

RAAF Lieutenant dismissed for assaulting male colleague at Tindal RAAF base

By [Emilie Gramenz](#) Posted yesterday at 8:15pm 20 August 2019



Photo: [The Flight Lieutenant wrote an apology in which he said his actions were embarrassing. \(Flickr: Kenhodge13\)](#)

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A Flight Lieutenant with the RAAF has been dismissed from the Australian Defence Force after admitting to assaulting a colleague at an official function in the Northern Territory.

Key points:

- Flight Lieutenant Michael Barwick pleaded guilty to two charges of indecency without consent and one of assault
- Flight Lieutenant Barwick was dismissed for the incidents — one of which was described as a "rapid grope"
- The victim of the incident said he would struggle to encourage his own son to chase a career in the Australian Defence Force

Over the course of the Dry Season Ball at the Tindal RAAF on May 25, 2018, Flight Lieutenant Michael Barwick grabbed a man he'd previously worked with over his pants in three separate instances — one of which was described as a "rapid grope".

Flight Lieutenant Barwick pleaded guilty to two charges of indecency without consent and one of assault.

In a victim impact statement read in court, the complainant said he had wondered how someone selected to lead within the ADF had acted this way, and if he would still be able to encourage his own son to pursue a career in the ADF.

Flight Lieutenant Barwick's defending officer, Captain Mary Chalmers, told the court Flight Lieutenant Barwick was contrite and deeply regretful because he recognised his behaviour was "well out of line".

'I'm deeply ashamed'

A handwritten letter of apology to the complainant was tendered to the court, in which Flight Lieutenant Barwick wrote that his actions that evening were nothing short of crude and embarrassing.

"Not only have I humiliated myself and put you in a difficult position, but I tarnished ... our professional relationship ... I'm deeply ashamed of how I have disgraced it," he wrote.

"This event has been something of a wake-up call for me," he wrote, adding that it made him realise he needed to address a possible problem with alcohol.

"I genuinely and unequivocally apologise for what was disrespectful and immature behaviour."



Photo:

[Defence Force Magistrate Jonathan Hyde said the conduct diminished the ADF's Pathway to Change strategy. \(Supplied: RAAF-Shane Gidall\)](#)

Conduct undermines strategy for systemic change

An ADF strategy known as Pathway to Change, which has been in place to evolve defence culture since 2011, was repeatedly mentioned in the trial at the Darwin RAAF base.

The plan outlines a focus on ethics and workplace behaviours as well as health, wellness, safety and leadership accountability.

In sentencing, Defence Force Magistrate Lieutenant Colonel Jonathan Hyde said that while he was left in no doubt that Flight Lieutenant Barwick was remorseful, the conduct struck at the heart of the Pathways to Change strategy and anything less than a dismissal would be inappropriate.

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Source: <https://www.abc.net.au/news/2019-08-20/raaf-member-dismissed-for-assault-at-tindal-nt-base/11432808>