

In March 2024, I notified my Chain of Command that I had made a report to civilian police in relation to another member of my unit, confirming that the incident which occurred in February 2024 constituted intercourse without consent. Over the following months and whilst the police investigation took place, I observed the respondent's career being progressed including a posting interstate and public selection for a seagoing role as Head of Department and advisor to Command onboard, which would require access to sensitive information and potentially vulnerable individuals.

The unnecessary posting of the respondent delayed the police investigation by some weeks, if not months, and during this time I perceived a distressing lack of action to prevent the respondent having access to new potential victims. Furthermore, by virtue of his role, the respondent had access to sensitive information, including my home address data and that of my family. I was and am taken aback that the ADF complaint process has not proven to be protective of myself nor others as I had hoped, to the point where I felt the need to apply for an FVO against the respondent in Dec 2024, given that I was not appraised of his movements within the organization and extent of system access.

In my experience as both a victim and HR professional within the ADF, complaints of Sexual Violence are dealt with in an inconsistent manner between Commands, and the more serious the allegation, the less likely Commanders are to take decisive action, due to the requirement for police intervention and an investigation process. From my perspective, this was (and is) the case given my complaint, which is now progressing through the court system, and with no communication received as to Command's actions since April 2024. Hence the perception that the ADF 'protects perpetrators' and reputation, rather than having a focus on safety within the workplace.

Protective measures such as suspension from duty ought not be seen as a punishment prior to conviction/substantiation of guilt, but a necessary means of preventing further damage to individuals as well as overall discipline and morale within the organisation – as stipulated within *Defence Amendment (Sexual Assault Prevention, Intervention and Response Commission) Bill 2025*. Furthermore, the establishment of an independent body to oversee responses to reports of Sexual Violence, as proposed within this Bill, would serve to mitigate inconsistent and frenetic/inert decision-making by Commanders and the adverse effect of such decisions on the victim and/or alleged perpetrator.

Based on my personal experience and understanding of current ADF processes relating to the management of Sexual Violence, I support this Bill as a step in the right direction towards achieving much-needed consistency and transparency, which would serve to demonstrate that the ADF does not tolerate and can adequately address acts of Sexual Violence.