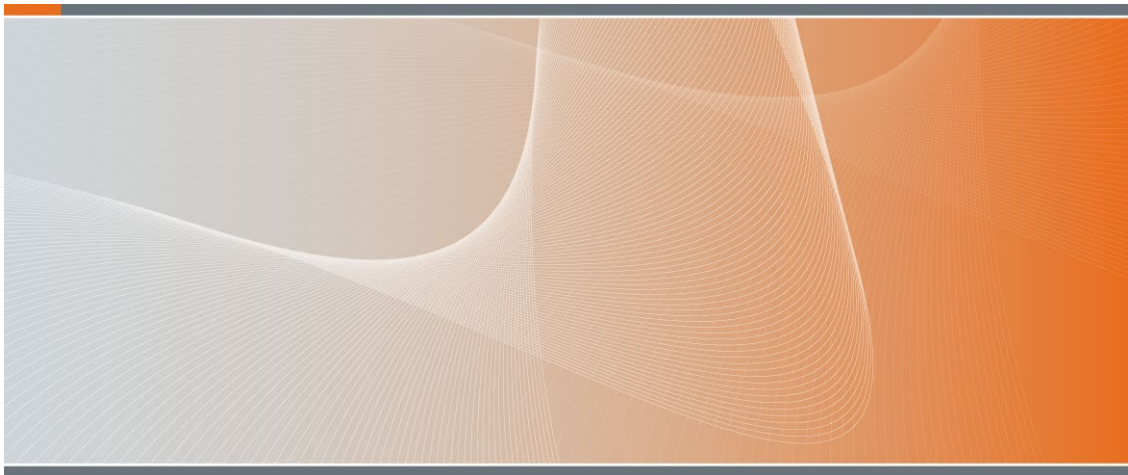


OFFICIAL



Australian Government
Defence

Youth Engagement Policy



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Natasha Fox'.

Natasha Fox AO, CSC
Lieutenant General
Chief of Personnel
Defence People Group

Department of Defence
CANBERRA ACT 2600

28 February 2024

OFFICIAL

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT POLICY

Issued by:	This administrative policy has been issued by Head Reserve and Cadet Support Division with the authority of the Chief of Personnel.
Purpose:	<p>Defence engagement with young people occurs across a broad spectrum. The Youth Engagement Policy describes the agreed approach for 'intentional' engagement with Defence. It gives effect to the Defence Youth Safety Framework (DYSF) and supports Defence's compliance with the National Principles for Child Safe Organisations.</p> <p>This policy is supported by a range of products that enable Defence personnel to meet the intended outcome/s. They should be read in conjunction with this policy.</p>
Scope and applicability:	<p>This policy has been issued in accordance with The Defence Instruction – Administration of the Australian Defence Force and Defence (Defence) (AG1).</p> <p>The Secretary and the Chief of the Defence Force expect Defence personnel to comply with this policy.</p> <p>The terms of a relevant contract may extend the application of this policy to a person/s engaged under a contract.</p> <p>The Defence Instruction (including AG1) should be read in conjunction with this policy. In accordance with AG1, Defence personnel who award or manage contracts should consider whether there is a specific and documented reason to include the requirement to comply. If so, include such terms in the contract.</p>
Management:	This policy has been developed, and will be maintained, in accordance with the Administrative Policy Arrangements . It will be reviewed within five years from its date of issue.
Availability:	This policy is available at Defence documents . Its currency cannot be guaranteed if sourced from other locations. It is available for public release.
Accountable officer:	Chief of Personnel
Policy owner:	Head Reserve and Cadet Support Division
Policy contact:	Youth Directorate Email: defence.youth@defence.gov.au
Definitions:	Definitions that apply to Youth Engagement Policy are in Annex A

POLICY STATEMENT

1.1. Defence recognises the important role youth engagement plays in developing young people, in connecting to the wider community and attracting the right people, with the right skills, behaviours and attitudes in support of Defence's Mission to advance Australia's security and prosperity. By investing in the development of youth, Defence contributes to the development of leaders, innovators and problem solvers of the future.

1.2. Engagement with youth is an important component of Defence's engagement with communities and Defence's recruitment initiatives. This engagement is central to maintaining Defence's reputation within the community it serves and our commitment to meet the requirements of the [Commonwealth Child Safety Framework](#) (CCSF) and [National Principles for Child Safe Organisations](#) (NPCSO).

1.3. Links to a range of laws, including Commonwealth, state and territory, are provided in this policy. The legislative references are not exhaustive and other legislation may apply. A number of international child protection instruments also apply.

