



Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal

DECISION

Defence Act 1903
s.58H—Functions and powers of Tribunal

AIR FORCE: SECURITY FORCES OFFICER (Matter 4 of 2024)

MS B. O'NEILL, PRESIDENT

MR A. MORRIS, MEMBER

CANBERRA, 30 APRIL 2024

MAJGEN G. FOGARTY AO RETD, MEMBER

[1] This decision arises from a listing application from the Australian Defence Force (ADF) for a determination to be made under Section 58H of the *Defence Act 1903* (the Act). The listing application¹ seeks to restructure the Air Force Ground Defence and Security Policing officer constructs by combining them into a new employment category to be known as Security Forces Officer.

Background

[2] Currently, the Air Force Security Force is comprised of two separate employment categories: Ground Defence (GRDEF) and Security Policing (SECPOL). GRDEF contribute to ground combat roles and defend airfields, assets and personnel from ground attack. They are responsible for training Air Force personnel in core military skills. SECPOL also contribute to the protection of assets and personnel, but additionally contribute to Air Force's obligation to the Joint Military Policing Unit (JMPU) including police investigations for Air Force.

[3] We considered this matter in a hearing on 18 April 2024 where Ms K Hagan appeared for the ADF and Mr M Guteridge for the Commonwealth. Wing Commander C Scott, Chief of Staff, JMPU, gave evidence for the ADF.

Submissions

ADF

[4] The ADF submission proposes the Security Forces Officer (SECFORO) workforce will incorporate Force Protection, Protective Security, Ground Combat, and Military Police roles, while retaining and leveraging the existing skills of the GRDEF and SECPOL officers.

[5] The ADF submits the proposed SECFORO category will '*develop and maintain capabilities to protect personnel, aircraft, equipment and infrastructure that are critical to projecting air and space power*'. It further states SECFORO's are to be '*the principal advisors to Command and leadership on force protection and protective security, planning, security risks and mitigation*'.²

[6] To achieve this, the ADF seeks to:

- a. establish a new employment category of SECFORO with salary placement at pay grade 2 to 4 in the Graded Officer Pay Structure (GOPS);
- b. transfer the current employment categories of GRDEF and SECPOL into the SECFORO employment category in accordance with requirements for salary placements under the proposed structure; and
- c. remove the current employment categories of GRDEF and SECPOL once all current members are transitioned to the SECFORO category.³

[7] In doing so, Air Force states it seeks to address:

- a. the need for a contemporary structure that better utilises the existing GRDEF and SECPOL functions to deliver current and future force protection and protective security capability outputs;
- b. the requirement to retain Ground Combat and Military Police roles, which includes ongoing provision of Military Police qualified officers in the JMPU as part of the joint policing capability; and
- c. the need to adjust training and career pathways to ensure they are fit for purpose and support personnel to deliver capability effectively.⁴

[8] Air Force states this includes *‘revision of current content and delivery of force protection and protective security training to ensure the workforce is trained and supported to effectively undertake roles required of them’* which it considers *‘essential to achieving workforce flexibility and expertise.’*⁵

[9] The ADF submission is *‘not seeking any increased remuneration for this new employment category’*⁶ and *‘does not seek any non-reduction provisions to support transition’*.⁷

Commonwealth

[10] The Commonwealth *‘supports’* the ADF submission.⁸ However, it does question whether, because *‘the majority of the workforce will transition directly to SECFORO at the same skill grade’* but *‘career progression requirements will change’* any transitioned personnel will fall short of requirements under the new structure.⁹

[11] Additionally, the Commonwealth questioned the overall cost to Air Force of any GRDEF officers, currently on trainee salary, moving to pay grade 2 on appointment - noting this *‘differs from the current structure where GRDEF officers receive trainee salary rate until completion of Initial Military Training and Initial Employment Training’* (IET).¹⁰

[12] The Commonwealth did request a review into this matter in our Annual Review of Determinations in 2026 citing a proposal to assess: the number of employees that have transitioned; the number of members still to transition at that point; and the timeframe of transition of any remaining impacted personnel.¹¹

