



**LIEUTENANT GENERAL DAVID MORRISON, AO
CHIEF OF THE AUSTRALIAN ARMY**

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Ladies and Gentlemen,

Thank you for your attendance.

Today I wish to speak, to you to the degree that I can, about an ongoing investigation by the Australian Defence Force Investigative Service, or ADFIS, in cooperation with the NSW Police, into the actions of a group of men – officers and non commissioned officers – of the Australian Army, alleged to have occurred in and since 2010.

The matters under investigation are serious and appear to centre on the production and distribution of highly inappropriate material demeaning women across both the Defence computer systems and the public internet.

As a result of information I received from ADFIS in April of this year, three Army personnel were suspended from duty for alleged breaches of the Defence Force Discipline Act and their access to Defence computer systems was removed. I am advised these three may also be persons of interest to the NSW Police and of the possibility that civil charges may be laid against them is a matter under consideration by the Police.

The ADFIS investigation also extends to other Army personnel, which evidence suggests, are linked to the three who have already been suspended.

Indeed, that evidence, at this stage, indicates another fourteen Army officers and non commissioned officers appear to have engaged in a series of actions that strike at the heart of our Army's ethos and its contract with the Nation.

Of these fourteen, I have today initiated action to consider the suspension of five individuals who appear to be closely linked in distributing inappropriate emails.

Pending the outcomes of the on-going ADFIS investigation, I may consider further suspension decisions against nine others if circumstances warrant.

There are a number of service offences that may apply, ranging from the misuse of Defence computer systems, the distribution of emails and other

material that denigrates other people, especially women, through to involvement with illicit drug use.

I have instructed ADFIS to pursue any and all service offences that might apply. If proven, these allegations could lead to the imposition of punishment and to these individuals being discharged from the Australian Army.

I have also been advised that a further 90 or so other Defence personnel, overwhelmingly Army personnel, may have been on the periphery of the group's email exchanges. They will also be investigated and may also be suspended if circumstances warrant.

I am appalled at this situation. I am, of course, cognisant of the need to keep an open mind and to let the evidence speak in regard to how these men are dealt with, but I view the allegations that are being made in the gravest light.

After the significant effort we have made to encourage women to enlist and remain in the Army, I am extremely concerned at what appears to have been uncovered.

There is no place for this type of behaviour in our Army, and in a Defence Force that prides itself on teamwork, courage and respect, and where women and men work alongside each other as colleagues and professionals. It brings the Australian Army into disrepute and it betrays all those whose service has established its enviable status among our citizens.

I am resolved that where any serious case is proven, every step available will be taken to remove the individual responsible from the Army.

In the wake of the ADFA 'Skype' case, and the series of inquiries and reviews into various aspects of ADF culture and military justice over the last 20 years, the leadership of the ADF no longer accepts the 'bad apple' argument when one of these incidents does occur. These behaviours are symptoms of a systemic problem and we will continue to address them in a comprehensive manner, through Defence's Pathway to Change strategy.

Army and Defence (ADFIS) is engaging with and providing support to those women who have been affected by this disgraceful behaviour. I have also spoken today to some of these women who felt comfortable taking a call from me, and I have apologised to them on behalf of the Army.

The men who are subject to the types of adverse action I have mentioned, such as suspension, retain access to the support services available through Defence.

In conclusion, let me reiterate that the Army is changing and what you are seeing here today is evidence of that change, and my commitment to greater transparency. I have issued reinforcing guidance today on the standard of behaviour I demand from every Regular or Reserve soldier in the Army, and

this can be viewed on the Army website. Individuals will be held to account for demonstrated misconduct, immediately and decisively.

We're working to increase the number of women in our ranks. We know that we must build a critical mass of women if we are going to fully realise the value of a diverse and inclusive workforce in the Army. It is clear, however, that we have got to be relentless in driving this change.

If we do not do this, the parents of Australia simply will not entrust us with the wellbeing of their daughters. And who can blame them? Equally, the strong, educated and talented women of Australia will not choose a career with the Australian Army when the Army is perceived to be an institution which permits the degradation of women.

I will now take questions but there will be limits on what I can tell you as this is subject to ongoing investigation, by both ADFIS and the New South Wales Police. The last thing any of us wish to do is to impede those investigations.