



Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal

DECISION

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

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY: INFORMATION WARFARE OFFICER (Matter 16 of 2021)

MS I. ASBURY, PRESIDENT

MR A. MORRIS, MEMBER

CANBERRA, 22 DECEMBER 2021

MAJGEN G. FOGARTY AO RETD, MEMBER

[1] This decision arises from a listing application received from the Australian Defence Force (ADF) for a determination to be made under Section 58H of the *Defence Act 1903*. The listing application seeks to create a new employment category within the Navy named ‘Information Warfare Officer’.¹

[2] We considered this matter in a hearing on 2 December 2021 where Mr J. Phillips SC appeared for the ADF and Mr H. Miller for the Commonwealth.

Background

[3] Currently, the Navy workforce delivering information warfare-related capability is derived from officers across various qualifications and specialisations, delivering this capability as a secondary function to their primary qualification or specialisation.

Submissions

ADF

[4] The ADF states that Information Warfare “*has become a pivotal aspect of all modern military operations and that Navy no longer operates exclusively in the maritime domain as it has in the past*”, but is now “*interconnected with other Services, coalition or agency systems, for example, in the information, cyberspace and, more recently, the ‘Space’ domain to be combat effective*”.²

[5] To address this, the ADF seeks to create the Information Warfare Officer (IWO) category in the Graded Officer Pay Structure (GOPS). The ADF submits this will “*consolidate, synchronise and enhance information warfare related capabilities by developing an Information Warfare Officer who understands and leverages the entirety of information warfare-related capabilities*”.³

[6] The ADF proposes a pay grade progression, within GOPS, from pay grades 2 to 8 to be “*consistent with the achievement of other Navy employment categories including the requirement to achieve award of Shore Qualification and Shore Command*”.⁴

Commonwealth

[7] The Commonwealth supports the establishment of the IWO category, believing it will “*provide a unified framework to guide the training, development and organisation necessary to provide the capability effectively*”.⁵

[8] The Commonwealth submission raises the following concerns with the advent of the workforce:

- a. the ‘Warfare Officer Common Training Modules’ that officers will be required to complete are not yet finalised; and
- b. whether current retention challenges will be remediated by the proposal.

[9] The Commonwealth submission seeks “*additional information from the ADF on the likely content of the training modules*” and “*a report back on comparative retention rates in due course*”.⁶

Consideration

[10] We accept that, because personnel from “*a few key employment categories and specialisations*” are performing the roles as a secondary role, this has led to “*perceptions of a lower importance of the information warfare capabilities*”.⁷ We also accept that training for information warfare has not been consistent, requiring members interested in the capability to seek out training opportunities, instead of as part of a defined career continuum.⁸

[11] We considered the evidence that, because officers performing information warfare roles presently belong to other categories, there is an expectation they will follow the career continuum of their primary employment category and Navy will continue to have a liability in filling positions within that category.

[12] We accept Navy intends to reclassify 144 current positions to build the IWO workforce. We acknowledge “*Navy members will apply to transfer to the Information Warfare Officer employment category in what will constitute a unique cohort, identified as ‘Cohort Zero’*”. We recognise this initial transfer will be based on personnel with relevant qualifications and experience who have applied to transfer, and who have been recommended by the IWO ‘Expression of Interest Board’.⁹

[13] We note that this initial IWO workforce, referred to by the ADF as ‘Cohort Zero’, will be drawn from officers from the rank of Sub Lieutenant (O2) to Captain (O6), with primary qualifications such as Maritime Warfare Officers, Maritime Combat Officers and Management Executive officers. We considered the evidence that this will not be a “*sustainable workforce structure*”, and will require growth to achieve a “*healthy IWO workforce over a seven-year timeframe*”¹⁰.

[14] We understand ‘Cohort One’ will commence in 2023 and be recruited through Defence Force Recruiting, as well as via in-Service transfers, sailors commissioning, mid-career engagement and inter-Service transfers.

[15] In the hearing, and in the context of the Commonwealth submission, we raised the issue of how this transition is likely to occur “*without placing additional pressure on at risk and other critical categories, and the Navy’s ability to sustain this workforce*”.¹¹

[16] At the same time, we sought advice on how the workforce links to other initiatives previously addressed by us in relation to the cyber workforce.¹² In this respect, we accept the ADF offer to report back to us with a “*general update for the overall cyber workforce*” in March 2022 and consider this will also address the concerns of the Commonwealth.¹³

Conclusion

[17] We agree that the increasing complexity of information warfare means that Navy needs a specialised workforce, and while to date a disparate workforce has broadly met the capability, it has been with limited effect.

[18] We accept that amalgamating the workforce will enable Navy to optimise the existing expertise with a new specialised workforce. Further, that this workforce is likely to provide “*an intimate understanding of the complexity, relationships and dependencies across areas such as cyberspace into ship, Task Group and Force operations to support Commanders in achieving mission success*”.¹⁴

[19] We agree the new structure will provide a focused and clear career pathway, which is likely to have a positive effect on the retention of highly skilled members who wish to develop their profession in this specialised workforce - as well as provide for a career continuum for officers and sailors.

[20] Lastly, we approve the IWO pay grade progressions, from pay grades 2 to 8, to align with the Maritime Warfare Officer employment category, and with similar employment categories in Army and Air Force.¹⁵

[21] Determination 25 of 2021 will give effect to these changes from 3 March 2022.

MS I. ASBURY, PRESIDENT
MR A. MORRIS, MEMBER
MAJGEN G. FOGARTY AO RETD, MEMBER

Appearances:

Mr J Phillips SC for the ADF assisted by Mr P Blady

Mr H Miller for the Commonwealth assisted by Mr N Doukas.

¹ DMR/OUT/2021/26 Listing Application – *Royal Australian Navy Information Warfare Officer employment category* dated 11 October 2021.

² ADF Submission *Royal Australian Navy Information Warfare Officer employment category* undated (ADF1) page 10 paragraph 4.1.

³ ADF 1 page 43 paragraph 7.1.

⁴ ADF1 page 36 paragraph 6.12.

⁵ Commonwealth submission *Royal Australian Navy Information Warfare Officer Employment Category* dated December 2021 (CWLTH 1) page 9 paragraph 37.

⁶ CWLTH1 pages 9 and 10 paragraphs 41 and 46.

⁷ ADF1 page 12 paragraph 4.14.

⁸ ADF1 page 13 paragraph 4.16.

⁹ ADF 1 Annex C.

¹⁰ ADF1 page 31 paragraph 5.53.

¹¹ Transcript 2 December 2021 page 11 lines 4 to 8.

¹² Matters 12 of 2017 <https://www.dfrt.gov.au/matters/navy-cryptologic-sailors> and 3 of 2019 <https://www.dfrt.gov.au/matters/adf-joint-cyberspace-warfare-employment-categories>.

¹³ Transcript page 12 lines 9 to 12.

¹⁴ ADF1 page 12 paragraph 4.10.

¹⁵ ADF1 page 40 Table 5.