



Report into the Australian Defence Force released

22 August 2017

The Royal Commission's report of [Case Study 40 – The Response of the Australian Defence Force to allegations of child sexual abuse](#) – was released today.

This report follows a [public hearing](#) held in Sydney in June and August 2016 which inquired into the experiences of men and women who were sexually abused as children in certain divisions of the Australian Defence Force (ADF).

HMAS Leeuwin

The Royal Commission finds that physical and sexual abuse of child recruits was widespread at HMAS Leeuwin, a navy shore base in Fremantle WA, from the 1960s to 1972. “Bastardisation” practices that involved a junior recruit being held down while boot polish, toothpaste or another substance was forcibly smeared on his genitals or anal area also took place at Leeuwin.

Several junior recruits who were sexually abused as a children did not report it to anyone for fear of retribution, being labelled a “dobber”, being humiliated or discharged or because they did not believe any action would be taken. Those who did report it to staff members were not believed or told the abuse was a “rite of passage”. Some were “dishonorably discharged” or threatened with it.

Commissioners find that senior staff members knew of and tolerated the abuse and that Leeuwin's institutional environment allowed the abuse to occur. Leeuwin's system of management was ineffective in preventing and responding to child sexual abuse and thus the Navy failed in its duty of care to junior recruits who were children, the Commission finds.

The Army Apprentice School, Balcombe

Commissioners heard teenage apprentices at Balcombe, an Australian Army base located in Victoria's Mornington Peninsula, were severely sexually abused during the 1970s and 80s. The abuse included fondling of genitals, forced masturbation, anal penetration with an object such as a broomstick and “bastardisation” practices primarily perpetrated by senior apprentices or staff.

Survivor CJU told the Royal Commission he reported abuse by three senior apprentices to a Balcombe staff member. He said he was constantly bullied after this report, further sexually abused by senior apprentices and also abused by a Captain off site.

The Commission finds unofficial rank hierarchy at Balcombe created an environment that allowed senior apprentices to control and sexually and physically abuse junior apprentices

The Australian Air Force Cadets & Cadet Sergeant Eleanore Tibble

In 2000 Cadet Sergeant Eleanore Tibble (CSGT Tibble) was a 15-year-old cadet within the Tasmanian squadron of the Australian Air Force Cadets (AAFC). In August 2000 CSGT Tibble told her mother Susan Campbell that Mr Harper, an adult AAFC leader, had given her a silver necklace and told her that he loved her. Ms Campbell made it known to him that any relationship with her daughter was inappropriate.

On 15 August 2000 Mr Harper tendered a letter of resignation, which stated he had “surcummed [sic] to the attention of a female cadet and become personaly [sic] involved with her”. CSGT Tibble was interviewed without the knowledge of her mother. The Commission finds that the meeting was improper and caused considerable distress to CGST Tibble, who felt responsible for the relationship.

On 30 October CSGT Tibble was told that she had the choice of resigning or being dishonourably discharged. The Commission finds CGST Tibble was denied natural justice in this process, when she should not have been the subject of disciplinary proceedings in any event.

On 10 November senior management determined that the relationship was not sexual and that a discharge could no longer be supported. Despite the direction to do so, Wing Commander Carroll James did not reinstate CSGT Tibble. On 27 November 2000 CGST Tibble committed suicide.

Any disciplinary of CSGT Tibble was wrong, the report finds. “At no point should blame be placed on a cadet when an adult instructor or officer engages with a relationship with the cadet. The responsibility remains entirely with an adult instructor or officer,” the report states. Similarly, if a 15-year-old schoolgirl was groomed into an inappropriate relationship with a 30-year-old teacher, it would be wrong to ever contemplate that she would be the subject to any disciplinary action or be expelled, the report finds. The blame would rest with the schoolteacher.

The Commissioners find that when considering the discharge of CSGT Tibble, the AAFC was more concerned with the “efficiency” of the flight unit and setting an example to other cadets than with the protection of cadets from adult instructors in positions of authority.

“Not a day goes by that I don’t think about my daughter and the abject waste of her life,” Ms Campbell told the Commission.

Policies of ADF Cadets since 2000

The Royal Commission finds that since at least 2000 the policy guides and training manuals of the ADF Cadets and the AAFC regarding sexual offences and the age of consent (stated as 14 years) were incorrect. The Commission finds this “increased the risk of child sexual abuse and had the potential for serious consequences”.

In its submissions to the Royal Commission, Defence acknowledged the “shortcomings” of the ADF Cadets and AAFC policies and training manuals. Defence said it had been reviewing and amending its policies and training manuals and undertaken to reform the ADF Cadets.

[Read](#) the full report.

Source: <https://www.childabuseroyalcommission.gov.au/media-releases/report-australian-defence-force-released>