



Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal

STATEMENT

Defence Act 1903

s.58H—Functions and powers of Tribunal

AIR FORCE: GROUND SUPPORT EQUIPMENT FITTER TRAINEE (Matter 7 of 2025)

MS B O'NEILL, PRESIDENT

MS A LESTER, MEMBER

CANBERRA, 22 APRIL 2025

MAJGEN G FOGARTY AO RETD, MEMBER

[1] This statement arises from a listing application¹ from the Australian Defence Force (ADF) seeking to provide an alternative progression pathway for Air Force Ground Support Equipment (GSE) fitter trainees. This alternative pathway is designed to alleviate capacity pressures at the Army School of Electrical and Mechanical Engineering (ASEME) and improve retention and capability of trainees.

[2] We considered this matter in conference in Canberra on 10 April 2025.

[3] Air Force GSE fitters are responsible for the maintenance, repair, modification, and testing of GSE and Land Materiel, Aircraft Arrestor Systems and Defence Fuel Installation operations.

[4] The current initial employment training for Air Force GSE fitter trainees is conducted alongside Army Vehicle Technician trainees on a full-time basis at ASEME.

[5] The ADF states that since 2019 the ASEME has experienced capacity constraints for training Army Vehicle Technicians and Air Force GSE Fitters due to a lack of facilities, instructors, training aids, and base services. These constraints have caused delays in commencing initial employment training; impacting motivation and retention of both trainees and staff.²

[6] In 2022, the ADF approached industry to offer solutions to delays occurring at ASEME through a regional training model. In 2023, the Joint Technical Trade Training Services was signed as a joint contract between Navy and Army to deliver technical trade training through a regional trade training trial (RTTT).³

[7] In this matter the ADF does not seek any amendments to established pay grade placements, nor the addition of any further training requirements, although acknowledges *'the remuneration outcome for trainees is that they remain on a trainee salary...for approximately six months longer'*.⁴

[8] The ADF specifically proposes to:

- a. add an alternative progression pathway for Air Force GSE Fitter 1;
- b. add an alternative progression pathway for Air Force Advanced Ground Support Engineering Fitter;
- c. increase the Skill Grade and Pay Grade timeframe of Trainees, Aircraftmen, and Aircraftwomen in the employment category of *GSE Trainee* for an additional six months;
- d. allow Air Force GSE employment category to leverage the existing Army trade training pathway, including contacts and support frameworks; and
- e. align remuneration of Air Force GSE trainees utilising the existing Army trade training pathways with trainees under the existing ASEME training model.⁵

[9] Additionally, these proposed changes will leverage the national training contracts and support frameworks established under the RTTT, and may provide a long-term solution to training constraints across the broader ADF.

[10] The Commonwealth supports the ADF proposal, noting in particular the positive outcome to increase the supply of training and relieve capacity constraints currently delaying progression of GSE members.⁶

[11] The Commonwealth notes the proposal may disadvantage some GSE members by extending their training duration by 6 months, however acknowledges the benefit of an alternative pathway to those GSE members whose training has currently been delayed for 6 months or more.⁷

[12] We accept that this proposal will alleviate capacity pressures at ASEME, which are forecasted to increase with expected growth in the GSE employment category. We note the RTTT was designed with the *intent to establish a permanent alternative training pathway* and that this pathway may address the structural problems of training capacity across the ADF.⁸

[13] We contemplated the causes of the capacity pressures, noting delays are impacting retention and morale for trainers in addition to trainees. We accept the trial of the RTTT shows *management of apprentices in training appears to be operating as intended*,⁹ with the benefits of the pathway acting as *a retention initiative as it allows for the development of new skills and supports members and their families to stay in location for longer*.¹⁰

[14] We agree the introduction of an alternative progression pathway for the GSE employment category will deliver benefits to current and prospective trainees and trainers. The pathway will allow for a GSE capability that is trained, suitably remunerated at the trainee level, and is able to respond to workforce requirements via two equitable training options – the ASEME model and the RTTT model.

[15] There is no determination required in this matter.

MS B O'NEILL, PRESIDENT

MS A LESTER, MEMBER

MAJGEN G FOGARTY AO RETD, MEMBER

¹ DMR BN97619201 Listing Application: Air Force Ground Support Equipment Fitter Trainee dated 12 March 2025.

² Matter 7 of 2025, ADF submission, paragraph 2.5.

³ Matter 7 of 2025, ADF submission, paragraphs 2.6, 2.7.

⁴ Matter 7 of 2025, ADF submission, paragraph 1.7.

⁵ Matter 7 of 2025, ADF submission, paragraph 4.2.

⁶ Matter 7 of 2025, Commonwealth submission, paragraph 25.

⁷ Matter 7 of 2025, Commonwealth submission, paragraph 28.

⁸ Matter 7 of 2025, ADF submission, paragraph 4.4, 4.6.

⁹ Matter 7 of 2025, ADF submission, paragraph 2.7.

¹⁰ Matter 7 of 2025, ADF submission, paragraph 4.4.