Evidence

[13] Wing Commander (WGCDR) C Scott gave oral and written evidence in support of the ADF proposal. He states in his affidavit that *‘Air Force needs a contemporised security workforce structure that better utilises existing GRDEF and SECPOL functions to deliver capability’*. Expanding on this, he submits *‘the current system is limited because, whilst there are differences in training between the two employment categories, the Air Force already utilises members interchangeably from GRDEF to SECPOL in most security force positions’* meaning *‘some members are over-trained whilst some are under-trained which can adversely affect job performance and, in turn, capability’*.¹²

[14] WGCDR Scott considers the proposed structure will provide a *‘more robust workforce, providing greater flexibility and versatility for both the organisation and a member’s career’*.¹³ He summarised the benefits of integrating the roles as:

- a. better alignment with modern threats and operations;
- b. enhanced operational flexibility;

- c. integration into a single specialisation streamlining command and leadership structures;
- d. a comprehensive training regime;
- e. streamlined career progression;
- f. broader skill set; and
- g. increased cohesiveness in security operations.¹⁴

Consideration

[15] We acknowledge that when combining two employment categories, both with '*proud histories dating back to the 1940's*' cultural aspects may result in '*a degree of workforce friction*'. We note that Air Force, while acknowledging '*that the workforce redesign and restructure may present challenges associated with cultural transition to a single employment category*' has put in place '*Governance practices and processes to support individuals and the organisation through this change*'¹⁵, and expects this friction '*to be manageable*'.¹⁶ We further accept the cultural impact of combining the SECPOL and GRDEF roles '*will affect almost every aspect of operation and organisation*'¹⁷ and are encouraged by the evidence which acknowledges integration will require '*careful management to blend traditions, values and best practices*'.¹⁸ We agree with the Commonwealth that '*transitional challenges are not uncommon and should not be a barrier to necessary changes*'.¹⁹

[16] We accept the evidence that the workforce amalgamation is required to '*contemporise security capability across Air Force which includes organisational restructure, changes to force protection and protective security roles, creation of new security roles, and introduction of new security technology and systems*'.²⁰

[17] We considered the evidence that '*despite a common GOPS placement, the current appointment and advancement requirements of GRDEF and SECPOL are different*' and that '*with the proposed amalgamation into a single SECFORO employment category, members will move to a common appointment and advancement strategy which is more aligned with the current SECPOL progression*'.²¹

[18] We queried WGCDR Scott's evidence in regard to over and under-training and note that currently GRDEF and SECPOL IET and post IET training is focused on ground combat or military police respectively, rather than Force Protection and Protective Security, which '*generates skill sets that are often mismatched to the roles of the Security Forces workforce*'.²² We considered the evidence that the merging of the categories '*provides opportunities for training efficiencies to generate a more effective workforce*'²³ and that '*by consolidating IET and post-IET courses that will create training efficiencies and result in members being better trained for the roles they will be required to perform*'.²⁴

[19] We considered the evidence that, while both GRDEF and SECPOL categories are placed at pay grade 2 to 4 in the GOPS, the appointment and pay grade progression requirements for each are presently different. We accept that the proposed pay grade for SECFORO remains at pay grade 2 to 4 and will be *'reflective of the new work value and training outcomes when benchmarked against the previous pay grades and skill grades'*.²⁵

[20] With further regard to remunerative aspects, we reviewed the evidence that, despite a common GOPS pay placement, the current appointment and advancement requirements of GRDEF and SECPOL are different. We note that GRDEF are presently placed on trainee salary rates until completion of IET, while SECPOL are placed on pay grade 2 from appointment. We accept the proposal that in future all SECFORO officers will commence on pay grade 2 from appointment. We considered the Commonwealth concerns over any cost of this amendment however do not consider them to be of such value as to warrant particular attention.

