



I can't
tell my back

I need
some advice

...it's my
responsibility

I know I should tell someone...
I can't ignore it

Maintaining our integrity

Coming forward to report criminal, corrupt or inappropriate behaviour is one of the hardest tasks to undertake for any employee.

The AFP Confidant Network is an avenue available to all employees to provide support and assistance if you do have to come forward to make a report.

The Confidant Network is made up of 260 trained confidants and a Coordination Team.

The confidants

Confidants are located throughout AFP workplaces and can be accessed by all employees. The main role of a confidant is to provide support and options to employees who come forward to speak about criminal, corrupt or inappropriate behaviour.

Confidants have undertaken training in communications and conflict resolution and possess a sound knowledge of the integrity environment. This, coupled with their understanding of professional reporting processes, including the Commissioner's Orders and National Guidelines, allows them to provide information and options to any AFP employee who asks for assistance.

Inappropriate behaviour

It is well known that inappropriate behaviours in the workplace can have significant effects on employees' physical and mental well being. Inappropriate behaviour can come in many forms and include behaviours such as bullying, sexual harassment, inappropriate management practices and various types of discrimination. The impact on the workplace, in terms of performance, can also be significant.

There are a number of laws which prohibit discrimination, including the *Sex Discrimination Act 1984*, the *Racial Discrimination Act 1975* and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. These various acts apply equally to the workplace and clearly outline the unacceptable and illegal behaviours.

If the AFP is to remain a high performance organisation with integrity as is most important value, the environment we work in needs to be free from behaviour that adversely affects fellow employees and their work performance.

Anonymity and confidentiality

If a genuine concern is raised, and that matter is a non-criminal issue such as workplace harassment, anonymity can be offered to the person coming

forward. AFP senior management have openly supported this confidentiality guarantee which is also outlined in the National Guideline on Professional Reporting.

In criminal matters, the confidentiality of the employee coming forward cannot be guaranteed, however all efforts will be made to protect their identity. In all cases where reports are referred to Professional Standards for investigation, the identity of the reporting person is not disclosed without their consent, unless such disclosure is required. These circumstances may be:

- following the lawful direction of a court, tribunal or similar body or person, if argument in support of non-disclosure is unsuccessful;
- during any investigation, prosecution or other proceedings connected with the report where disclosure is necessary; and/or
- otherwise by law.

In both criminal and non-criminal matters, the Confidant Network will apply procedural fairness and natural justice principles. This ensures fairness to all parties and does not affect the Network's

adherence to the core values of the AFP or reporting obligations under Commissioner's Orders.

Training

AFP employees who apply to undertake the voluntary role of a confidant are required to meet both integrity and referee checks before beginning training. This involves an online learning component through AF POLL, an intensive two-day training workshop conducted jointly by the Coordination Team and an AFP nominated psychologist and involves the participation of PRS. The workshop looks not only at the integrity framework and procedures for confidants and reporting obligations, but also the stresses that may be faced by both clients and confidants.

Mandatory refresher training and integrity checks have been introduced this year for confidants to maintain their skills and knowledge in the role. This ensures that the Network's integrity is maintained at a high order, instilling trust in the reporting process and commitment from all within the Network.

The year ahead

A new National Guideline on Professional Reporting has been drafted to incorporate concerns raised in both the Industrial Relations Commission and by other relevant stakeholders, including the AFPA. These concerns centred on the possibility of employees utilising the Confidant Network with malicious and vindictive intentions.

To address these concerns and balance this negative perception, procedural fairness and natural justice principles have been built into the drafted National Guideline. Issues such as conflicts of interest and anonymity in certain circumstances have been further defined.

These changes, and the increased focus on these kinds of issues, are incorporated in the ongoing training and advice provided to new and existing confidants. The Network encourages ongoing feedback



exchanges between confidants and the Coordination Team in an effort to provide a progressive and supportive work environment for all AFP employees.

The absorption of the responsibilities of the Harassment Contact Officer's (HCO) from Protective Service into the Confidant Network brings with it new challenges and opportunities. Further training for HCOs will be provided over the coming months as well as advice on these changes to all Protective Service employees.

It is also timely that new marketing strategies have been developed following consultation with a number of workplace focus groups. These focus groups were representative of most areas of the AFP and provided valuable input into the perceptions and ideas of employees about the Confidant Network.

The AFP Confidant Network is a unique referral and support option for all AFP employees. By providing options for employees to come forward with information relating to criminal, corrupt or inappropriate behaviour, the AFP is well positioned to maintain its high level of integrity and excellence. And, as Commissioner Keelty stated in his message of support for the Confidant Network in July this year, "by working together, we can ensure the AFP remains professional in its practices and conduct, excellent in its performance and admired for its attitudes."

