



Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal

DECISION

Defence Act 1903

s.58H—Functions and powers of Tribunal

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ENGINEERS: SURVEYOR EMPLOYMENT CATEGORY (Matter 11 of 2020)

MS I. ASBURY, PRESIDENT

MR A. MORRIS, MEMBER

RADM J. GOLDRICK AO CSC RAN RTD, MEMBER

CANBERRA, 3 SEPTEMBER 2020

[1] This decision arises from a listing application¹ made by the Australian Defence Force (ADF) under s.58H of the *Defence Act 1903* (the Act) to re-establish an Army surveyor employment category within the Corps of Royal Australian Engineers.

[2] The ADF and Commonwealth both made written submissions in regard to this matter and we considered those on the papers via teleconference on 21 August 2020.

Background

[3] The Royal Australian Survey Corps was disbanded on 1 July 1996 with the force integrated with the Royal Australian Engineers and known as ‘Technician(s) Geomatic’; in 2009 the Technician Geomatic was renamed ‘Geospatial Technician’ to better reflect consistency with other Defence agencies and civilian professional organisations of the time.

[4] Until 2017 the Royal Australian Engineers continued to include the employment category of ‘Geospatial Technician’ with two types of surveying capabilities provided: geospatial surveying and engineering surveying. In 2018 Army elected to move the Geospatial Technician category into

the Electronic Warfare, Intelligence and Communications family. The Corps of Royal Australian Engineers retained the engineering surveying specialisation where the capability is now part of the construction environment.

[5] Of note, the Corps of Australian Engineers also includes the Construction Engineers employment categories which were last considered in Matter 8 of 2019. Our decision on this Matter can be read in conjunction with this decision.²

Submissions

[6] Specifically, the ADF submission seeks to re-establish a dedicated engineering survey employment category that will perform roles and responsibilities associated with engineering surveying. In keeping with its association with construction trades, the category is proposed to be grouped in the Technical engineering family within the Graded Other Ranks Pay Structure (GORPS) with two skill grades: Skill Grade 1 to be known as ‘Engineer Surveyor’ and Skill Grade 2 as ‘Foreman Survey’ at ranks from Private to Corporal.³

[7] The ADF submits that the re-establishment of the surveyor employment category will provide Army with a “dedicated engineering survey capability that enables the ADF to establish, maintain and deliver technical survey control in support of ADF construction works and projects that directly support:

- a. rapid humanitarian assistance and disaster relief operations to Government, both domestically and regionally;
- b. reconstruction effects for long-term stability operations;
- c. post-disaster relief assistance; and
- d. host nation and indigenous building, training, advice and assistance missions for long-term development of regional and international partner forces.⁴

[8] The submission also describes the process whereby the Geospatial Technician category moved to the Intelligence Corps in 2018 while the engineer survey capability remained with the Engineering Corps. It further outlined that, as a result, members who did not elect to transfer have been placed on non-reduction provisions (NRP) while the Surveyor category was established.⁵

[9] The Commonwealth supported the ADF proposal.⁶

Consideration

[10] We considered the evidence that there are “*significant workforce shortfalls affecting engineering surveying capability which will be exacerbated by future capability/establishment reform*” and that “*this is primarily as a result of the current capability structure being managed as a skillset instead of discrete employment category.*”⁷ We accept that the Surveyor category will therefore be “*embedded in the Corps of Royal Australian Engineers and will be a category with its own career pathway.*”⁸ We also considered the evidence that the shortfall “*creates a lack of dedicated category into which Army can directly recruit*” thereby worsening the workforce issue.⁹

[11] We also considered the detailed and distinct roles of Surveyors at the rank levels of Private to Lance Corporal as well as those of the Foreman Survey at the Corporal level and accept the work assessments for both.¹⁰

[12] We accept that as a result of the reorganisation between geospatial and engineer surveyors salary NRP has been provided to affected members under s.58B of the Act since 2018.

[13] With further regard to NRP, our decision in Matter 8 of 2019 required the ADF to return to us to report on progress of NRP “*during the development of any related cases.*” As a result, the ADF provided data to us and we note that 33 members of the Construction Engineers category have remained on NRP since November 2019.¹¹

[14] We note the ADF advice that Engineering surveyor qualified members holding the rank of Sergeant and above will be addressed “*in the near future in a separate but broader Construction Engineer submission*” to be brought before us.¹²

Conclusion

[15] We accept that the re-establishment of the Surveyor employment category will provide Army with a dedicated engineering survey capability that will “*enable the ADF to establish, maintain and deliver technical survey control in support of ADF construction works and projects*”. We agree it creates a “*functional and robust capability that is both complimentary, civilian qualified and job ready for service in construction environments.*”¹³

[16] We agree with the proposal in its entirety and determine that the Survey category be placed within GORPS in two skill grades – Engineer Surveyor (Private to Lance Corporal) at Pay Grade 4 and Foreman Surveyor (Corporal) at Pay Grade 5.

[17] Determination 7 of 2020 will give effect to our decision from 3 October 2020.

MS I. ASBURY, PRESIDENT
MR A. MORRIS, MEMBER
RADM J. GOLDRICK AO CSC RAN RTD, MEMBER

¹ DMR/OUT/2020/09 Listing Application – Royal Australian Engineers – Surveyor Employment Category dated 16 July 2020.

² https://www.dfrt.gov.au/sites/default/files/decision_-_army_construction_engineer_employment_categories.pdf

³ ADF Submission Royal Australian Engineers – Surveyor Employment Category Matter 11 of 2020 undated.

⁴ ADF Submission page 27 paragraph 7.1.

⁵ Administered and set by the ADF under s.58B of the Defence Act 1903.

⁶ Commonwealth submission Matter 11 of 2020 – Army: Royal Australian Engineers – Surveyor Employment Category dated 5 August 2020.

⁷ ADF submission page 16 paragraph 4.11.

⁸ ADF submission page 2 paragraph 1.6.

⁹ ADF submission page 17 paragraph 4.14.

¹⁰ ADF Submission Annexure C.

¹¹ Email Assistant Defence Force Advocate/Tribunal Advisor Matter 11 of 2020 – RAE: Surveyor employment categories 20 August 2020 13:18.

¹² ADF submission page 3 paragraph 1.8.

¹³ ADF submission page 23 paragraph 5.26.