



# Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal

## DECISION

*Defence Act 1903*

s.58H—Functions and powers of Tribunal

### **ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARTILLERY – RESTRUCTURE**

(Matter 10 of 2024)

MS B. O'NEILL, PRESIDENT

MR A. MORRIS, MEMBER

CANBERRA, 9 SEPTEMBER 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 application<sup>1</sup> seeks to restructure employment categories of the Royal Australian Artillery (RAA) by disestablishing two categories; amending some category and skill grade names; creating additional skill grades in the remaining categories; and increasing the pay grade placements for some skill grades in one category.

[2] We considered this matter in a hearing on 13 August 2024. Ms K Hagan appeared for the ADF and Mr K Wong for the Commonwealth. Major C Woodhall, Staff Officer Grade Two, Artillery Trade and Training Land Combat College, appeared as a witness for the ADF.

#### **Background**

[3] The role of the RAA is to provide offensive support coordination and indirect firepower, surveillance and target acquisition, and ground-based air defence. The categories of the RAA are presently divided into 3 streams: Offensive Support, Ground Based Air Defence and Uncrewed Aircraft Systems.

[4] RAA employment categories were last reviewed by this Tribunal in Matters 3, 4 and 6 of 2024.<sup>2</sup> There are currently 7 Other Rank employment categories in the RAA. Of these, only the Artillery Light Gunner category is designed for Reserve soldiers; the remaining 6 are for Permanent members and currently not open to ab initio Reserve entry.

## Submissions

### ADF

[5] The ADF submits that since the RAA employment categories were last reviewed there has been continued modernisation of the trades necessitating capability development and changes to roles and training. As a result of these changes and acquisitions, Army states it has identified a requirement to change the RAA category structure.

[6] The ADF outlined a number of factors which have culminated in this submission: the Land Combat Capability Workforce Segment Review (LCCWSR); the Defence Strategic Review; the continued modernisation of the trade since the last reviews; and new artillery capabilities.<sup>3</sup>

[7] The ADF now proposes a *'holistic restructure of the Other Ranks employment categories in the RAA'* which specifically seeks to:

- a. disestablish the Artillery Light Gunner employment category;
- b. disestablish the Operator Air and Missile Defence Systems employment category;
- c. amend the skill grade names in the Artillery Gunner employment category, and establish new skill grades within the employment category;
- d. amend the name of the Operator Unmanned Aerial System employment category and amend the names of attendant skill grades;
- e. amend the skill grades, skill grade names and some pay grade placements in the Artillery Command Systems Operator employment category;
- f. amend the name of the Artillery Observer employment category, amend the names of attendant skill grades, and establish new skill grades within the employment category;
- g. amend the name of the Manager Operations Offensive Support employment category and amend the names of attendant skill grades, and establish new skill grades within the employment category; and

h. establish new skill grades in the restructured Artillery Gunner, Operator Unmanned Aerial System, Artillery Command Systems Operator, and Artillery Observer employment categories to facilitate a Reserve workforce continuum.<sup>4</sup>

[8] Additionally, in order to facilitate an Army Reserve continuum across the employment categories, the Army seeks to create entry-level skill grades of ‘Grade 0’<sup>5</sup> at pay grade 1 within the Graded Other Ranks Pay Structure (GORPS).

### **Commonwealth**

[9] The Commonwealth supports the submission, noting the *‘historical, environmental and trade factors that have influenced the proposal’* while recognising *‘shortfalls in strength across the categories is a challenge to address’*. It acknowledged the proposal *‘seeks to do this through a targeted pay grade increase and redesigned career continuum’*.<sup>6</sup>

[10] It did expand on, and query, personnel shortfalls particularly in the Artillery Command Systems Operator category, and questioned how the category *‘reached an overall vacancy rate of 47.4% below strength, and whether the ADF has any non-remunerative measures that can address this shortfall’*.<sup>7</sup>

### **Witness Evidence**

[11] Major (MAJ) C Woodhall gave written and oral evidence in support of the proposal. He gave detailed evidence regarding the new and enhanced capabilities, as well as the rationale for the changes sought. He outlined the findings of the LCCWSR including one recommendation to *‘cease training Light Artillery Gunners and transfer them into other RAA employment categories’*.<sup>8</sup>

[12] MAJ Woodhall summarised that the proposal *‘brings Artillery into a more diverse workforce where we can rely on individuals and their commonalities across three streams and provide those elements to where they’re best needed on a priority given by the Chief of Army, when required’*.<sup>9</sup>

[13] MAJ Woodhall outlined the communication strategy supporting the restructure and the ways *‘significant effort has gone into ensuring that all affected personnel are informed about the reasons for the proposed change, the benefits it aims to bring, and how it is planned to be implemented’*.<sup>10</sup>

[14] In the hearing, MAJ Woodhall addressed the specific concerns of the Commonwealth regarding the low attraction and high separation rates of the Artillery Command Systems Operator category, conceding it is a *‘hard trade to explain’* to potential candidates. He acknowledged the lack of targeted remediation for members of this category stating *‘there has been no previous action for that at this stage, and thus the dissatisfaction amongst that workforce’*.<sup>11</sup>

## Consideration

[15] We accept a full work value assessment of each skill grade in the restructured employment categories in the RAA was not conducted. Despite this, we note that *‘although this submission changes the structure of some categories to reflect training continua and capability developments, the underlying work value in most instances has not fundamentally changed from that previously presented to [us] in 2016’*.<sup>12</sup>

[16] We accept that the proposed structure contains five employment categories:

- a. Artillery Gunner;
- b. Artillery Command Systems Operator;
- c. Artillery Surveillance Reconnaissance and Targeting
- d. Manager Joint Fires; and
- e. Operator Uncrewed Aircraft Systems.

