

DEFENCE FORCE REMUNERATION TRIBUNAL

AUSTRALIAN ARMY CATERING CORPS TRADE RESTRUCTURE

REASONS FOR DECISION

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) has sought a restructure of the Australian Army Catering Corps (AACC) categories and Determination of new Pay Groups.

The AACC categories consist of approximately 550 Cooks and Stewards employed in postings across Australia. Currently the Cooks have two skill grades at Pay Groups 2 and 3 and Stewards have two skill grades at Pay Groups 1 and 2.

The role of the AACC is to prepare, present and serve meals at fixed installations and on deployment and provide technical advice to Commanders on all catering matters. The AACC is responsible for ordering, receiving, storing, preparing and serving rations.

BACKGROUND

The AACC categories have not been formally reviewed since the Committee of Reference in 1978.

SUBMISSIONS

Australian Defence Force (ADF)

The ADF sought a review of the placement of the AACC categories within the ADF pay structure. It was submitted that the ADF seeks to introduce a revised career structure for the Cooks and Steward categories by providing tiered structures linking increased skill levels and competency attainment to progressive remuneration levels. It was said that the proposal contains elements of both structural efficiency and work value change and provides revised career structures capable of satisfying Army's ongoing catering requirements.

The ADF proposed to replace the two-tiered Cook category structure at Pay Groups 2 and 3 with a five-tiered structure remunerated at Pay Groups 2, 3 and 4 and increase the remuneration levels for the Steward category from the existing Pay Groups 1 and 2 to Pay Groups 2 and 3.

It was submitted that there have been a number of significant changes influencing the current catering levels including the introduction of tri-Service training, outsourcing of certain training elements and aligning military catering skills with those of the broader civilian workforce. Greater emphasis has been placed on hygiene, nutrition, food science and dietary programs.

The introduction of mobile field kitchens powered by various forms of fuel has increased the levels of responsibility and training requirements necessary to operate the more complex equipment and to maintain a large body of troops at peak performance and health levels under challenging environmental conditions. This, it was submitted, has placed much greater demands on the skill and general abilities of Army Cooks and Stewards.

It was said that a large proportion of AACC personnel are posted to Land Command units and, as such, Cooks and Stewards are required to maintain the military skills of unit soldiers whether it be in weapon training, grenade training, parachute training and general fitness requirements.

In relation to the Cook and Steward categories it was submitted that the characteristics of the proposed structures are:

- a tiered structure reflecting the transition from the basic Cook and Steward skill Grade 1 to Cook and Stewards skill Grade 5;
- formalisation of multi-skilling at all levels;
- structured training throughout a members career linking competency attainment with job level and career development requirements;
- recognition of technical and instructional skills;
- the award of civil accreditation; and

- progressive remuneration advancement linked to specific skill grade level.

The ADF also submitted that the Army Trades should be aligned with the Pay Groups for the Navy Cooks and Stewards as determined by the Tribunal in 2002 (Matter 6 of 2002). All Service Cooks and Stewards complete the same Tri-Service training and have the same core competencies. Although the Navy and Army categories have different additional duties and responsibilities they are of similar work value.

In relation to the RAAF Cooks and Stewards the ADF submitted that Air Force is currently reviewing the long term requirement of its catering function but will not be able to propose a likely structure nor identify employment responsibilities until the end of 2003. An Air Force Catering Review is soon to commence.

In regard to implementation, the ADF advised that a board of subject matter experts will assess all category personnel and have competencies assessed, approved and deemed. All personnel who require formal training courses or on-the-job training will be able to complete those competencies within twelve months.

Witness evidence was provided by: Lieutenant Colonel K Schneider, Warrant Officer Class 2 V Ferguson and Warrant Officer Class 1 A E Stow.

The Commonwealth

The Commonwealth supported the proposed structure and pay groups for the AACC categories. It was stated that the witness evidence demonstrated the key aspects of the changes to work value that have occurred over recent years.

The Commonwealth further submitted that the ADF proposal is consistent with the ADF Workplace Remuneration Arrangement: 2002 – 2004 and the relevant principles of the Australian Industrial Relations Commission.

The Armed Forces Federation of Australia

The Armed Forces Federation of Australia supported the structure and pay groups proposed by the ADF.

DECISION

On the basis of the submissions and evidence the Tribunal has decided to introduce the new structure and Pay Groups as sought by the ADF.

The Tribunal considers that the factors which justify the proposed structure include:

- evidence of changes in the nature, skill and responsibility required of the category;
- the tiered structure provides for well defined career progression;
- the changed operational environment; and
- the addition of new skills with the introduction of new equipment.

The Tribunal is also satisfied that the structure proposed is consistent with that for the Navy Supply Cook and Steward Categories approved by the Tribunal in August 2002.

The Tribunal notes that all personnel who require formal training courses or on-the-job training will be able to compete these competencies within twelve months. The ADF should report back to the Tribunal by September 2004 on progress with the reassessment.

The ADF should also provide a progress report on the Air Force Catering Review by November 2004.

As agreed by the parties the date of effect for the new structure and pay groups will be on and from 14 August 2003.

APPEARANCES: Lieutenant Commander A Bradshaw with M Russell for the Australian Defence Force

H Lavey with L Cox for the Commonwealth

G Howatt for the Armed Forces Federation of Australia

DATE AND PLACE OF HEARING:

12 August 2003 Canberra