadet but a staff member. This transition is not always immediate or successful.

### **Your Help**

9. To address this whole issue of inappropriate relationships I need the support of the more senior and experienced staff members to play an essential role in communicating the expectations of the AAFC to our less experienced staff members irrespective of rank. I need you to display courage and wisdom in conveying this message and ethos.

10. I also need our more junior staff members to understand one of the less visible, but very essential, expectations of being a AAFC staff member. Avoidance of an inappropriate relationship is a new found duty expected of, and imposed upon, you as an AAFC staff member.

11. I look to all of you to support me in the maintenance of this important and delicate ethical standard..



**KEN GIVEN**

Group Captain (AAFC)

Commander – Australian Air Force Cadets

01 Feb 11