



**AUSTRALIAN AIR FORCE CADETS** CH12 - Complaint Management

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## AAFC MANUAL OF MANAGEMENT

### VOLUME TWO - BUSINESS

### PART ONE – PEOPLE MANAGEMENT

### CHAPTER TWELVE

## COMPLAINT MANAGEMENT

### Amendment List

Amendment	Comment	Date	Authority
AL-00	Initial Issue	16 Jul 14	DGCADETS-AF

### INTRODUCTION

1. Upon acceptance within the Australian Air Force Cadets, AAFC members agree to support an environment in which all members are respected and encouraged to participate in a safe, fair and happy atmosphere while undertaking youth development activities. This policy outlines the complaint management processes designed to assist members to support the desired behaviours within the AAFC regulatory framework and to sustain development of the AAFC values based culture.

### POLICY STATEMENT

2. Unacceptable behaviour is not condoned, and neither is the mismanagement or disregard of complaints. The Air Force and the AAFC are committed to zero tolerance of unacceptable behaviour and to ensuring that incidents of unacceptable behaviour are recognised and dealt with in an appropriate and timely manner and in accordance with the rules below.

### SCOPE

3. This chapter will outline the management processes for handling complaints and/or inquiries and applies to all personnel.

### DEFINITIONS

4. Policy definitions are detailed at annex A to AAFC Manual of Management Volume 1, Part 1, Chapter 1.

### POLICY PRINCIPLES

5. The principles of the AAFC complaint management policy are as follows:

- Principle One:** All personnel must adopt measures to prevent and eliminate all forms of unacceptable behaviour, and seek complaint resolution at the lowest practicable level.
- Principle Two:** All complaints must be treated seriously and tactfully by commanders and resolved as soon as possible.
- Principle Three:** All personnel have the right to make a complaint if they have been aggrieved, however, all parties must exercise sound judgement and common sense when making or handling a complaint.
- Principle Four:** All personnel must manage and report complaints in accordance with this chapter, AAFC Standing Instructions and extant mandatory reporting legislation.
- Principle Five:** All personnel involved in the complaint process are to be provided with support if they seek it. Cadets are to be supported by a responsible adult.

### ROLES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

6. **Complainants:** The complainant must:

- attempt to resolve the issue at the lowest possible level appropriate to the circumstances (this should include speaking directly with the respondent in the first instance) and identify steps taken to seek resolution;
- make their complaint verbally or in writing to the lowest level AAFC Executive;
- make only honest complaints, and provide as much documentation as practicable; and
- clearly state their desired outcome
- refrain from referring the matter to any outside agency (that is outside the AAFC) unless the AAFC Executive has refused to deal with the complaint in accordance with AAFC policy and Standing Instructions, and unless the higher HQ has been made fully aware of the complainant's intention to refer the matter elsewhere, together with the reasons for that action.

7. **AAFC executives.** An AAFC executive or AAFC supervisor must act on all complaints brought to their attention in a fair and impartial manner. AAFC executives and AAFC supervisors must:

- treat all complaints seriously and impartially;
- action complaints as promptly as practicable;
- ensure that the complainant and respondent are afforded procedural fairness, protection from victimisation; and receive appropriate support;
- keep all parties informed on the progress of the complaint;
- action the complaint according to extant Standing Instructions; and
- seek guidance from their supervisory chain, an Equity Advisor or Defence Equity Hotline if required.

8. **Higher HQ:** The AAFC executive handling the complaint is to advise their higher HQ of the complaint and keep their HQ apprised of progress. Higher HQ must monitor progress and maintain records of the complaint processes and resolution in accordance with AAFC Standing Instructions.

### MAKING A COMPLAINT

9. Before making a complaint, personnel are encouraged to seek advice through their supervisory chain. No member is to be dissuaded or prevented from making a genuine complaint, but assistance from **AAFC executives** or **AAFC supervisors** may provide clarification and/or early resolution.
10. Complaints may be made verbally or in writing. If the complaint is made verbally, it is to be reduced to writing by the person to whom the complaint is made. Both the person to whom the complaint is made, and the complainant, are to sign the document.
11. A complaint should be made in the first instance to the **complainant's** or **respondent's** lowest level **AAFC executive**, unless that person is the subject of the complaint, in which case the complaint is to be made to the next highest level **AAFC executive**.
12. **Complainants** must provide a full, honest account of the incident(s) providing details of what happened, when it happened, who was involved, (including witnesses), desired outcome and supporting documentation.
13. An incident of alleged unacceptable behaviour reported by a third party may be managed as a complaint. A vexatious or malicious complaint may be a form of harassment, itself requiring management in accordance with this policy. Each complaint is to be assessed on its own merits.

