

I am making this submission in support of the DEFENCE AMENDMENT (SEXUAL ASSAULT PREVENTION, INTERVENTION AND RESPONSE COMMISSION) BILL 2025.

My name is [REDACTED] of the Australian Defence Force – Army. I am still currently serving and due to be medically discharged in [REDACTED] 2026 because of the consequences of my Sexual Assault and how my previous unit handled it.

I would like to refer to my own case of Sexual Assault in the ADF when I was a trainee at [REDACTED]. I was in the [REDACTED] to become a [REDACTED]. I had only just marched in from [REDACTED]. On my first weekend of leave I was out with friends and was drugged by an unknown person, then sexually assaulted and raped by my friend who is still currently an ADF member.

Its been close to [REDACTED] years since my assault and there has been no action or justice since I have been actively and aggressively campaigning very publicly to the detriment of my own career and wellbeing. I reported the assault straight away to the on base health centre who treated me. They were fantastic. It was when the assault was reported to the [REDACTED] (my unit/JMPU Military Police) is when it all fell apart.

There was no trauma-informed approach, and the lack of care was confronting. I was hospitalised on base for 2 weeks post assault being treated for infections and trauma. During this time,

- the Commanding Officer who is a LTCOL told my support officer that she didn't want to know the identity of my perpetrator. (then weaponised that by saying, she didn't know who he was, so couldn't take action)
- My Captain came to my room and told me to be quiet about the incident.
- The Senior medical doctor was told by Joint health command that they would not cover the cost of a 'just in case' rape kit that was provided by CASA house as it was not in their policy. This forced me to report the assault sooner than I was comfortable
- My perpetrator was boasting to other members of the troop about what he did to me and it was voice recorded.
- JMPU and the CO didn't want to acknowledge the recordings, and I was simply told to take it to the local police

I reported the assault to the police at [REDACTED] Station and did my statement, DNA collection ect. I gave them the recordings, and they became a part of the evidence. My chain of command (CoC) then took a complete hands-off approach stating it was policy. I was then sent home for 4-5 weeks on medical leave. When I returned from leave back to my troop, I found that I was medically downgraded for a healed hand injury and placed into a holding platoon. This ensured I could not sit any further courses. Even though, before going on leave and before the assault, I was panelled for the course and given my room keys ready to start. Interestingly my perpetrator was on course.

I was then made to work in close proximity to my perpetrator for approximately 5 weeks. Leaving me further at risk. This was while he had other members report back to him on my activities ect. And he called me begging me to not report him to the local police, after he boasted about raping me. 2 other trainees who overheard this, attempted to report it to the CoC and were turned away and told to effectively 'stay out of it'. All of this was reported and well documented to the CoC.

As a result of this inaction, my mental health tanked and I had a breakdown. The CoC only separated our meal times at the mess and accommodation rooms as they put him on a course. I still saw him everyday. I was forced to lock myself in my room after hours and pay for hotels ect on weekends to

protect myself as there was no staff. I was told if I felt unsafe to just report to the duty room and that was it.

I requested that my perpetrator be suspended or removed so I could feel safe and was told no by the CO. She stated that the [REDACTED] Police [REDACTED] POL) gave her advice that stated we were safe to continue working together, that she was advised to take no action against him and that he posed no further risk to me. All of this 'advice' from [REDACTED] POL has since been proven to be untrue. I asked the detective they claimed gave her that advice and she denied giving such advice.

I questioned this and then was told I would be transferred out (kicked out of the school) to [REDACTED] [REDACTED] in another state. They used my healed hand injury (weaponised) to medically downgrade me and transfer me out to [REDACTED]. My medical scans later proved they were healed.

Whilst at [REDACTED], I was diagnosed with PTSD and Major Depressive Disorder. I was suffering debilitating mental health issues as a result of the assault and the lack of action that took place. I then became very sick and was taken to hospital where I was further diagnosed with an aggressive type of Autoimmune Disease that was later directly linked to the assault. I was recommended for medical discharge without treatment and support.

The onset of this disease caused my joints, especially in my spine and hips to swell, my bowels and kidneys to bleed, my eyes to become red and sore. I was miserable, in chronic pain, I could barely walk and wanted to end my life. During the Individual Welfare Board that is held (IWB) I was told I would be recommended for medical discharge. I was told that I 'was no longer an asset to defence' (because I was suffering the consequences of rape) I was also told that "Don't worry, you will be well compensated, this happens all the time). By the head doctor.

I required urgent immunotherapy that I was not able to start until January 2024. I was diagnosed in Oct 2023. No reason for the delay. I was given no time to start treatment to see if it would work and I would be able to continue serving or not. Policy states this was an option that could have been afforded to me as well as a duty of care. I was sent home end of Nov 2023 to 'wait out my discharge' I had not received a determination yet. I was later told that it was one of the fastest medical discharges this 25+ year officer had ever seen. ([REDACTED] 23 paperwork went in, [REDACTED] 2024, I got my date for discharge)

When I got home, I was very sick (not started treatment yet) I was severely depressed and dealing with chronic pain and inflammation as a result of the disease. I required a full-time carer I was told the CO to enjoy my 'free money' and just sit at home and wait for my discharge, then its over to DVA to look after me. I was lucky that I lived with my best friend at the time who cooked for me, cleaned, occasionally helped me with personal hygiene, getting me out of bed ect.

