

Aussie soldiers let rip on Facebook

Women, Muslims the fave targets

By [Natalie Apostolou](#) 29 Feb 2012 at 21:45

Australia's armed forces still appear addicted to offensive social media activities, a new investigation has found.

Over 1000 serving and former soldiers from the Royal Australian Regiment have been busted for partaking in an offensive closed Facebook site which features consistent comments and images denigrating women, Muslims and other targets.

The ABC's 7.30 Report programme yesterday [revealed](#) the contents of the social media site which includes hundreds of abusive and un-PC postings and messages.

The Facebook page, which was set up as a community outreach group for ex and current soldiers, exemplifies disturbing levels of violence towards women, ultra racism and homophobia.

The Australian Defence Force and Ministry of Defence has confirmed that an investigation has been launched to uncover whether serving Defence Force members are responsible for the extreme sexist and racist comments posted. Lowlights of the posts include pictures of drunk women passed out with the comments: "She looks a little used to me."; "Which woman isn't."

Women are variously described as "filthy, lying whores" while Muslims are referred to as "ragheads" that "should be shot".

The revelations come after six separate reviews into defence culture were instigated last year following a number of sex scandals that involved inappropriate online activity.

One such investigation, into the [Skype scandal](#) at ADFA in March 2011, continues.

The Minister for Defence Stephen Smith said in a statement: "In April 2011, I announced a range of comprehensive reviews into aspects of culture within the Australian Defence Force (ADF) to address ongoing concern in relation to appropriate ADF conduct. One of these reviews was the use of social media within Defence.

"The impact of social media has created new challenges for the ADF and the Defence organisation. I expect to release these reports and the Government's response in the very near

future. The Secretary, the CDF and I have zero tolerance for inappropriate behaviour, including inappropriate use of social media. All members of Defence must meet modern day community standards and expectations.”

Army chief Lieutenant General David Morrison said in a statement that the issues raised were serious and that the targeting of any person on the basis of their gender, ethnicity or sexual orientation “is repugnant and contrary to both Defence and Army’s values.” “Where they have been I intend to take action to deal with them to the extent that our policies and the laws allows,” Lt Gen Morrison said.

The ADF recently conducted a Review of Social Media but Morrison said it was not intended to look at the content of specific social media sites, but to consider more broadly what Defence’s obligations are in using social media. “Following the Social Media Review, Defence will adapt its policies, procedures to acknowledge the complexity and increasing use of social media by our current and prospective employees and ensure that we respond effectively to mitigate risks and to harness opportunities,” he added.

Current Defence policy on social media falls under the same auspices that govern public comment and the dissemination of official information by Defence personnel.

“Defence personnel are expected to exercise high standards of professional judgment in their use of social media. They are to ensure that the information they post does not breach operational security or adversely affect the safety and wellbeing of Defence personnel,” LT Morrison said. ®

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