

DEFENCE

Australian Defence Force Academy hit by new scandal

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AN investigation has been launched into alleged serious misconduct involving up to 20 cadets and midshipmen from the Australian Defence Force Academy in Canberra.

Vice-Chief of the Defence Force, Air Marshal Mark Binskin, said seven people had been suspended pending the investigation and more suspensions were expected in coming days.

“Enough is enough,” he said. “There are some people that obviously ... still don't understand and that is what we are trying to get to here.”

ADFA was the scene of the so-called Skype scandal in 2011, when it emerged a female cadet was filmed having sex with a fellow cadet without her knowledge.

Air Marshal Binskin said ADFA staff had become aware on Monday of the off-campus incident that occurred on the weekend.

“They immediately referred the matter to the ADF investigative service and an investigation is under way,” he said.

“It appears the incident is linked to a group of male cadets and midshipmen that is operating contrary to the values and standards expected of ADF members and our future leaders.”

The male cadets and midshipmen span all services and all three years of training.

Air Marshal Binskin would not reveal details of the latest incident, apart from saying he could not rule out the use of alcohol as a factor and he had no knowledge of any “victims”.

However a defence source said male cadets mostly associated with the ADFA rugby team had engaged in “drunken stupidity” and “quasi-initiation” rituals in and around a Canberra nightspot.

“The point is there was no women, no sex and no violence,” the source said. Neither were police involved.

But it does not appear to have been a one-off event.

Air Marshal Binskin said it had been going on for “less than a year”.

He said the Australian Defence Force would not apologise for its “decisive action”.

“Conduct of this nature has consequences and it will not be tolerated,” he said.

ADFA is currently the subject of an audit by Sex Discrimination Commissioner Elizabeth Broderick, who found serious problems in the college's culture and treatment of women in a report released in 2011, in the wake of the Skype sex scandal.

The new investigation also follows last week's revelation that more than 100 ADF personnel are being investigated over a series of degrading emails involving female victims going back to 2010.

Air Marshal Binskin said he believed the culture within ADFA was improving, despite the actions of a minority who “just don't get it”.

“It has come to light through the moral courage of a number of ADFA cadets who have come forward to talk about it,” he said.

“So I actually think that is demonstrating a good culture which is developing in ADFA.”

Air Marshal Binskin said the ADF would not tolerate bad behaviour by its future leaders.

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