



DEFENCE INSTRUCTIONS (GENERAL)

Department of Defence
CANBERRA ACT 2600

19 December 2002

Amendments to Defence Instruction (General) PERS 26-2 are issued pursuant to section 9A of the *Defence Act 1903*.

R.C. SMITH, AO
Secretary

P.J. COSGROVE, AC, MC
General
Chief of the Defence Force

LIST B—ISSUE NO PERS B/28/2002

Amendment

PERS 26-2 *Australian Defence Force policy on religious practices of Australian Defence*
AMDT NO 2 *Force members*

Complete Revision

Single Service filing instructions

This instruction should be filed as:

1. NAVY PERS 62-3
2. ARMY PERS 170-2
3. AIR FORCE PERS 12-6

Cancellation

DI(G) PERS 26-2 ISSUE NO PERS B/17/96 of 12 SEP 96 (AL1) is cancelled.

AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE POLICY ON RELIGIOUS PRACTICES OF AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE MEMBERS

INTRODUCTION

1. Australian Defence Force (ADF) members are encouraged to pursue their own religious beliefs and practices, subject to the requirements of ADF operations.

AIM

2. The aim of this instruction is to state the ADF policy regarding the religious practices of ADF members.

PRINCIPLES

3. The principles of this policy are:

- a. Defence accepts the significance of religious faith in people's lives and upholds the freedom of religious practice;
- b. ADF members are encouraged to practise their religious beliefs according to their freedom of choice; and
- c. every effort is to be made to allow members of any faith group to practise their faith according to their own particular observances. Personnel are not to be employed on recognised Holy Days other than on necessary duty.

PRACTICE OF RELIGION

4. The personal qualities of character that can ensure high standards of conduct and which inspires courage and self-sacrifice in a crisis can be developed by religious faith. Religious worship is an important part of the development of such faith. Defence will make every effort to allow members of any faith group to practise their faith according to their own particular observance. Care should be taken to ensure that any constraints, which would restrict particular religious observances, are minimised.

5. Attention to the spiritual need of ADF members is a matter of the highest importance. Commanding Officers (CO) are to ensure that members, regardless of their religious affiliation, are provided with the opportunity and facilities for the proper observance of their religious practices, so far as is possible. They should also be aware that most, if not all religions, allow their followers to be granted exemption from religious activities in order to participate fully in military operations.

6. CO should, by consulting with Chaplains, acquaint themselves with and make allowances for specific differences based on religious requirements, unless such an allowance poses an operational or safety threat. Differences could include matters such as dress, diet, prayer rituals and funeral rites, and they should be accommodated wherever possible. Catering arrangements should, where possible, provide flexibility to satisfy any dietary requirements. There may also be particular religious necessities for the disposal or treatment of bodies at the time of death.

7. When a Chaplain is not available to conduct a particular denominational Service, the CO or delegate may either conduct a Service of Worship or make provision for:

- a. personnel to attend their respective Services of Worship in another unit or establishment, or at a civilian place of worship; or
- b. lay persons, with denominational accreditation endorsed by the:

- (1) appropriate member of the Religious Advisory Committee to the Services (RACS), to conduct Services of Worship within the level of their particular religion.

Religious observances

8. Where practicable, and dependent on operational requirements, personnel are not to be employed to work on a day where that is contrary to the principles of their religion. Where a force deploys in support of another cultural group, Commanders should be cognizant of the religious observances, Holy Days and cultural practices of that group.

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders

9. The spiritual aspects of Indigenous Australians, including rituals and Sacred Sites, need to be considered in the context of religious observance. Traditional beliefs and ceremonies of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders are recognised forms of religion.

Special occasions

10. Ecumenical Worship provides an opportunity for members of all Christian denominations, and all other religions that wish to take part, to mark occasions of special significance to the ADF. Such occasions include the presentation of Colours, anniversaries or memorials of battles and the launching of ships. The form of the worship will be worked out jointly by a Chaplain from each of the three main denominational groups—Anglican, Roman Catholic and Protestant. In isolated situations, an individual Chaplain may arrange an Ecumenical Worship service using the guidelines drawn up by the Principal Chaplains Committee for each of the single Services, noting the policy advice given by the RACS. In a tri-Service or joint environment, the guidelines developed by the Principal Chaplains Advisory Group are to be followed. When such occasions take place on a Sunday, they are to be arranged at a time apart from the times of normal denominational services. If non-Christians are likely to be present, the sensibilities of their religions are to be borne in mind.

Commemorative events

11. Commemorative events are occasions of national importance when it is appropriate to conduct a ceremony of remembrance. On these occasions, such as ANZAC Day and Remembrance Day, members of all faiths and those without religious affiliation may be present. Such events will normally take place in a setting other than a church or a chapel, and if held on a Sunday will not replace, or clash with, times normally allocated for denominational worship. It is common for such occasions to be non-denominational to allow participation of all religions and denominations, though ideally, each officiant offers prayer according to their traditions or beliefs. While the participation of Chaplains is usual at commemorative events, no Chaplain is, or can be, obligated to take part, as the nature of a specific ceremony may involve elements that infringe on the conscientious beliefs of the Chaplain or the Chaplain's denomination. Chaplains concerned about participating are encouraged to take appropriate advice from a member of the RACS.

Church parades

12. In arranging for a church service to be conducted a CO may conduct a Church Parade as a ceremonial activity prior to the Service of Worship. At the place of parade, members will participate as directed; and will be invited and encouraged, not compelled, to attend the church service that follows.

Sponsor: DGCMP (DEO)