1.4. **Management and reporting of Defence employees under 18 years of age.** Youth, including Defence personnel under 18 years of age are owed a special duty of care. Defence personnel under 18 years of age are managed in accordance with the [Administrative Policy Framework](#). Special duty of care and youth protection requirements can be found in [Defence's Youth Manual](#). For general administration and management of Defence members under 18 years of age, refer to [Military Personnel Policy Manual](#), Part 7, Chapter 2 - Management and Administration of Defence Members Under 18 Years of Age.

THE DEFENCE YOUTH SAFETY FRAMEWORK

1.5. This policy is a central component in the [Defence Youth Safety Framework \(DYSF\)](#) which incorporates safety, protection and wellbeing. The DYSF aligns with the CCSF and NPCSO and consists of policies and procedures designed to keep young people safe when they engage with Defence. The DYSF utilises existing Service/Group Safety Management Systems and Defence Safety Domains to deliver a safe environment for youth.

1.6. **Youth protection (safety)** is a [Work Health and Safety Domain](#) and a specific category of 'unacceptable behaviour' that relates to protecting youth from child abuse and includes managing risk, providing support and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

1.7. The [Defence Youth Safety Commitment Statement](#) and Defence Annual Child Safety Statement of Compliance with the CCSF is available from the [YouthHQ portal](#).

YOUTH ENGAGEMENT PRINCIPLES

1.8. Defence is committed to the following five outcome-focused principles, developed to raise appropriate awareness of Defence's youth engagement requirements and responsibilities. These principles should be used to inform development of subordinate documents, including plans, procedures and arrangements at all levels of the organisation.

PRINCIPLE 1 – SAFETY AND WELLBEING

RATIONALE

1.9. Engagement with youth requires an understanding of the behavioural nature of youth. Youth behave, solve problems and learn differently to adults. The nature and maturity levels of youth, their propensity for taking risks and inability to link action to consequences adds a degree of vulnerability and layer of complexity to the management of youth in Defence.

1.10. Defence has a duty of care to provide a safe environment where youth are respected and empowered to report concerns.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

1.11. Only suitability selected, screened and trained personnel engage with youth on behalf of Defence. Youth Protection training is completed in accordance with the [Defence Youth Manual](#).

1.12. Defence delivers quality education to the youth it engages with about their rights and responsibilities, their safety and wellbeing and that of their peers.

1.13. Physical and online environments promote safety and wellbeing and minimise the opportunity for youth to be harmed. Risk management strategies focus on preventing identifying and mitigating risks to youth.

1.14. Risk management plans should align with the [Defence Risk Management Framework](#). The plans should consider risks posed by organisational settings including activities to be undertaken, psychosocial hazards and the physical environment. So far as is reasonably practical, youth are not to be exposed to risks to their psychological or physical health and safety. Plans should be tailored to manage the unique requirements of mitigating risk when engaging with youth.

1.15. Complaints handling procedures and policies are youth-focussed, and clearly outline the roles and responsibilities of leadership, personnel and volunteers.

PRINCIPLE 2 – ONE DEFENCE

RATIONALE

1.16. Defence youth activities are to be delivered in a coordinated and well governed manner. Collaboration across Groups and Services, through the sharing of

information, lessons learned or in developing and delivering activities and programs is in accordance with the One Defence approach.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

1.17. Defence youth engagement is contemporary and professional. Defence is accountable for the delivery of outcomes consistent with community expectations and the CCSF and NPCSO.

1.18. Defence should collaborate to maximise the success of the planning and delivery of youth engagement.

1.19. Defence youth engagement and management of youth is reviewed and continuously improved.

PRINCIPLE 3 - INCLUSIVITY AND DIVERSITY

RATIONALE

1.20. Defence is committed to being a diverse and inclusive organisation that values, respects and draws on the diverse backgrounds, experiences, knowledge and skills of its people.

1.21. Engaging with a diverse range of youth allows Defence to foster positive and respectful relationships. This in turn, enhances cultural understanding and provides opportunities for education, mentoring, personal development, skills building, and accessible pathways for employment.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

1.22. Defence youth engagement is conducted in a culturally safe and inclusive way where youth feel valued and respected.

1.23. Defence youth engagement provides programs that support, develop and promote accessible pathways for future employment.

1.24. Youth are supported and respected by Defence personnel and peers.

PRINCIPLE 4 – HUMAN RIGHTS COMMITMENT

RATIONALE

1.25. The DYSF is consistent with the whole of Government approach and Australia's commitment to the [United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child](#) and the [Optional Protocol to the United Nations Convention on the Rights of the Child on the Involvement of Children in Armed Conflict](#).

