



Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal

DECISION

Defence Act 1903

s.58H—Functions and powers of Tribunal

AIR FORCE: SECURITY FORCES (OTHER RANKS)

(Matter 12 of 2024)

MS B O'NEILL, PRESIDENT

MR A MORRIS, MEMBER

CANBERRA, 8 NOVEMBER 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 the creation of a Security Forces (SECFOR) Other Ranks (OR) workforce as the final phase of Air Force's security workforce modernisation. This matter complements Matter 4 of 2024 – Air Force Security Forces Officer and should be read in conjunction with our decision in that matter.²

Background

[2] Currently the SECFOR OR workforce comprises three separate employment categories: Air Base Protection (ABP), Air Force Security (AFSEC), and Air Defence Guard (ADG) and includes both Permanent and Reserve members. Members provide Force Protection and Protective Security across the National Airbase Network and deployed environments.

[3] We were informed in this matter by an inspection at 2 Security Forces Squadron (2SECFOR) at RAAF Base Amberley on 21 October 2024. We subsequently considered the matter in a hearing at Gallipoli Barracks, Enoggera on 23 October 2024 where Ms K Hagan appeared for the ADF and Mr K Wong for the Commonwealth.

Submissions

ADF

[4] The ADF submit the SECFOR workforce *‘capability and training requirements have evolved in response to shifts in the environment, strategy, priorities, measures and required skill sets’*.³ As a result, Air Force specifically seeks to implement a contemporary workforce to address:

- a. the need for a contemporary structure that better utilises the existing ADG, AFSEC and ABP functions to deliver current and future Force Protection and Protective Security capability outputs;
- b. the need to adjust training and career pathways to ensure they are fit for purpose and support personnel to deliver capability effectively, which includes revision of current content and delivery of training to ensure the workforce is trained and supported to effectively undertake roles required of them;
- c. the need to review the work value delivered by the combined ABP, ADG and AFSEC workforce against the SECFOR roles; and
- d. the need to create an agile workforce with increased opportunities and aligned skill grade advancement to achieve higher levels of job satisfaction and retention.⁴

[5] The ADF submits the proposed introduction of a single SECFOR employment category, with revised training and career continuums, *‘facilitates achievement of skills and delivery of contemporary Air Force Security Forces capability more effectively than the current ABP, AFSEC and ADG construct allows’*.⁵ It states *‘SECFOR capability requires common skill sets and also specific skills that vary across the different environments that SECFOR are employed in. SECFOR will be able to advance in skill and pay grade irrespective of the environment they are employed’*.⁶

[6] Remuneration for the proposed SECFOR includes placement in the Graded Other Ranks Pay Structure between pay grades 1 and 6. The ADF submits this is representative of current remuneration for ABP (pay grades 1 and 2); AFSEC and ADG (2 to 5) with an additional skill grade introduced, with increased pay grade placement, at pay grade 6 at the Manager level.⁷

Commonwealth

[7] The Commonwealth supports the ADF submission, recognising *‘the issues raised with the current Air Force SECFOR workforce, including the inequities between categories disadvantaging personnel from developing unit-required skills and qualifications, or deploying and training in high tempo/low tempo environments’*.⁸

[8] The Commonwealth acknowledges the *'flexibility and sustainability'* of the proposed SECFOR continuum and *'notes the work values assessment provided by the ADF that outlines the increased work value and changing environmental context recognised by the proposed pay grade increase'*.⁹

Witness Evidence

[9] Warrant Officer (WOFF) S Whinfield, Directorate of Security, Air Force Headquarters, provided written and oral evidence in support of the proposition. WOFF Whinfield explained that *'AFSEC represent 65% of the SECFOR workforce'* with *'ADG representing 35%'*. He remarked that *'both AFSEC and ADF have higher than Air Force average separation rates with AFSEC currently considered a 'critical' category'*.¹⁰

[10] WOFF Whinfield outlined how, in 2021, the Chief of Air Force *'directed that RAAF Security required transformation to ensure that security, as a capability, is structured and resourced to deliver the range of security effects required by Air Force operating as part of the Joint Force within the current threat environment'*. WOFF Whinfield explained this *'culminated in the disbandment of 3SECFOR and the restructure of 1SECFOR and 2 SECFOR Squadrons'* in 2023 meaning the *'current disposition of the SECFOR workforce (irrespective of employment category) is spread across these environments'*.¹¹

[11] WOFF Whinfield gave detailed evidence supporting the proposed increased salary placement for SECFOR Managers. He explained that the increase is sought *'to recognise the accumulation of the environmental security skills gained over a career that are now indicative and required for a SECFOR Manager'* while also *'reflective of the future workforce model'*.¹²

[12] In the hearing, WOFF Whinfield explained some limitations of the current model *'when I look at it strategically is that even though we've started drifting across is, to be (for example) a Dog Handler you must be AFSEC, but if I need a Dog Handler in 2SECFOR I have to find an AFSEC person to fill that, and then go and do the training. So that limits who can do it'*. He expanded on this detailing how *'that limits it greatly because we're restrained by "only AFSEC can do this and only ADG can do this"'* explaining *'whereas we need that full spectrum across all the jobs, and we need people to continuously move round, taking their skills with them, and transferring those skills to the location'*.¹³ He further highlighted how Air Force has *'already started blending the roles across'* outlining how *'1SECFOR has a really healthy blend. It's almost 50/50 there. So we've got AFSEC and ADG doing those roles'*.¹⁴

[13] WOFF Whinfield explained how the transition plan had been communicated to the workforce stating that *'engagement of the SECFOR workforce has occurred from the inception of the Air Force Security Transformation. Regular correspondence including email updates, briefs, virtual Q&A sessions, presentation to promotion courses and an extensive visit schedule covering across Australia has occurred'*.¹⁵

Consideration

[14] We considered the evidence that the *‘newly established single pay and career advancement structure for SECFOR will incorporate Force Protection, Protective Security and Ground Combat roles and broadly reflect like capability outcomes of those being replaced’*.¹⁶

[15] We accept that SECFOR members will have common training allowing them to be employed in any SECFOR environment. We note that SECFOR will *‘predominantly operate in two environments that can be characterised by tempo – SECFOR Flights and SECFOR Squadrons’*¹⁷ and that SECFOR will move between these environments during their careers. We accept that SECFOR will be employed in dedicated roles established at Wing and Force Element Group Headquarters, including Advanced Capabilities Security Advisor roles, to provide security governance and advise Unit Commanders.

