



Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal

DECISION

Defence Act 1903

s.58H—Functions and powers of Tribunal

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY: ELECTRONIC TECHNICIAN – RADAR SYSTEMS CONTROLLER AND COMBAT SYSTEMS COORDINATOR (Matter 12 of 2021)

MS I. ASBURY, PRESIDENT

MR A. MORRIS, MEMBER

CANBERRA, 27 SEPTEMBER 2021

MAJGEN G.FOGARTY AO RETD, MEMBER

[1] This decision arises from a listing application¹ for a determination to be made under Section 58H of the *Defence Act 1903* (the Act) for the Australian Defence Force (ADF) to establish a further “fire control” stream within the Electronic Technician employment category. The ADF submits the proposal is an interim measure and will apply to personnel who manage and operate the Aegis integrated weapons combat system in the *Hobart* Class Destroyers.² These streams will be known as “Radar Systems Controllers” and “Combat Systems Coordinators”.

[2] This matter was dealt with at a video hearing on 20 September 2021 where Mr J. Phillips SC appeared for the ADF and Mr H. Miller for the Commonwealth. COVID-19 restrictions meant that an inspection of the combat systems in the *Hobart* Class ships was unable to be arranged. An inspection will be conducted at the earliest convenient opportunity, in a manner consistent with those restrictions.

Background

[3] The Electronic Technician (ET) employment category specialises in the maintenance, repair and operation of electronic combat systems. ET’s who are responsible for the technical

maintenance and operation of fire control radars, gun and missile systems are a specialised subset known as Fire Control Officers.

Submissions

[4] The ADF submission seeks to establish another fire control specialised career stream, within the ET employment category, to partially remedy the remunerative inequity presently existing between ET sailors who operate different combat management systems.

[5] Specifically, the ADF intends to achieve this by the establishment of two new employment streams responsible for the Aegis combat system: Radar Systems Controllers and Combat Systems Coordinators, similar to Fire Control Officers.

[6] Navy proposes that the junior rank Aegis controller be called “Radar Systems Controller” and have two skill grades (2 and 3) at Pay Grades 5 and 6 respectively, while the senior ranks Aegis coordinators be called “Combat Systems Coordinator” and assigned Skill Grade 4 at Pay Grade 7.³

[7] The Commonwealth supports the proposal as brought forward by the ADF.⁴

Consideration

[8] We accept that the introduction of the *Hobart* Class Destroyers into the Royal Australian Navy means the fire control workforce for the Aegis combat management system is evolving from those sailors who previously served in the *Adelaide* and *Anzac* Class ships.

[9] We accept that the fire control capability for the Aegis system is “*substantially more advanced and integrated with significantly more demanding operational responsibilities*” when compared to the capability provided on *Adelaide* and *Anzac* frigates.⁵

[10] We recognise that, in order to establish the initial operation and maintenance of the Aegis combat management systems, Navy has directed that Fire Control Officers be redeployed and retrained for the fire control roles and responsibilities of the Aegis combat system in the *Hobart* Class destroyers “*even if they do not wish to pursue this career path.*” We considered the impact and the “*potential detriment to the overall ET workforce and the impact such directions may have on the personal needs, wants, desires and career aspirations of the selected sailors*”.⁶

[11] Further, we considered evidence that the ET category is experiencing “*extreme workforce stress across the ranks*” which is “*further exacerbated by the redirection of personnel away from the generalist fire control ET’s and Fire Control Officers to controllers and coordinators that man the Aegis combat management system*”.⁷ We accept that Navy is also having to recruit ETs to become Aegis controllers regardless of their enlistment preference.

[12] We agree with the Commonwealth on “*the evidence provided by the ADF to demonstrate current personnel shortages within this workforce and accept that this has likely contributed to increased workforce stress, increased physical and psychological demands, and decreased attractiveness of this career*”.⁸

[13] We take into account the evidence that the ADF intends to undertake a complete review of Navy’s ET workforce over the next two years and present a submission to provide for a final pay placement for the Aegis fire control workforce at that time.

Conclusion

[14] We accept that Navy is relying upon directing sailors to these roles in order to establish the Aegis system workforce and agree this is not a long-term solution. We accept that, without provision of a formal career path as an Aegis controller/coordinator, it is difficult to provide certainty and encouragement for sailors to transfer trade, or appeal to potential recruits.

[15] We agree this proposal provides recognition for the specialist skills, knowledge and responsibilities required of Radar Systems Controllers and Combat Systems Coordinators in *Hobart* Class Destroyers and that it is likely to contribute to attraction, and stabilisation, of the workforce.

[16] We agree this is an interim measure and note the intention of the ADF to return to us in two years’ time with a final assessment of the capability and work value. We welcome a further submission at that time following the intended review into the workforce. Having said that, we ask that any future submission gives particular reference and “*deeper insight into this employment category and the sustainability of it over time*”⁹ where it can be aligned with the Navy retention initiatives as presented to us in Matter 13 of 2021 – *Navy Retention Incentive Payment Report Back*.¹⁰

[17] Consequently, we agree to the proposed interim Skill and Pay Grades and consider this structure will provide recognition of the (currently known) work value associated with the operation and maintenance of the Aegis combat management system.

[18] Determination 13 of 2021 will give effect to these changes from 1 October 2021.

MS I. ASBURY, PRESIDENT
MR A. MORRIS, MEMBER
MAJGEN G.FOGARTY AO RETD, MEMBER

Appearances:

Mr J. Phillips for the ADF assisted by *Mr P. Blady*

Mr H. Miller for the Commonwealth assisted by *Mr J. O’Reilly*

¹ DMR/OUT/2021/01 letter Listing Application – *Navy Electronic Technician – Radar Systems Controller and Combat Systems Coordinator streams* dated 21 July 2021.

² The Aegis combat management system uses radar and computer systems to detect, track and engage/destroy an inbound target with missile and gun systems.

³ ADF submission *RAN Technician Radar Systems Controller and Combat Systems Coordinator Stream* dated September 2021 (ADF 1) page 23 paragraph 5.3

⁴ Commonwealth submission *RAN Electronic Technician – Radar Systems Controller and Combat Systems Coordinator stream* dated September 2021 (CWLTH 1)

⁵ ADF 1 page 2 paragraph 1.4

⁶ ADF 1 page 14 paragraph 4.10

⁷ ADF 1 page 16 paragraph 4.18

⁸ CWLTH 1 page 5 paragraph 27.

⁹ Transcript 20 September 2021 page 3 lines 29 to 31.

¹⁰ <https://www.dfrt.gov.au/matters/navy-cryptologic-sailors-report-back>