Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal

DECISION

Defence Act 1903
s.58H—Functions and powers of Tribunal

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARMY ORDNANCE CORPS – DISTRIBUTION OPERATOR
(Matter 14 of 2020)

MS I. ASBURY, PRESIDENT

MR A. MORRIS, MEMBER

CANBERRA,12 NOVEMBER 2020

RADM J. GOLDRICK AO CSC RAN RTD, MEMBER

[1]   This decision concerns a listing application[1] for a determination to be made under Section 58H of the *Defence Act 1903* (the Act) to combine the Army Unit Quartermaster and Supply Chain Operator employment categories into a single new category to be titled 'Distribution Operator'.

[2]   In circumstances where the current COVID-19 pandemic limits the capacity of the Tribunal from conducting in-person hearings and with the consent of the parties, we considered this matter, on the papers as submitted, by video conference on 5 November 2020.

Background

[3]   The Unit Quartermaster and Operator Supply Chain employment categories are part of the Royal Australian Army Ordnance Corps and provide logistic supply support. These supply soldiers are multi-skilled and conduct duties relating to supply support, supply systems and unit supply. Their range of tasks include inventory control, warehousing and distribution, supply management processes, equipment non-technical maintenance, corporate governance, procurement and supervision and management of all classes of supply.

Submissions

[4]   Specifically, the ADF seeks to modify the Royal Australian Army Ordnance Corps supply soldier employment categories in order to provide a contemporary distribution workforce. Army proposes to deliver this by:

   a. disestablishing the Unit Quartermaster and Operator Supply Chain employment categories in the Graded Other Ranks Pay Structure (GORPS);

   b. creating a new Distribution Operator employment category with Pay Grades 1 - 4 in the GORPS and Pay Grades 4, 5 and 8 at the Warrant Officer ranks; and

   c. afford non-reduction provisions for personnel as they transfer from the Unit Quartermaster and Operator Supply Chain categories into the new Distribution Operator employment category.[2]

[5]   The Commonwealth is "*supportive of the ADF's proposal and acknowledges the increased flexibility these changes will facilitate.*"[3]

Consideration

[6]   We considered evidence that, since 2018, Army has been undertaking a multi-phase review of all distribution related employment categories through the Distribution Workforce Segment Review. We accept the Review "*assessed the need for flexible workforces that can work in both the traditionally separated 'wholesale' (Operator Supply Chain) and 'retail' (Unit Quartermaster) portions of the Defence supply chain.*"[4] We note the evidence that Army has also reviewed the responsibilities of each rank and "*has identified that some of the responsibilities could no longer be justified at those ranks and were more appropriate at a lower rank without any compromise of integrity.*"[5]

[7]   In reviewing the pay grade placements sought we considered evidence that "*Army requires distribution soldiers that are capable of operating within a convoy construct in an environment of threat and be self-deployable, utilising the efficiencies provided by the new protected modularised vehicle systems.*" We accept that this requirement of distribution soldiers to operate vehicles does not presently exist and that new Army vehicle capabilities will require "*supply soldiers to drive and defend a supply transport vehicle and to work in a wide range of supply environments*" also necessitating the need to obtain licencing and skills mandated by a new fleet of vehicles. Additionally, we accept the workforce must now be able to distribute supplies and operate vehicles with the tactical acumen and operational skills required in threat environments.[6]

[8]   We accept the ADF will establish non-reduction provisions under s.58B of the Act for a period of 24 months to allow time for affected members to transition to the new structure without financial detriment.

Conclusion

[9]   We accept that the modernisation of ADF logistics information systems, along with vehicle fleet modernisation, has resulted in the convergence of supply soldier functions. We agree that the combination of work functions and responsibilities has increased to the point where there are few differences in the work performed by the Unit Quartermaster and Operator Supply Chain categories. We agree that merging the two categories will provide Army with a single contemporary distribution workforce.

[10]   We agree with the ADF proposal to review the implementation of the new category and the transition of the current workforce, and that they provide us with a report back two years from the date of commencement. We also agree with the Commonwealth proposal[7] that this report back not only address an assessment of whether the Distribution Operator category is meeting the expectations of Commanders, but that it also addresses workforce hollowness issues and the impact of a merged workforce on retention and recruitment.

[11]   Determination 8 of 2020 will give effect to these changes from 21 January 2021.[8]

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

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[1] DMR/OUT/2020/26 Listing Application – Army Distribution Operator employment category dated 1 September 2020.

[2] ADF Submission *Army Distribution Operator* Matter 14 of 2020 undated

[3] Commonwealth submission Matter 14 of 2020 Army Distribution Operator dated 23 October 2020.

[4] ADF submission page 12 paragraph 4.3

[5] ADF submission page 13 paragraph 4.6.

[6] ADF Submission page 14 paragraphs 4.14 and 4.15 (e.g. Project Land 400 will modernise Army's Armoured Fighting Vehicle Systems and Infantry Fighting vehicles).

[7] Commonwealth submission page 4 paragraph 20.

[8] Email – J.Levy (Army IR)/K Blazey (Tribunal Secretariat): *Change of effect date* dated 17 November 2020.

Decision – Matter 14 of 2020 – Royal Australian Army Ordnance Corps – Distribution Operator