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Case exception, not rule: alumni

THE GRADUATES

By Christopher Knaus

The defence sex scandal is an aberration and does not reflect the intelligent and chivalrous culture of the Australian Defence Force Academy, according to the institution's alumni.

A political brawl has erupted at the top levels of Defence over allegations that footage of an 18-year-old female ADFA cadet having consensual sex was secretly streamed to six cadets in another room.

But the ADFA Graduates Association, the institution's alumni body, has spoken to *The Canberra Times* in defence of the student body, describing them as intellectual, self-aware, and respectful. ADFA Graduates Association chairman Steve Rohan-Jones said that while despicable, the incident should not colour the broader student population of ADFA.

"I think that the majority of cadets . . . would be horrified, they

would be horrified at what has occurred," Mr Rohan-Jones said.

"They are not representative of what we are seeing of a small minority of people that . . . have done something inappropriate.

"The quality of the person that is coming out of ADFA at the moment is second to none.

"I believe intellectually, we have a very strong group of people there . . . they are more self-aware than I recall being at a similar age."

Mr Rohan-Jones, who attended ADFA from 1987 to 1989 and has since left the military, said female cadets were treated with tremendous respect at the military institution.

"It's not part of the culture, I'd say that the culture has shifted over 20 years," Mr Rohan-Jones said.

"I can tell you, that my class . . . has had, and still has, tremendous respect for all the women that went through with us, both through ADFA and also through the [Royal Military College].

"A lot of those constructs that

people are suggesting, that there's a masculine culture, that it's patriarchal . . . Yes, there is a predominance of men there . . . but I think it's tempered quite considerably now by the process and the system, by the inclusion of women, and by the change of style of the way that this generation of leaders leads."

Mr Rohan-Jones also refuted claims that ADFA's culture led cadets to self-censor personal issues, and that they were discouraged from seeking help from superiors.

He said hierarchal avenues, through ADFA divisional officers and senior non-commissioned officers, as well as non-hierarchal avenues, through padres and psychological support officers, were available for cadets to seek help.

Mr Rohan-Jones expressed confidence in ADFA and Defence to resolve the issue and said it appeared the allegations had been taken seriously from the first moment they came to light.