

Abusers become the bosses

EXCLUSIVE

JESSICA MCSWEENEY

SEXUAL abusers end up as managers in the Australian Defence Force and only a quarter of assaults are reported each year, the author of a government investigation has claimed.

The damning report, commissioned by the federal government, was released more than 10 years ago, yet its lead author claims most abusers remain in positions of power.

The Review of Allegations of Sexual and Other Forms of Abuse in Defence was led by



lawyer Dr Gary Rumble in 2011 after an 18-year-old was filmed having sex and the videos

shared via Skype to other cadets. It found the ADF had a culture of silence around sexual abuse, and a major overhaul of reporting structures was sorely needed.

The report has mostly fallen on deaf ears and its core findings are still ignored.

Defence's own 2020-21 annual report found 187 sexual assaults and abuse claims were officially reported to the Joint Military Policy Unit, but Mr Rumble said the figure was

more likely to be upward of 700. "In general society, the experts say less than 20 per cent of sexual assaults are reported – plenty of reports have said defence environments strongly discourage reporting," Dr Rumble said.

"So if the number reported is 187, that implies at least four times as many assaults that went completely unreported."

He told the Sunday Telegraph Defence personnel reporting abuse were often

treated like they had been disloyal, "instead of treating the abuse as an act of disloyalty".

"I recommended that Defence stop talking about zero tolerance, and instead talk about zero instances."

"Defence talks about how many people is it acceptable to get blown up at the grenade range? Zero. How many people is it acceptable to have die of heat exhaustion in training in the tropics? Zero. How many times is it acceptable for

a member of the ADF to rape another member of the ADF? Surely the answer is zero."

"But former Vice Chief of Defence Ray Griggs ... would not commit to zero incidents because it was not achievable."

Dr Rumble said it was likely perpetrators of abuse are still serving in high ranks in the ADF: "It's not apparent to me that in Defence anything was done, so it carries the implication that those people are still in the defence force."

That's a slap in the face for victims who have spoken up as part of the Sunday Telegraph's Uniform Justice campaign.

SWIM LESSONS COLD COMFORT FOR PARENTS



Swim instructor Alex Chow teaches Janet Jiang at Jump! Swim School in North Strathfield. Picture: Sam Rutty

AMAANI SIDDEEK

LIN Jiang's three-year-old daughter Janet is obsessed with swimming – so much so that even the freezing winter weather can't keep her away from the water.

"The first time she started swimming she was scared, but by the second time she just loved it," Ms Jiang said. "The water is warm and I think she likes the feeling of going under water."

Despite her daughter not even being in preschool, Ms Jiang said it was important as a

mother to ensure that her daughter had good swimming skills, especially living in Australia.

"To teach Janet that the water isn't scary and that she can save herself or other people if she's in danger," she said.

But after two years of pandemic lockdowns, swim experts fear it has left a generation of young Aussies flailing in the water. And instructors say the winter months are no excuse for kids to skip out on lifesaving lessons.

"Summer swimmers are made in winter," JUMP! Swim Schools CEO Mark Collins said.

The rate of annual drownings have increased by 20 per cent over the pandemic, with kids under 14 years old experiencing the biggest jump in drownings, according to the Royal Life Saving Australia 2021 report.

Head swimming instructor Yogita Lal said the biggest issue arose when parents and kids stopped lessons during the winter months.

"All the effort from the instructors and kids putting in the hard yards – it all goes down the drain ... and when they come back (in the spring or summer) they're back at square one

again," Ms Lal said. "It's so sad as instructors when you see kids come back and they're back to the fundamental basics."

Almost half of children leaving primary school cannot meet basic swimming and water safety benchmarks of swimming continuously for 50m or floating for two minutes

Now that pools were open, Ms Lal said the key to winter swimming success for kids was parental preparation – pack a hot water bottle, a beanie, a warm coat, and a hot chocolate always goes down well.

Man killed in crash

A MAN has died after two vehicles collided on Waterfall Way in the state's Clarence region early on Saturday morning.

Emergency services were called to the scene at Hernani about 12.20am.

The driver of a Nissan Tiida, a 33-year-old man, died at the scene. The driver of a Ford Ranger, a 50-year-old man, was treated at the scene by paramedics before being taken to hospital for mandatory testing.

Police have asked anyone with information or dashcam footage from the area to call Crime Stoppers on 1800 333 000.

Rental crisis a nightmare for people with disability



KATE McINTYRE

DISABLED and elderly tenants have been forced to live in unsuitable homes where they can't shower or access bedrooms as Sydney grapples with one of the worst rental housing shortages in years.

With vacancies plummeting and rents soaring, there have been reports of renters in wheelchairs having to climb stairs on their hands to

get to upstairs rooms because they could not find rental homes with adequate disability access.

Others were sleeping in living rooms or finding alternative means to clean themselves due to limited facilities for people with disabilities.

A survey conducted by the Physical Disability Council of NSW found renters with limited mobility struggled to gain consent from landlords for

vital modifications. The state-based PDCN survey found the majority of renters and homeowners rated their homes as only partially accessible, with more than 40 per cent needing to move.

Close to half had paid for housing modifications with their own money, despite 59 per cent being NDIS participants and 13 per cent being eligible for Aged Care Packages.

It comes as the number of

vacant properties across Sydney halved over the past year to just 11,000, while rents soared 20 per cent, according to SQM Research.

Sydney renter Jacob Darkin, who has a spinal chord injury, said trying to find accessible housing was stressful. "I have friends who have needed purpose-built showers and when they moved out they had to pay for the replacement to put it back," he said.