

1 December 2011

Australian Defence Force Review
Australian Human Rights Commission
P O Box 5218
Sydney NSW 2001

RE: Review into the treatment of Women in the ADF

In 1989, I wrote to the then Federal Minister for Defence in response to a documentary called 'Ladies in Line' which had been screened by the ABC. In that letter, I drew the Minister's attention to the treatment of women army recruits by both male and female superiors, as shown in the documentary.

A copy of the letter is attached together with the response received from the then Minister for Defence Personnel. The Minister's letter refers to action that had been taken as a result of the programme and also to the training and behavioural change initiatives that were underway at the time and the intended outcome of those initiatives.

Now 22 years later, a review is underway about the treatment of women in the Australian Defence Force and the effectiveness of cultural change strategies and initiatives, including their implementation. The 1989 correspondence is therefore provided to the Review as a point in time reference about the intentions of government and the Australian Defence Force at the time as contrasted with the reality of what continues to prevail today.

The documentary itself may also be worth viewing if it can be obtained from ABC archives.

(Janet Crews)

28 February 1989

The Hon. Kim Beazley
Minister for Defence
Parliament House
CANBERRA, ACT 2600

Dear Minister,

I have watched the series of Documentaries "In real Life - Ladies in Lines" screened on the ABC and feel compelled to write to you to express my outrage at the way the Women Army recruits were treated as portrayed in these programs.

I was particularly horrified at the way in which the Women were systematically brutalized by both their male and female superiors, particularly the Woman corporal representing a pathetic caricature of a man in a like role. Perhaps the message was selectively and emotively portrayed as is often the case on television. The moral equivalent that came to mind was the pattern of behaviour where sexually abused or brutalized children become adults who perpetuate the same pattern of behaviour.

How is such behaviour allowed and officially sanctioned? What good are army recruits trained in this way to the defence of Australia?

Surely you as the Minister responsible for this portfolio, can have some influence over the way new recruits into the Services are treated, and in making induction procedures for recruits more humane and appropriate to the modern day reality.

Yours faithfully

Janet Crews
53 Moil Crescent
Darwin, N.T. 0810.



MINISTER FOR
DEFENCE SCIENCE AND PERSONNEL
PARLIAMENT HOUSE, CANBERRA, A.C.T. 2600

Ms Janet Crews
53 Moil Crescent
DARWIN NT 0810

21 MAR 1989

Dear Ms Crews

Thank you for your letter of 28 February 1989 expressing concern about the training received by female recruits depicted in the ABC TV program 'In Real Life - Ladies in Lines'.

I too was concerned when I saw the program and I consider that some of the attitudes displayed, in particular the harassment and the unnecessary shouting, especially on a one to one basis, are clearly unacceptable. I have discussed these aspects with the Army and I have been assured that action has already been taken to ensure that these practices cease.

It is important, however, not to over-react to the incidents shown in the early episodes of the program. It should be borne in mind that the incidents selected by the producers were taken from a total period of 72 hours during a 12 week course, and were compressed and subject to editing for maximum viewer impact. I understand that there was a degree of stage management in the series and that there was also a degree of over-acting in front of the cameras. As an example, the fraternisation incident shown in the second episode was stage managed and was depicted incorrectly: the same anti-fraternisation rules apply to both male and female recruits and are considered essential to avoid potentially more serious problems. Nevertheless, the Instructors in question are aware of the situation and have been counselled on their attitude and behaviour.

I can assure you that every effort is made by the staff at Kapooka to ensure that recruits are treated fairly and equally. There is a need for imposed discipline in recruit training, so that recruits who come from all backgrounds can quickly adapt their personal routine and organisation to meet the tough and challenging training ahead of them. Challenge is the theme of the recruit course. The aim is to produce soldiers, both male and female, who can work reliably as a team and who possess the individual qualities of self-discipline,

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obedience and self-confidence. Nevertheless, I do believe that these qualities may be instilled without loss of human dignity, or the humiliating tactics depicted in the program. Training must be tough but fair. The imposed discipline which is evident early in their training is gradually replaced by self-discipline as the recruits' training and skills develop. Regrettably not all recruits are able to meet the challenge of the training.

All Instructors at Kapooka are required to undertake and pass a Recruit Instructor Selection Course prior to being posted as recruit instructors. During this course the importance and sensitivity of their role in transforming young civilians into soldiers and the personal standards and behaviour required of them in carrying out this vital task, is continually emphasised.

Clearly, some of the 500 instructors at Kapooka can fall below the required standard at times. However their performance and the performance of the whole training program is continually being monitored and reviewed. The review of training processes presently underway, will give close attention to the guidelines, supervision and training for these instructors.

The real proof of the training at Kapooka is in the end product: the recruits' pride and sense of achievement, as well as the respect they accord their training staff, is clearly evident when the recruits reach their final week and march-out of Kapooka. I might add that the final program in the ABC series reinforces this point by showing the recruits as confident people and proud of their achievement and having respect for their training staff.

In summary, I am satisfied that abusive and demeaning behaviour by instructors is not condoned at Kapooka and that procedures are in place to correct any deviations from the rule. Thank you for writing to express your views and I trust that the foregoing information has helped to alleviate your concerns.

Yours sincerely

ROS KELLY