

Australian Privacy Principle 2: Anonymity and pseudonymity

APP 2 provides individuals an option of dealing with Defence anonymously or through the use of a pseudonym. For example, if a person rings Defence to ask a generic query, APP 2 means that people should be allowed to communicate with Defence without having to reveal their identity or by providing a pseudonym.

This rule does not apply in cases where an APP entity is required or authorised to deal with individuals who have identified themselves:

- a. by or under an Australian law;
- b. subject to a court or tribunal order; or
- c. where it is impractical for an APP entity to deal with a person anonymously or pseudonymously.

A simple way to apply APP 2 is to remember that:

1. if a person is requesting information on themselves or specific information about their circumstances, we would need to know the identity of the person;
2. if a person is seeking generic information, we may be able to deal with an individual without knowing their identity.

Defence personnel faced with this situation would need to make an assessment on each individual case in relation to a person's particular circumstances (see the scenarios below).

Scenarios

A person rings Defence Force Recruiting to enquire about how they can apply to join the Navy. The Defence staff member who takes the call can provide information to the person without having to know their identity. The person making the enquiries can be advised of the Defence Force Recruiting website, sent an information pack in the mail (it is not necessary to know someone's name to send mail to them), or they could be given the address of their nearest Defence Force Recruiting Centre without Defence having to know the person's identity.

If the same person then submits an application to join Defence, it would be impracticable to process the application without knowing their identity.

Likewise, if a Defence member calls 1800 Defence for advice about what form to complete for a particular purpose, it may not be necessary to identify the caller, but if the Defence member calls the career management agency for advice on their next posting, they would need to disclose their identity to receive the requested information.