

DEFENCE FORCE REMUNERATION TRIBUNAL

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY

COMBAT SYSTEMS OPERATOR MINE WARFARE

CATEGORY RESTRUCTURE

REASONS FOR DECISION

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) sought a restructure and revised Pay Groups for the Royal Australian Navy (RAN) Combat Systems Operator Mine Warfare (CSOMW) category. Following the hearing on 24 October 2002 the Tribunal approved a revised structure and pay group placements for the CSOMW category. We now publish our reasons for decision.

BACKGROUND

The RAN CSOMW category consists of members who have completed the necessary training to undertake the duties of a CSO on Navy Mine Warfare vessels and related units.

The category has a current strength of 158 billets ranging in rank from Seaman to Warrant Officer. Under the current structure, basic and intermediate skill grades are placed at Pay Group 3 and the advanced skill grade at Pay Group 4.

The CSOMW category performs the following tasks: laying and recovery of sea mines; Mine Counter Measures including mine hunting, mine sweeping and sea route surveillance; the monitoring of surface and air contacts; Electronic Counter Measures; seamanship duties and gunnery.

INSPECTION

The Tribunal visited HMAS WATERHEN in Sydney on 22 August 2002.

During the inspection the Tribunal was briefed by a number of Officers and senior sailors on the duties of the CSOMW category members. The Tribunal also inspected the work of CSOMW sailors on Mine Sweeper Auxiliary (MSA) Broilga and HMAS GASGOYNE, a Mine Hunter Coastal.

THE ADF CLAIM

The structure proposed by the ADF is as follows:

Tier 1	CSOMW Grade 1	Pay Group 3
Tier 2	CSOMW Grade 2	Pay Group 4
Tier 3	CSSMW	Pay Group 5, and
Tier 4	CSMMW	Pay Group 5

SUBMISSIONS AND EVIDENCE

Australian Defence Force

The Defence Force Advocate submitted that the proposed restructure of the category is characterised by the following:

- a four tiered skill structure;
- remuneration levels tied to gained competencies and skill grade attainment;
- an enhanced training programme; and
- recognition of greater levels of skill and responsibility at the intermediate and advanced levels.

It was said that the introduction of the Mine Hunter Coastal (MHC) had significantly changed the nature of employment within the CSOMW category. The MHC is a larger, more complex and far more capable vessel than the Mine Hunter Inshore (MHI). The greater capability of the MHC has allowed Navy to apply a greater focus on the more demanding task of mine hunting, rather than mine sweeping.

It was submitted that the combined effect of the introduction of the MHC and the change of focus to mine hunting is that the category requires a higher standard of operator who has acquired a wider range of competencies on a greater range of sensors and combat systems. The focus on mine hunting has evolved the category from one whose primary task, mine sweeping, involved towing mechanical equipment behind their vessels, setting off or dislocating mines, to now detecting mines by utilising electronic combat systems.

The Defence Force Advocate argued that the category has assumed increased responsibility. A greater general knowledge of naval operations and seagoing duties is now required in order that the tactical information produced may be used effectively. The replacement of two small MHI with six larger MHCs has necessitated a larger number of category members of being capable of operating at a higher level of competency demanded by mine hunting operations.

It was said that the proposed structure and Pay Groups would align the CSOMW category with the related Combat Systems Operator trade. Both categories have been subject to the same influences within the RAN and are focused on multi-skilling and devolution of responsibilities to each level within the categories. Both categories receive similar or the same civil accreditation at the same points within their career progression.

Witness evidence was provided by Captain M S Angus, the Commander Australian Navy Mine Warfare and Clearance Dive Group.

Witness statements were provided by: Lieutenant Commander P W Koerber, the Category Sponsor; Chief Petty Officer J Dodd, Combat Systems Supervisor Mine Warfare and Petty Officer A Sims, Combat Systems Supervisor Mine Warfare.

Commonwealth

The Commonwealth supported the ADF proposed restructure stating that it was consistent with: the ADF Enterprise Productivity Arrangement: 1999 – 2002; the relevant decisions or principles established by the Australian Industrial Relations Commission; and the definitional framework for the Other Ranks pay structure.

Returned and Services League of Australia

Armed Forces Federation of Australia

The Returned and Service League of Australia and the Armed Forces Federation of Australia supported the ADF proposal.

CONSIDERATION

The ADF has sought to introduce a new structure and Pay Groups for the RAN CSOMW category.

The role of the Australian Mine Warfare and Clearance Diving Group is to provide mine warfare and clearance diving capabilities required to fight and win at sea and contribute to military support operations. CSOMW category sailors are the RANs specialist operators of its mine warfare capability.

The Tribunal had the benefit of, and was greatly assisted by comprehensive briefings provided by CSOMW members at HMAS WATERHEN.

Captain M S Angus testified that the Chief of Navy and the Maritime Commander strongly support the proposed structure on the basis that:

- it acknowledges the increased demands in respect of knowledge, skills, training and competencies placed upon CSOMW sailors since the last review of the category;
- it provides a clear and logical career progression which is accompanied by an appropriate and equitable pay structure; and
- it addresses a pay anomaly which exists between the CSOMW and his or her CSO counterpart.

We consider that the changes in skill and responsibility required of members of the CSOMW category are sufficient to justify the restructure. The introduction of the MHC has been the major catalyst for these changes.

The proposed structure will provide appropriate remuneration to reflect current levels of work value and skill development. The structure recognises the evolution that has occurred in CSOMW training courses and that the placement of the tiers accords with points at which there is a significant increase in work value rather than an increase in authority solely through rank.

On the basis of the submissions and evidence the Tribunal approved the new structure and pay group placements as sought by the ADF and agreed by the parties.

APPEARANCES: R Kenzie QC, Defence Force Advocate, with Lieutenant Commander
A Bradshaw, for the Australian Defence Force

M Frawley with L Cullen for the Commonwealth

J Dainer for the Returned and Services League of Australia

G Howatt for the Armed Forces Federation of Australia

DATE AND PLACE OF HEARING:

24 October 2002 Canberra

INSPECTION:

22 August 2002 HMAS WATERHEN, Sydney