#### MANAGING A COMPLAINT

14. Every complaint must be taken seriously and managed by an **AAFC executive** or delegated member who is impartial and competent to manage the issue.
15. **Initial Assessment.** The **AAFC executive** receiving the complaint is to make an initial assessment report to determine the appropriate method of managing the complaint.
16. **Responsibility.** In most circumstances the lowest level **AAFC executive** in consultation with their immediate supervisor, will be responsible for managing the complaint and taking action towards resolution. If a complaint cannot be resolved at this level, it is to be escalated to Wing/National level through the supervisory chain.
17. **Notifying parties.** **AAFC members** who are subject of a complaint must be made aware of the exact nature of the complaint as soon as practicable and must be given adequate time and opportunity to respond. Where cadets, under the age of 18 years are involved, early contact with the cadets' parents or guardians should be made.
18. **Support.** The **complainant** and the **respondent** must be treated with respect and dignity, and offered full support. The **respondent** is not to be considered guilty just because a complaint has been made against them.
19. **Complainant's wishes.** The complaint manager is to take into account the complainant's wishes when determining the manner in which a complaint is to be managed and resolved. However, the complaint manager is to also consider any statutory requirements and/or the health and wellbeing of members.
20. **Resolution.** All complaints should be resolved at the lowest possible level appropriate to the circumstances and in accordance with this policy and extant AAFC Standing Instructions. **All personnel** have a personal responsibility to initiate and participate in appropriate action at the lowest practicable level, including using AAFC Alternative Dispute Resolution where appropriate.
21. **Confidentiality and Privacy.** **All personnel** must ensure that all complaints remain in-confidence and only appropriate persons with a need-to-know are involved in communications and that information is recorded in accordance with the Privacy Act. **Complainants** and **respondents** may need advice and support before they are able to report, reply or deal with a complaint. Communications with equity advisors, and concerned parties should remain in-confidence.
22. **Sexual offences.** All sexual offence complaints must be referred immediately to the appropriate State/Territory police. If a cadet is involved, their **Parent/Guardian** is to be advised **immediately prior** to notifying the police. The **Parent/Guardian's** wishes do not negate the requirement to report the incident to police.
23. **Cessation of AAFC service.** If a member ceases to serve in the AAFC after submitting a complaint, the complaint process will normally cease unless further investigation suggests a clear benefit for parties involved and the AAFC. No member is to be 'suspended' as the result of a complaint unless directed by Wing or higher authority.

#### Actioning the outcome of an inquiry

24. Complaints must be aware that their complaint may not always have the outcome they desire.
25. If the outcome of an inquiry finds there is no case to answer, both the complainant and the respondent are to be advised. Supervisors are to monitor the situation to ensure the situation is satisfactorily resolved.
26. If the outcome of an inquiry finds there is a case to answer, supervisors are to act in accordance with Vol 2 Pt 1 CH13 - **Adverse Administrative Action**.
27. If any party to a complaint is not satisfied with the outcome of a complaint inquiry, they may request through their chain of command that the issue be reviewed.

#### Reporting and recording a complaint

28. **Mandatory reporting.** All complaints of sexual abuse must be reported to the relevant state/territory police. In circumstances when legislation requires mandatory reporting individuals must be aware of, and comply with their specific responsibilities.
29. **Contacting parents.** Where cadets under the age of 18 are involved in a substantiated complaint, early contact with the cadets' parents or guardians must be made. If the complaint is of a sexual abuse, parents must be advised immediately before police are called. Cadets aged 18 years and over may elect not to have parental involvement.
30. **Record-keeping.** All correspondence and written reports must be marked '**Sensitive: Personal**' and handled in accordance with AAFC record management processes (**SI(ADMIN) 8-1 - Records and Document Management**). Any records must be kept secure and accessed only by those who have an operational 'need to know'.
31. **Tracking.** Each AAFC Wing is to record and track the progress of all complaints to ensure they are actioned, and must report progress to HQAAFC as per **SI(PERS) 8-4 - Managing a Complaint** and **SI(PERS) 8-9 - Incident Reporting**. **Complainants** and **Respondents** are to be kept regularly informed with the progress of their incident.

#### SUBORDINATE INSTRUCTIONS

32. CDR-AAFC may issue specific instructions or directives as required to supplement this chapter. CDR-AAFC will ensure that all AAFC SIs or directives comply with this chapter and any other higher level Orders Instructions and Publications (OIP).

#### Related OIP

- CH10 - Behaviour
- CH11 - Alternative Dispute Resolution
- SI(ADMIN) 8-1 - Records and Document Management]]
- SI(PERS) 8-1 - Behaviour
- SI(PERS) 8-2 - Alternative Dispute Resolution
- [[SI(PERS) 8-3 - Making a Complaint]
- [[SI(PERS) 8-4 - Managing a Complaint]
- SI(PERS) 8-9 - Incident Reporting

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