



Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal

STATEMENT

Defence Act 1903

s.58H—Functions and powers of Tribunal

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY: COMMUNICATIONS AND INFORMATION SYSTEMS

(Matter 14 of 2024)

MS B O'NEILL, PRESIDENT

MAJGEN G FOGARTY AO RETD, MEMBER

CANBERRA, 4 DECEMBER 2024

[1] This statement arises from a listing application¹ from the Australian Defence Force (ADF) seeking to contemporise Navy's Communications and Information Systems (CIS) employment category in response to emerging capability requirements and the changing strategic environment.

[2] We considered this matters on the papers as submitted.

Background

[3] CIS sailors operate the Navy's telecommunications systems using a range of equipment covering the complete span of the communications spectrum. CIS sailors operate and administer a number of Fleet, Local and Wide area information and communications technology networks. There are two streams within the CIS employment category, the CIS Communications (CIS-C) and the CIS Information Systems (CIS-I).

[4] We last dealt with this workforce in Matter 10 of 2020 – Navy: Communications and Information Systems where pay placements for Warrant Officer Information Warfare Advisors were created.² Prior to that, in Matter 11 of 2015 – Navy: Communications and Information Systems – Category Streaming, we accepted the introduction of the two distinct streams for CIS sailors without alteration to any remuneration provisions.³

[5] As a result, all CIS sailors currently enlist as a generalist sailor and undertake foundation postings while classified as skill grade 1. During this time, the career continuum requires a CIS sailor to undertake at least 12 months’ sea service prior to progression to skill grade 2. Then, at skill grade 2, members complete further postings and training in preparation for selected streaming as either CIS-C or CIS-I.

[6] The ADF states this construct is no longer providing the ‘*suitably specialised, qualified and experienced personnel*’ it needs. It proposes to restructure the CIS category to amend how CIS sailors progress through the current continuum. The proposed changes include ‘*enabling the specialisation of personnel into CIS-C or CIS-I stream on enlistment, removing the sea service requirement for advancement to skill grade 2 and permitting earlier progression to skill grade 5 for Petty Officers*’.⁴

[7] The ADF does not seek to introduce changes to remuneration with this proposed amendment although acknowledges ‘*there may be some members who progress more quickly to skill grade 5 than they would have under the extant continuum*’.⁵

[8] The ADF submits it will now specifically:

- a. stream CIS Sailors into CIS-C or CIS-I on enlistment instead of at Skill Grade 3;
- b. replace the sea service requirement for advancement to skill grade 2 with equivalent experience and exposure; and
- c. amend the eligibility requirements to allow for advancement to skill grade 5 to be earlier in the CIS continuum, moving from the rank of Chief Petty Officer to Petty Officer.⁶

[9] It outlines a number of workforce challenges that have contributed to a need to stream CIS sailors from the point of enlistment, rather than waiting until skill grade 3 attainment. We accept those challenges now include the need:

- a. for deeper specialisation and greater role and task experience at all levels;
- b. for greater security and clarity;
- c. for enhanced workgroup modelling;

- d. to expedite training times;
- e. to increase the attractiveness of the CIS role to Information Technology professionals;
- f. to improve preparation for continuation training;
- g. to amend the sea service requirement for advancement to skill grade 2; and
- h. to amend the criteria for advancement to skill grade 5.⁷

[10] The requirement for sea service, established in Matter 10 of 2020, was introduced to encourage personnel to undertake sea service. We accept that attainment of this requirement has become challenging because of *‘training bottlenecks and uncertain platform availability’* thereby delaying sailors from advancing and causing follow-on impacts on skill grade 2. We accept this has resulted in a *‘disenfranchised workforce who perceive themselves to be financially and competitively disadvantage through no fault of their own’*.

[11] Although we accept the advice that the sea service requirement has become *‘excessive and counter-productive’*⁸, we were concerned that *‘substitution of 12 months sea service prior to the awarding of skill grade 2’* will be replaced by the *‘requirement to gain 12 months exposure and experience in a core tactical and technical role and the requirement to complete the CIS continuous professional development program as defined in the CIS employment category Master Career Pathways’*.⁹

[12] We therefore sought further information so as to be assured that the amendment would not compromise the significant work value Navy places on maritime mastery for all other categories. We accept the subsequent advice from Navy that *“for CIS specifically, the tasks required of a Skill Grade 2 are akin to that of a Skill Grade 1 sailor. The difference is that the tasks are undertaken with greater autonomy by a Skill Grade 2 sailor. These tasks are predominantly focussed on Technical Mastery in ashore and sea-going CIS workspaces and therefore there is no negative impact expected with this amendment. Further we accept, ‘sea service can be undertaken at either the Skill Grade 1 or Skill Grade 2 levels and remains a mandatory requirement for advancement’*.¹⁰

[13] We accept that, in reality, the ADF expects its Chief Petty Officers to attain the knowledge, skills and attitudes commensurate with skill grade 5 *‘prior to’* promotion and as a consequence, intends to recognise skill grade 5 at the earlier rank.¹¹

[14] The Commonwealth supports the ADF proposal in its entirety. It states it recognises the issues identified, as well as the restructure, on the basis it is justified and in line with the Defence Strategic Review identified need for robust cyber security, data networks and space capabilities.¹²

[15] We agree that the changes sought by the ADF represent a structural update and amend the way members progress through extant skill and pay grades. We agree these changes result in minor remunerative implications at the Petty Officer rank only. Accordingly, there is no requirement for us to make an amending determination.

[16] We thank the ADF for the written advice of these adjustments which permit us to record the changes for future consideration of the CIS category by this Tribunal.

[17] In our decision in Matter 10 of 2020 we sought a report on the progress of the matter in both 2023 (which was submitted in July 2023) and at the expiration of non-reduction provisions in 2025. The consideration of this submission now supersedes that requirement.

MS B O'NEILL, PRESIDENT
MAJGEN G FOGARTY AO RETD, MEMBER

¹ DMR BN87949504 Listing Application Navy: Communications and Information Systems dated 27 August 2024.

² <https://www.dfrt.gov.au/matters/navy-communications-and-information-systems>

³ <https://www.dfrt.gov.au/matters/navy-communication-and-information-systems>

⁴ ADF Submission Communications and Information Systems Employment Category Contemporisation dated 1 October 2024 page 15 paragraph 5.1.

⁵ ADF Submission page 15 paragraph 5.2.

⁶ ADF Submission page 2 paragraph 1.5.

⁷ ADF Submission pages 7 to 10 paragraphs 4.3 to 4.13.

⁸ ADF Submission page 10 paragraph 4.11 and 4.12.

⁹ ADF Submission page 15 paragraph 5.6.

¹⁰ Hawsett L. (2024) Email to DFRT Advisor of 28 November

¹¹ ADF Submission page 16 paragraph 5.7.

¹² Commonwealth submission Communications and Information Systems Employment Category Contemporisation dated 11 October 2024.