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

1.26. Defence upholds the Government's commitment to Human Rights in ensuring that youth are empowered and that their rights are respected when engaging with Defence.

1.27. Youth engagement complies with legislation, standards and government policy.

PRINCIPLE 5 - REWARDING, ENRICHING AND EMPOWERING

RATIONALE

1.28. Defence aims to provide engagement opportunities that align with best practice youth development principles, are rewarding and enriching, provide a positive experience for the youth who participate and display Defence in a positive light.

1.29. Activities aim to provide education, mentoring, personal development and opportunities to build skills that empower youth to grow as individuals and work towards achieving their full potential.

EXPECTED OUTCOMES

1.30. Defence delivers challenging and contemporary youth engagement activities that develop young Australians with the capacity to contribute to society.

1.31. Feedback from youth about their experiences engaging with Defence is encouraged.

MEASURING POLICY OUTCOMES

1.32. Performance of this policy will be measured against the following outcomes:

- a. Youth engagement contributes to the achievement of Defence outcomes.
- b. Youth safety policy and practices are embedded in corporate and business planning, including risk assessments and performance reporting processes.
- c. Defence complies with relevant youth safety policies and legislation.

YOUTH PROTECTION ROLES, ACCOUNTABILITIES AND RESPONSIBILITIES

1.33. **Chief of Personnel** is the Accountable Officer as defined in the [Strategic Accountability Table](#).

1.34. **Head Reserve and Cadet Support Division** is the youth policy owner for youth protection and is responsible to Chief of Personnel for developing, maintaining and implementing these policies. Head Reserve and Cadet Support Division is also

responsible to the Accountable Officer for enterprise wide assurance of the Defence Youth Manual.

1.35. **Group Heads and Service Chiefs** are required to ensure this policy is implemented within their areas of responsibility. The Service Chiefs and Group Heads are responsible for managing risks in relation to youth activities for which they are accountable or responsible.

DEFINITIONS

The following list of terms are defined in the [Defence Instruction](#). The definitions are intended to apply to their use in administrative policies.

Accountable officer

Administrative policy

A person/s engaged under a contract

Australian Public Service employee

Defence

Defence member

Defence personnel

Manager

Policy owner

Provision

Supervisor

For the purpose of the policies described in this document, the definitions used in the Defence Youth Manual listed in the [Abbreviations and Glossary](#) apply.

Specifically:

ADF Cadets. The collective title for the three cadet organisations - the Australian Navy Cadets (ANC), the Australian Army Cadets (AAC), and the Australian Air Force Cadets (AAFC).

Cadet. A young person who has been accepted as a volunteer youth participant in the ANC, AAC and the AAFC.

Child. In Defence a person under the age of 18 years is referred to as Youth. See 'Youth' definition.

Child Abuse. Relates to abuse of a person under the age of 18 years (youth). It is intended to have its broadest meaning and includes Child Sexual Abuse or other Sexual Exploitation, including Grooming and Unacceptable Sexual Relationship; Physical Abuse; Emotional/Psychological Abuse; Neglect; and Exposure to Family/Domestic Violence.

Defence Youth Program. A Defence supported program that offers a range of safe, challenging and high quality activities to young people across metropolitan and regional areas of Australia, including but not limited to: Australian Defence Force Cadets; Defence Work Experience Program; Young Endeavour Youth Scheme and Indigenous Youth Programs.

Intentional Engagement. Planned engagement to achieve specified outcomes – eg youth programs (including programs open to under 18 and over 18), Defence Force Recruiting, ADF Community engagement, ADF family events.

Special Care Provisions. Legislation which imposes additional restrictions on adults in certain contexts. These laws prohibit any person in a supervisory role from

engaging sexually with a person who is under 18, whether or not they are above the age of consent. These laws exist only in some states. See <https://aifs.gov.au/cfca/publications/age-consent-laws> for further information on Special Care provisions in each state.

Youth. Anyone under the age of 18, which encompasses child, children, young person, young people, adolescent, minor and any other equivalent term. Youth special care provisions extend to over 18s participating in ADF youth programs.

Youth Protection. Encompasses matters related to protecting all youth from child abuse, managing the risk of child abuse, providing support to a youth at risk of child abuse and responding to incidents or allegations of child abuse.

Youth Safety. The application of the Defence Youth Safety Framework to youth.

Page 2