



AFP National Guideline on references and testimonials

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1. Disclosure and compliance

This document is classified **UNCLASSIFIED** and is intended for internal AFP use.

Disclosing any content must comply with Commonwealth law and the [AFP National Guideline on disclosure of information](#).

Compliance

This instrument is part of the AFP's professional standards framework. The [AFP Commissioner's Order on Professional Standards \(CO2\)](#) outlines the expectations for appointees to adhere to the requirements of the framework. Inappropriate departures from the provisions of this instrument may constitute a breach of AFP professional standards and be dealt with under Part V of the [Australian Federal Police Act 1979](#) (Cth).

2. Acronyms

AFP	Australian Federal Police
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3. Definitions

AFP appointee – is defined in the [Australian Federal Police Act 1979](#) (Cth).

Personnel file – means a file created in any form to hold only personal information about each AFP appointee's employment conditions, engagement, advancement, deployment, discipline, remuneration, awards and termination.

Testimonial – means a written affirmation of another person's character, virtues, personal qualities or worth.

Reference – means a written (e.g. a Statutory Declaration) or verbal statement that gives information about another person's skills, qualifications, abilities and personal attributes.

4. Authority

This guideline was issued by the National Manager Human Resources using power under s. 37(1) of the [Australian Federal Police Act 1979](#) (Cth) as delegated by the Commissioner under s. 69C of the Act.

5. Introduction

This guideline establishes the formal procedures where an AFP appointee is requested to give a testimonial or a reference report for another person.

It does not apply when the person seeking a reference is a current AFP appointee and is applying for a:

- transfer, promotion, term posting etc within the AFP
- security clearance/renewal resulting out of their AFP employment.

6. Policy

Where an AFP appointee provides a testimonial or reference either in their private capacity or on behalf of the AFP, it is essential to ensure the information given does not compromise the integrity and effectiveness of AFP operations or impact on the confidence of the Government and the community in the integrity of the AFP and its appointees.

7. Avoiding conflicts of interest

Where an AFP appointee provides a testimonial or reference about another person, including another appointee, there is the potential for the testimonial or reference to imply an endorsement by the AFP, even where the AFP is not specifically mentioned or inferred. Situations may include:

- employment outside the AFP
- academic entry
- judicial (including civil) or disciplinary proceedings outside of the AFP
- organisation membership applications
- adoption applications
- school applications.

In all of the above situations there is the potential for a conflict of interest between the AFP appointee providing the information in their private capacity and the official duties of the appointee.

Appointees must not provide a testimonial or reference without authority where there may be an actual or perceived conflict of interest. Where an appointee is asked to provide a testimonial or reference outside of his or her official capacity, the appointee must ensure:

- there is no misuse of their duties, status, power or authority as an AFP appointee to gain, or seek to gain, a benefit or advantage for the appointee or any other person.
- the provision of the testimonial or reference can not be seen within the wider community as an endorsement on behalf of the AFP
- they avoid any conflict with the AFP core values and code of conduct as contained in the [Australian Federal Police Commissioner's Order on Professional Standards \(CO2\)](#) (e.g. providing a character reference for a known criminal or a person of doubtful repute).

The [AFP Practical Guide on dealing with conflicts of interest](#) provides advice on how to identify and resolve any potential or perceived conflicts of interest.

8. Responsibilities

8.1 AFP appointees

AFP appointees must obtain written approval from their National Manager before giving either a personal or professional testimonial or reference which:

- is on behalf of the AFP
- mentions the AFP
- infers that it represents the views of the AFP
- has any conflict of interest with the operations and reputation of the AFP (see s. 7 of this guideline).

Approval should be sought in the form of a Minute.

When a testimonial or reference has received official approval, the appointee giving it must:

- maintain it as an AFP record in accordance with the [AFP National Guideline on managing records](#)
- forward a copy of the testimonial or reference and the official approval to HR for

placement on their personal file.

A testimonial or reference may only be written on official stationery when an appointee is acting in an official capacity **and** specific permission has been granted by a National Manager to use that stationery.

Exceptions

An appointee may generally supply a person with a reference as a private member of the community without seeking prior approval (e.g. providing information on how long a friend has lived in Australia for the purpose of an immigration issue or giving a personal reference for a friend's child who is seeking after school employment), however the appointee:

- must not make any mention of the AFP including their AFP rank or role
- may only state that the AFP is their employer, if asked, but must be clear that they are not representing the AFP
- must not use AFP letterhead
- must not send the reference from an AFP email account or include an AFP signature block.

8.2 National Managers

A National Manager who receives a request for an appointee to provide a testimonial or reference must respond in writing. Written responses can be in the form of an official email.

To determine if a testimonial or reference can be given, National Managers must consider:

- if the person requesting it is also an AFP appointee (or former AFP employee)
- its intended use (such as for employment, academic entry, judicial or disciplinary proceedings)
- the nature of the relationship between the AFP appointee providing it and the person requesting it
- possible media or public interest
- whether an AFP Manager or AFP Legal should review it prior to provision
- whether it can be provided on official AFP stationery.

In instances where the testimonial or reference is in support of an AFP appointee seeking permanent employment outside the AFP, and there is concern about revealing that fact to the appointee's relevant National Manager, written permission may be sought from the National Manager Human Resources.

9. Further advice

Any queries relevant to the content of this guideline may be referred to Coordinator Professional Standards Awareness and Prevention, through the [PRS OMC](#).

10. References

Legislation

- [Australian Federal Police Act 1979](#)

AFP governance

- [AFP National Guideline on managing records](#)
- [AFP Practical Guide on dealing with conflicts of interest](#)
- [Australian Federal Police Commissioner's Order on Professional Standards \(CO2\)](#)