When I arrived back home to await my discharge. I was being managed by the [REDACTED] remotely. However, in [REDACTED] I had no unit, nowhere to muster and no one to report to. I was given a welfare officer, who was remote and could not help me. She was not readily reachable. I informed them that I was struggling severely with my mental health and was told "We cant help you." No welfare whatsoever. Its unheard of. So I saw a rehab consultant and she sent me to the [REDACTED] [REDACTED]. Who took me in, so I had somewhere to go, also somewhere to start treatment. This program and the support from the staff there changed my life. I later found out that this program was previously recommended to the CO for me to attend by the CoC at [REDACTED]. CO denied that referral. This program not only aids soldiers returning to work after injury or illness, it assist transitioning members with services, support, training and DVA ect. There is no reasonable excuse to deny me into this program. So the [REDACTED] staff overrode that and accepted me in.

I contacted the COL from the mec cell who handles the medical discharges when I noticed that all my assault info had been redacted in my discharge paperwork. I explained everything to her and she put an immediate stop to my discharge. I was able to start treatment at [REDACTED] and it was rough but I managed with their support. A phone conversation with myself, the CO and the Captain who told me to be quiet was conducted so they could read me my discharge determination. They were joking and laughing during this call. Not trauma-informed at all. I was then told by the CO that my perpetrator had been posted to a neighbouring base and that he was issued with a 'Minute' to not enter my base. This indirectly informed him of my whereabouts and the base I was posted to. I now feared for my safety again as he was no longer interstate.

I questioned the CO's ethics on this decision, and she snapped back at me. Stating 'she was only trying to help'. She refused to conduct any administrative enquiries either, even though it was within her power. She did not believe my assault report. I submitted a Sentinel report on my assault and was ordered by her to delete it as she claims that it had no 'defence nexus'. I later found out that the assault was not reported to Comcare or reported on Comtrack which is against policy.

As a result of the deletion of the Sentinel report it did not progress to Comcare as per policy. After the CO indirectly notified my perpetrator of my location I requested to be managed by another unit. [REDACTED] took carriage of my management. They were excellent. I was aided in my appeal against my discharge and was given an extra 12 months to begin treatment and rehabilitation. During this I undertook a Clerk course to finally become a qualified soldier and was placed into my current unit. That unit changed me for the better. I can not fault the support and everything else I got from them.

In 2024 I was still on Immunotherapy (16 months in total) I was sick but showed up to PT and work everyday and participated in everything my restrictions allowed me to. I loved my unit and my job. Still I fought against the Army because they refused to take action whilst the [REDACTED] POL investigation was active. Against policy. I requested help from then [REDACTED] and was told he couldn't help me in a written letter. I ended up in surgery in 2025 that found stage 4 endo, caused by the first autoimmune disease. Frustrated with the lack of action by police and ADF I went to the media, began speaking publicly [REDACTED]. Absolute public outrage, support from my unit and the wider ADF. Result? I was 'unofficially suspended' from my role as a [REDACTED]. I still am.

Only due to the public outrage and fear of retribution did the ADF move my perpetrator to [REDACTED] from [REDACTED]. They didn't tell me, a friend reached out and told me this. I submitted a Redress of Grievance (ROG) back at [REDACTED] but no redress could be sought as the CO allowed time to fester. It stated that suspension was an option to the CO and that she should exercise that. However, she refused.

My ROG became an IGADF Enquiry after that. The reviewing officer made 'no adverse findings' against the perpetrator and the CO, even though there was clear, mismanagement, not following policy, bias opinion and absolutely no investigation. The terms of reference (TOR). They refused to even look at the accusation, and most of the management. So it was essentially a cover up. I did my own review of the IGADF summary and found all the inconsistencies and submitted it. It was rejected. I was told to take it to the Ombudsman if I wasn't happy.

They have accepted my complaint of abuse and are commencing their own investigation.

My perpetrator provided a no comment statement to the police. They closed the case citing not enough evidence. The ADF didn't want to commence an investigation. So I continued a public campaign with huge media support and eventually its now only 'being looked at'. My entire career in the ADF has been fighting for justice. I was meant to be an [REDACTED] Officer. But I remain a [REDACTED], sanctioned because I reported my rape. The OC at [REDACTED] stated that if I had not have reported it, I would have not been there, I would have marched out and been in my unit as planned.

Unfortunately, my disease has become more aggressive and I am now on stronger Immunotherapy and will be medically discharged. My perpetrator still remains in service in [REDACTED] at the time of writing this submission.

[REDACTED]. The ADF requested that my perpetrator provide them with a statement, one where he claims nothing happened and that he's innocent. This is in order to give the ADF a positive defence in their case. So whilst the ADF publicly say there is no tolerance for Sexual Violence in the ADF, their words do not match their actions. They refuse to take action where necessary, they have tools to remove and discharge victims and fight back at the victims who stand up against them by doing exactly what I just wrote.

All of the pathways that I could take were exhausted. I was stalled at every possible turn. When I read this bill, it read like my own case. I am fully supportive of this bill because of what you read above. This bill must be accepted in its entirety. There cannot be anymore people like me in our ADF if we are to be an affective fighting force in the near future.

[REDACTED]