[16] We acknowledge Air Force assessed work value, complexity, training outcomes and accountabilities of the SECFOR roles and responsibilities to *‘develop the proposed triggers for advancement, skill and remuneration levels’*.¹⁸ We agree to a pay structure where *‘SECFOR pay grade 1 for General Entry Reserve replicates ABP at pay grade 1’* with *‘an increase to pay grade 6 from the current AFSEC and ADG pay grade 2 to 5 placements’*. We agree this represents a *‘net overall increase in work value to current AFSEC and ADG’*.¹⁹

[17] At the same time, we note the evidence of the Nature of Work Assessment conducted by Air Force where the Manager level has been rated at a *‘very high level’* assessed against roles, responsibilities, range of skills, depth of knowledge, range and complexity of actions and the complexity of the environment.²⁰ In that regard, we gave detailed consideration to the evidence of WOFF Whinfield in relation to the differences between and Supervisor and Manager roles and the appropriateness of the pay grade 6 increase for the latter. We accept that *‘a Supervisor is focused on direct supervision of subordinate roles, providing subject matter expert advice to subordinates and recommendations to managers’* whereas a manager *‘focuses on capability planning and advice at the Headquarters level not only supervising elements but also applying strategic understanding in the joint space across the knowledge and skills obtained across a career’*.²¹

[18] We note the *‘strong and proud history’* of each of the previous SECFOR categories and accept the evidence of WOFF Whinfield that this has *‘created some friction’* in the past which has *‘adversely affected our capability, reputation and potential’*. We agree with him that while *‘identity has an important place with the workforce’* the *‘creation of a single category will present a transitional period of challenge for the SECFOR workforce’*.²² We are encouraged by the evidence that members are well informed and have been engaged in the process and appreciate workforce engagement is *‘ongoing’* and that communications *‘include information on training remediation, career pathways and avenues of support’*.²³

Conclusion

[19] In closing, we agree with the ADF that this proposition enhances capability ‘*largely due to career progression that better recognises and aligns with attainment of increased skills and responsibilities*’ and that ‘*greater flexibility and movement between roles will be generated providing improved opportunities for individuals and Air Force*’.²⁴

[20] We agree that combining ABP, AFSEC and ADG into a single agile SECFOR workforce will ‘*facilitate fluidity of movement across the employment categories, which provides career progression and diversification opportunities*’. It will also generate a larger pool of qualified and experienced personnel to select from in order to maintain capability requirements. We agree this will most likely ‘*provide a more robust and flexible workforce, broader career opportunities as well as provide a healthier workforce structure*’.²⁵

[21] Consequently, we agree to the increase of one skill grade and pay grade from the current categories to the SECFOR category and accept these are reflective of the new work value and training outcomes. At the same time, we accept the requirements of a Manager will increase accordingly and agree to an increase to pay grade 6 for Managers.

[22] Determination 12 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 Flight Lieutenant L Hawkett

Mr K Wong for the Commonwealth assisted by Mr C Johnston

Witness:

Warrant Officer S Whinfield, Directorate of Security, Air Force Headquarters.

¹ DMR BN85115686 *Listing Application – Air Force Security Forces (Enlisted) dated 27 August 2024.*

² <https://www.dfrt.gov.au/matters/air-force-security-forces-officer>

³ ADF Submission - Matter 12 of 2024 – Air Force: Security Forces Other Ranks dated 8 October 2024 (ADF1) page 9 paragraph 3.15.

⁴ ADF1 page 12 paragraph 4.1.

⁵ ADF1 page 31 paragraph 6.3.

⁶ ADF1 page 2 paragraph 1.7.

⁷ ADF1 page 2 paragraph 1.6.

⁸ Commonwealth Submission - Air Force: Security Forces Other Ranks dated 11 October 2024 (CWLTH 1) page 10 paragraphs 42 and 43.

⁹ CWLTH1 page 10 paragraph 44.

¹⁰ Affidavit of Warrant Officer S A Whinfield dated 15 October 2024 (ADF2) page 3 paragraph 12.

¹¹ ADF2 page 4 paragraphs 16 to 19.

¹² ADF2 page 9 paragraph 40.

¹³ Transcript 23 October 2024 page 13 lines 9 to 23.

¹⁴ Transcript page 10 lines 28 to 30.

¹⁵ ADF2 page 12 paragraph 50.

¹⁶ ADF1 page 12 paragraph 4.2.

¹⁷ ADF1 page 17 paragraph 4.14.

¹⁸ ADF1 page 22 paragraph 4.27.

¹⁹ ADF1 page 22 paragraph 4.26.

²⁰ ADF1 Annex C Air Force Security Forces Other Ranks – Nature of Work Assessment pages 12 to 15.

²¹ ADF2 page 10 paragraph 41.

²² ADF2 page 12 paragraph 49.

²³ ADF1 page 30 paragraph 5.15.

²⁴ ADF1 page 31 paragraph 6.4.

²⁵ ADF1 page 14 paragraph 4.6.