



Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal

DECISION

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

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN NAVY: BOATSWAINS MATE SAILOR (Matter 7 of 2022)

MS I. ASBURY, PRESIDENT

MR A. MORRIS, MEMBER

CANBERRA, 23 SEPTEMBER 2022

MAJGEN G. FOGARTY AO RETD, MEMBER

[1] This decision arises from a listing application received by the Australian Defence Force (ADF) for a determination to be made under Section 58H of the *Defence Act 1903*. The listing application¹ seeks to contemporise the Boatswains Mate workgroup and proposes amendments to select pay grades in recognition of specific skills and responsibilities within the category.

Background

[2] The Boatswains Mate (BM) employment category was established in 1993 when the Quarter Master Gunner, Fire Control, Survival Equipment and Fire Fighting Trades were amalgamated into the one category. BM sailors provide specialist seamanship skills and expertise in boarding operations, force protection, safety and survival at sea, and amphibious and navigation evolutions.

[3] We were informed in this matter by evolutions and demonstrations conducted during a visit to HMAS *Brisbane* on 24 May 2022, where we witnessed the roles and responsibilities of the BM category. We subsequently considered the matter in a hearing on 16 August 2022 where Mr J. Phillips SC appeared for the ADF and Mr N. Doukas for the Commonwealth.

Submissions

[4] As well as seeking pay grade amendments, the ADF submission provides a general update on the BM category including a range of changes to duties, responsibilities, and training, which have occurred since 1993. In order to recognise some of these changes, the ADF specifically seeks to:

- a. increase salary for Leading Seaman (LSBM) skill grade 2 from pay grade 3 to pay grade 4 on attainment of the Landing Helicopter Deck Landing Craft Coxswain qualification;
- b. increase salary for LSBM skill grade 2 from pay grade 3 to pay grade 4 on attainment of the Shipborne Lifesaving Survival Equipment Maintainer and Industrial Sewing Machine and Material Manufacturing qualification;
- c. increase salary for Petty Officer Boatswain (POB) skill grade 3 from pay grade 4 to pay grade 5 on attainment of the Limited Navigation Watch-keeping Certificate qualification;
- d. increase salary for Chief Petty Officer Boatswain (CPOB) skill grade 3 from pay grade 4 to pay grade 5 on attainment of the Limited Navigation Watch-keeping Certificate qualification; and
- e. retain Boatswains Mate Submariner in pay grade 6 (skill grades 1, 2 and 3).²

[5] In reply, the Commonwealth submission acknowledges that the BM workforce has undergone a “*demonstrable organisational shift*” since 1993. Additionally, the Commonwealth submits it “*gave weight to the additional duties, training and accountabilities expected of these specialist BM sailors that the relevant proficiencies enable*” and supports the ADF proposal.³

Consideration

[6] We note that, while the majority of the information in the submission does not link to pay or skill grade progression, it provides us with an understanding of changes to the workforce and contemporary knowledge of the working environment for BM sailors. Our understanding of the critical role and responsibilities of the BM category was significantly aided by our visit in HMAS *Brisbane* and our first-hand observations of the environment where the work is carried out. This experience was most helpful in our deliberations.

[7] We accept the primary roles and responsibilities of the BM category have undergone significant change since 1993 and “*the operating environment has also evolved with advancements in technology, workforce pressures, new military platforms and changed strategy*”.⁴

[8] We agree the entire BM workforce is now a more specialised workgroup, and the requirement to meet professionally assessed standards has resulted in “*a dramatic shift in the employment of a BM sailor from what was a generalist in 1993 to a specialist with numerous fields in 2022*”.⁵ We also note increases in legislative and safety compliance and the resultant complexity of roles and equipment.⁶

[9] We gave particular consideration to evidence pertaining to the increases in pay grades sought, and to the specialist qualifications and requirements, at each role and rank. We note the advice sought by the Commonwealth that the “*training and requirements are not, in of itself, the determinative factor*”. We accept it is not simply the skills acquired that determine the pay placement sought, but also the “*consistent, regular basis*” on which they are being applied.⁷ We accept the pay grade changes impact only 237 members of the 1058 strong BM workforce.⁸

Conclusion

[10] We agree, “*as a consequence of changes in job roles across the BM category, including expectations, and the training continuum some modifications are now required for alignment, consistency and improved career pathways*”.⁹ We agree the increased skill sets, and resultant increase in capability provided by BM specialists, should be specifically recognised, and agree to an advance in pay grade for those members outlined in paragraph 4 above.

[11] Determination 5 of 2022 will give effect to this decision with effect from 7 October 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. Flintoft

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

¹ DMR/OUT/2025/15 *Listing Application – Navy – Boatswains Mate* dated 15 July 2022.

² ADF Submission *Royal Australian Navy Boatswains Mate Sailor Matter 7 of 2002* (ADF1) pages 4 and 5 paragraph 1.7.

³ Commonwealth Submission *Royal Australian Navy Boatswains Mate Sailor Matter 7 of 2022* dated August 2022 page 4 paragraphs 17 and 20.

⁴ ADF1 page 2 paragraph 1.4.

⁵ ADF1 page 8 paragraph 3.2.

⁶ ADF1 Annexure B - *Boatswains Mate Work Value Changes since 1993*.

⁷ Transcript 16 August 2022 page 4 line 43 and page 5 line 24.

⁸ ADF1 page 2 paragraph 1.3 footnote 3.

⁹ ADF1 page 11 paragraph 4.1