[21] We note that the ADF does not seek any non-reduction provisions in this matter and accept the evidence that *'no members will be required to undertake any gap training in order to transition at their current skill grade'*.²⁶

[22] We considered each of the expected benefits listed by WGCDR Scott (at paragraph 14 of this decision) and accept his view that *'integration into a single SECFORO specialisation is poised to deliver substantial benefits, ranging from operational efficiency and flexibility to enhanced training and professional development opportunities for officers'*.²⁷

Conclusion

[23] We agree that combining GRDEF and SECPOL, while retaining the roles of each in an amalgamated workforce, *'generates a larger pool of qualified and experienced personnel'* and provides a *'more robust and flexible workforce, broader career opportunities as well as provides a healthier workforce structure'*.²⁸ We accept that members are already employed *'interchangeably'*²⁹ and that the *'absorption of two employment categories into one provides flexibility and versatility'* across the workforce.³⁰

[24] With regard to remuneration, we accept that *'the changes were not considered sufficient at this point in time to support Pay Grade adjustments for any of the proposed SECFORO skill grades'* and agree the pay placements for SECFORO at pay grade 2 to 4 is consistent with the current GRDEF and SECPOL pay grades.³¹ We also agree that all SECFORO members will move to a common appointment pay point commencing at pay grade 2 and consider this appropriate.

[25] We agree with the Commonwealth proposal for future reporting requirements and ask the ADF to return to us in 2026, as part of the Annual Review, detailing: the number of members who have transitioned; numbers still to transition; and the timeframe for transition of any remaining impacted personnel across the SECFORO workforce.

[26] We note the ADF advice that it will present ‘*similar changes for Security Forces in Air Force’s Other Ranks employment categories*’ which it expects to be brought to us ‘*later this year*’.³² We encourage that submission as soon as practicable.

[27] In closing, we agree that the creation of the SECFORO workforce is a significant transformation for Air Force and consider it will ‘*deliver immediate practical and cultural changes*’.³³

[28] Determination 3 of 2024 gives effect to our decision from 6 June 2024.

MS B. O’NEILL, PRESIDENT
MR A. MORRIS, MEMBER
MAJGEN G. FOGARTY AO RETD, MEMBER

Appearances:

Ms K Hagan for the ADF assisted by Flight Lieutenant L Hawkett

Mr M Guteridge for the Commonwealth assisted by Mr K Wong

Witness:

Wing Commander C Scott, Chief of Staff, Joint Military Policing Unit.

¹ BN78653690 Listing Application: Air Force: Security Forces Officer dated 27 February 2024.

² ADF Submission Matter 4 of 2024 Air Force: Security Forces Officer dated 19 March 2024 (ADF1) page 14 paragraph 4.1.

³ ADF1 page 3 paragraph 1.7.

⁴ ADF1 page 9 paragraph 3.17.

⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶ ADF1 page 2 paragraph 1.6.

⁷ ADF1 page 24 paragraph 5.10.

⁸ Commonwealth Submission Matter 4 of 2024 Air Force Security Forces Officer dated 12 April 2024 (CWLTH1) page 9 paragraph 48.

⁹ CWLTH1 page 9 paragraph 53.

¹⁰ CWLTH1 page 9 paragraph 54.

¹¹ CWLTH1 pages 10 and 11 paragraph 61.

¹² Affidavit of WGCDR C Scott (ADF2) dated 16 April 2024 pages 4 and 5 paragraph 21.

¹³ ADF2 page 8 paragraph 32.

¹⁴ ADF2 pages 9 and 10 paragraph 34.

¹⁵ ADF1 page 25 paragraph 5.14.

¹⁶ ADF2 page 10 paragraph 37.

¹⁷ ADF2 page 1 paragraph 4.3

¹⁸ ADF2 page 11 paragraph 38.

¹⁹ CWLTH1 page 10 paragraph 56.

²⁰ ADF1 page 26 paragraph 6.1.

²¹ ADF1 page 6 paragraph 3.6.

²² ADF1 page 19 paragraph 4.21.

²³ ADF1 page 20 paragraph 4.23.

²⁴ ADF2 page 8 paragraph 32.

²⁵ ADF1 page 18 paragraph 4.15.

²⁶ ADF1 page 19 paragraph 4.30.

²⁷ ADF2 page 10 paragraph 35.

²⁸ ADF1 page 19 paragraph 4.20.

²⁹ ADF1 page 7 paragraph 3.9.

³⁰ ADF1 page 12 paragraph 3.30.

³¹ ADF1 page 18 paragraph 4.13.

³² ADF1 page 3 paragraph 1.8.

³³ Ibid.