



AFPA
Australian Federal
Police Association

MEMBER UPDATE

AFPA Update – Review of Sergeants/Team Leaders selection process 17 April 2018

The AFPA has received a large number of complaints from applicants in the VRN 0391/17 Sergeants/Team Leaders selection process.

As a result, in accordance with Commissioner's Order 7, we have submitted a collective request for review of the Independent Selection Advisory Panel (ISAP) process on behalf of a number of members to the delegate (National Manager People, Safety and Security). A copy of the letter is attached for the information of members.

Once a response is received, members will be notified.

Regards



VICKI LINABURY

Manager, Legal and Industrial

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9 April 2018

Philippa Crome
National Manager People, Strategy and Security
Australian Federal Police
By email: Philippa.crome@afp.gov.au

Dear Philippa,

VRN 0391/17 – request for review of process

We represent the following members who were among the applicants for the above VRN process:

[Names of members included in signed letter]

We also represent a number of members who were applicants for this process however do not wish their names to be disclosed, as unfortunately they fear this may disadvantage them in future selection processes.

All of these members have similar concerns about this selection process, which are set out below.

As per section 9 of Commissioner's Order 7, we seek a review of the ISAP process for VRN 0391/17 based on the following:

- Apparent breaches of the application of regulation 3 of the Australian Federal Police Regulations 1979 (Cth) (the AFP Regulations),
- Apparent or perceived significant departure from the principles of merit selection processes

Section 3 of the AFP Regulations provides that employment decisions in the AFP must be based on the following values:

- Impartiality and professionalism
- Merit
- Freedom from discrimination
- Openness and accountability
- Fairness
- Equity in employment

- Effectiveness

As such, members have raised the following concerns:

1. Lack of clarity regarding blind recruitment/de-identification

While traditional de-identification relies on exclusion of name, gender, education levels and cultural backgrounds, applicants in this process were required to exclude dates of relevant work periods, unique or highly specialised skills, and examples of work achievements that may identify them.

Many of our members believe that this greatly disadvantaged them as their true merits could not be considered by Panels, therefore significantly undermining merit-based selection principles. One of our members who has already received written comments relating to her application did not proceed beyond the application stage as she “failed to fully detail the extent of their experience, including examples against the selection criteria.” In fact, all she did was follow the instructions she was provided by the AFP to exclude this information.

Research suggests that the employer should de-identify the applications, not the applicant, and engage a person or persons not involved in the recruitment process to do so. This ensures that the de-identification process is applied equally and fairly to all applicants. It appears that the AFP adopted a hybrid approach asking applicants to de-identify themselves, however each applicant will have a different view on how this should be done.

Research also indicates that to successfully implement this recruitment method employers need to invest in the training and technology required to ensure that the process is implemented effectively and consistently.

2. Not given an opportunity to review redactions made by the AFP on their applications

We understand that AFP Recruitment or other areas of the AFP such as the Police Volunteers (can you please confirm) redacted certain parts of applications that were considered to identify applicants. We are advised that this was a subjective process and not supported by a common methodology. Applicants complain that they were not given an opportunity to review these redactions, which in some cases were inconsistent and in others nonsensical (for example, redacting the word ‘Relevant’ from a heading ‘Relevant Training’). Another applicant had their former occupation of ‘Nurse – Psychiatric and Emergency’, which is highly relevant to policing, redacted from their CV even though this is by no means an exclusively female profession.

It is not clear whether Panels receiving applications redacted by the AFP were notified that this was the case, or whether the Panels believed that the redactions had been made by the applicants themselves. In the case of the nonsensical redactions, this would have reflected poorly on the applicants and results in a lack of fairness to all applicants who did not know what Panels were considering.

3. Lack of consistency amongst selection panels

Whilst we acknowledge the purpose of having numerous panels in a large recruitment process, it is not clear how the processes are common, how there can be consistent decision-making across the panels and that each panel is adopting an equally neutral stance in relation to candidates who are being interviewed. There is no evidence that the Panels in this process were working with consistent tools and methodologies for measuring and assessing applicants.

There appears to have been no moderation process, which is considered critical in large-scale recruitment and supports assessment decisions during the selection process.

Moderation is generally undertaken by panel members to ensure a shared understanding of the requirements of the role, and is recommended to take place during shortlisting, and following the use of other selection techniques to ensure a level of consistency and reliability in the assessment of applicants. Moderation allows wide variations among panel members to be scrutinised and consensus reached on who best meets the requirements of the role. Although we are advised some form of moderation was undertaken during this process, we question its effectiveness if applicants were removed at various stages when they were deemed unsuccessful and excluded from the remainder of the process, where a moderation process may have identified their suitability at a later stage.

4. New advice from and extension of timeframe by AFP after members' applications already submitted; no opportunity for members to review and re-submit applications

We are advised that the original due date for applications was extended and information sessions then commenced regarding the de-identification process. We are advised that members who had submitted their applications prior to the extension of the original due date could not re-submit their applications on the basis of new advice they had received in these information sessions.

Applicants who submitted their application early were therefore disadvantaged by doing so, which is unfair.

5. Assessment Centres – did not appear to align to the selection criteria

Applicants advised that the methodology being used for the Assessment Centres was not outlined to participants as per best practice.

Some applicants felt strongly that the Assessment Centre activities did not align with the selection criteria. Other applicants were concerned that the assessment activities were not sufficiently based on operational policing. We are unable to provide examples as members advise they are subject to non-disclosure provisions regarding Assessment Centre activities.

6. Applicants receiving documents and information not belonging to them

While we recognise the logistics involved in such a large recruitment process and appreciate that human error does occur, we are most concerned about reports from members that they received applications, CVs and other documents belonging to other applicants by mistake. While the AFP has apologised to these members, these types of errors impact on the professionalism of the recruitment process and raise questions about other similar errors, including whether the correct information regarding each applicant reached the Panels.

We are happy to provide any additional information and look forward to your response.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Vicki Linbury', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Vicki Linbury
Manager Legal and Industrial