[17] We considered the proposed skill grade adjustments to Artillery Gunner, Artillery Command Systems Operator and Artillery Surveillance Reconnaissance and Targeting employment categories, and the ADF intent to achieve consistency across all categories.<sup>13</sup>

[18] We accept that the disestablished Operator Air and Missile Defence Systems category will be incorporated into the Artillery Surveillance Reconnaissance and Targeting category, expanding that category and including an additional skill grade at the base of each stream *‘to bring like RAA category structures into alignment’*.<sup>14</sup>

[19] We note Army’s intention to *‘retrain the majority of the Light Artillery Gunners to become either Uncrewed Aircraft Systems operators or Artillery Surveillance Reconnaissance and Targeting Operators’*.<sup>15</sup>

[20] We deliberated on the evidence of MAJ Woodhall concerning feedback from members following the communication process. We accept that, for example, while the resultant removal of an employment category number was *‘originally of concern to some soldiers’*, once it was understood their functions would remain unchanged, members were *‘satisfied with that response’*.<sup>16</sup>

[21] In the hearing, the Commonwealth queried any other transition risks and we, along with it, are satisfied with MAJ Woodhall’s evidence that the changes, particularly for the Light Artillery Gunner, are *‘widely accepted’* noting transition has already commenced.<sup>17</sup>

[22] We reviewed the revised training procedures, in light of new equipment, and accept that in future, individuals will be *‘recruited to Artillery and not a particular trade’*. We note that once they get to the School of Artillery, post recruit training, they *‘will be assessed on aptitude, performance and their ability for a particular trade in RAA and be elected to the Artillery stream best suited to the individual’*.<sup>18</sup>

[23] We deliberated on the evidence supporting the development of a skill grade ‘0’ for Reserve members and accept this is designed for *‘soldiers who have completed their recruit training and combat arms training but have not yet completed their applicable initial employment training; and are therefore not yet fully trade qualified’*.<sup>19</sup>

## **Conclusion**

[24] In closing, we accept that the restructure proposal comes at the culmination of significant review. We agree that the modernisation of the categories and the career continuum will likely deliver suitably qualified and experienced personnel to enable Army to better manage and support current and future Artillery capabilities.

[25] We accept the existing Artillery Light Gunner and Operator Air and Missile Defence Systems workforces will transition into revised categories. We note that those members who would lose a pay grade as a result will be afforded non-reduction provisions for up to 5 years to ensure no financial disadvantage through the transition process. We note that the ADF will determine those non-reduction provisions under s.58B of the Act.

[26] We agree to a skill grade placement of ‘0’ at pay grade 1 in GORPS for eligible Reserve soldiers.

[27] Determination 10 of 2024 gives effect to our decision from 5 December 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 Mr P Rudd*

*Mr K Wong* for the Commonwealth *assisted by Mr C Johnson*

### *Witness:*

*Major C Woodhall* Staff Officer Two. Artillery Trade and Training Land Combat College.

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<sup>1</sup> DMR letter BN82991507 Listing Application – Royal Australian Artillery: Restructure of Employment Categories dated 12 June 2024.

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.dfrt.gov.au/matters/royal-australian-artillery-unmanned-aerial-system-and-manager-surveillance-and-target-acquisition>; <https://www.dfrt.gov.au/matters/royal-australian-artillery-offensive-support-employment-categories>; and <https://www.dfrt.gov.au/matters/royal-australian-artillery-operator-air-and-missile-defence-systems>.

<sup>3</sup> Transcript 13 August page 7 lines 11 to 18.

<sup>4</sup> ADF Submission Royal Australian Artillery: Restructure of Employment Categories (ADF1) dated 22 July 2024 pages 1 and 2 paragraphs 1.4 and 1.5.

<sup>5</sup> Affidavit of Major C Woodhall (ADF2) dated 7 August 2024 page 9 paragraph 32.

<sup>6</sup> Transcript page 8 lines 15 to 20.

<sup>7</sup> Commonwealth Submission Royal Australian Artillery: Restructure of Employment Categories (CWLTH1) dated 1 August 2024 page 12 paragraphs 57 and 60.

<sup>8</sup> ADF2 page 6 paragraph 20.

<sup>9</sup> Transcript page 14 lines 36 to 40.

<sup>10</sup> ADF2 page 9 paragraph 34.

<sup>11</sup> Transcript page 16 lines 1 and 2.

<sup>12</sup> ADF1 page 30 paragraphs 4.20 and 4.21.

<sup>13</sup> ADF1 pages 32 to 56.

<sup>14</sup> ADF1 page 28 paragraph 4.11.

<sup>15</sup> ADF2 page 6 paragraph 20.

<sup>16</sup> Transcript page 14 lines 20 to 26.

<sup>17</sup> Transcript page 16 lines 34 to 37.

<sup>18</sup> Transcript page 17 lines 31 to 42.

<sup>19</sup> ADF2 page 9 paragraph 33.