



# Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal

## DECISION

*Defence Act 1903*

s.58H—Functions and powers of Tribunal

### NAVAL POLICE COXSWAIN OFFICER

(Matter 6 of 2025)

MS B O'NEILL, PRESIDENT

MS A LESTER, MEMBER

CANBERRA, 09 MAY 2025

MAJGEN G FOGARTY AO RETD, MEMBER

[1] This decision arises from a listing application from the Australian Defence Force (ADF) for a determination to be made under Section 58H of the *Defence Act 1903* (the Act). The listing application seeks to restructure the Naval Police Coxswain Officer (NPCO) employment category to introduce additional pay grades, align with the other Services, and recognise the development of the role beyond general security matters.<sup>1</sup>

[2] We considered this matter at a hearing on 10 April 2025. Ms K Hagan appeared for the ADF and Mr K Wong for the Commonwealth. Captain (CAPT) M Nipperess RAN, Director of Security, Service Executive Security Advisor, and Head of Profession for Policing and Security, gave evidence for the ADF.

### Background

[3] The NPCO employment category is responsible for providing a broad range of policing and security capabilities to the Navy and the wider ADF. NPCOs lead the policing function within Navy, and work with Air Force, Army and civilian teams to investigate offences, manage

discipline and maintain security in both sea and shore units. NPCO members have similar training and skill sets to Army Military Police Officers and Air Force Security Forces Officers.

[4] The NPCO employment category is a small workgroup with 27 positions, 25 of which are currently filled.

## **Submissions**

### **ADF**

[5] The ADF submits the NPCO role has expanded significantly and now includes intelligence and specialist roles, in addition to front line military policing. As a result, the ADF proposes to introduce additional pay grade placements within the NPCO employment category to reflect a considerable change in role and scope of responsibilities, and to provide increased alignment across the three Services for joint policing and security positions.

[6] Specifically, the ADF seeks to:

- a. establish additional pay grades of 3 to 5 in the Graded Officer Pay Structure (GOPS); and
- b. restructure the NPCO employment category against Navy Mastery Stages<sup>2</sup>.

[7] The ADF notes the proposal would move the bulk of the current workforce to Pay Grade 3 immediately and provide progression recognition as members move through Navy's Mastery Stages, creating a more sustainable employment category<sup>3</sup>.

[8] The ADF submits workforce challenges, including lack of pay progression within the NPCO employment category, have contributed to personnel separating to pursue commercial careers, with seven members ceasing full time service since 2021.<sup>4</sup>

[9] The ADF states the proposed remuneration structure will allow for trainees to receive pay grade 2 and foundation members who have completed primary qualifications to receive pay grade 3. Members will then continue incrementally through to pay grade 5 as skills and experience are gained.

[10] The ADF states non-reduction provisions are sought for a 5 year period so as '*to provide sufficient time for individuals to meet the revised NPCO employment category requirements*'.<sup>5</sup>

### **Commonwealth**

[11] The Commonwealth does not oppose the ADF submission, noting '*this is the first review of the NPCO employment category since its initial pay placement in the GOPS in 2007*'.<sup>6</sup>

[12] The Commonwealth acknowledges that changes to the NPCO employment category over recent years have expanded the work value of the role, and notes the forecasted growth and demand of members' capability<sup>7</sup>.

[13] The Commonwealth supports the seeking of *‘remuneration parity between the Services where work value is similar, and the adoption of the Navy Mastery Principles to provide greater career transparency and align management within the service’*.<sup>8</sup>

#### **Witness Evidence**

[14] CAPT M Nipperess provided written and oral evidence in support of the proposal. He outlined how the NPCO role delivers *‘the necessary policing, security, and humanitarian services to the ADF that contribute to military effectiveness domestically and internationally in operational environments’*.<sup>9</sup> He noted that the establishment of the Joint Military Policing Unit (JMPU) in 2020 *‘was a shift for the NPCO cohort who, up until this time, had been predominately employed in the security sphere of operations and in a minor sense the management of discipline and policing functions’*.<sup>10</sup>

[15] CAPT Nipperess detailed more recent changes in the strategic environment requiring *‘an expansion of the NPCO role and this will continue into the future. In addition to the policing domain, the NPCO has evolved in the security domain from a security practitioner to a subject matter expert’*.<sup>11</sup>

[16] CAPT Nipperess also gave evidence that NPCO members will be intrinsic to the success of the AUKUS arrangements noting *‘there are newly established NPCO positions in relation to AUKUS, such as one within the Australian Submarine Agency’* and that *‘NPCO positions are already established within the newly formed Naval Force Protections Bureau to ensure the security of nuclear assets, and the inherent security and police responses to these strategic developments’*.<sup>12</sup>

[17] CAPT Nipperess explained the misalignment of the NPCO category with the other Services, detailing how Basic, Intermediate and Advanced Military Police Courses are undertaken by all Services, however *‘with the exception of NPCO posted to recognised Charge and Command appointments, NPCO remain on Pay Grade 2 for their entire career, whereas this pay grade placement is a baseline salary for Army and Air Force counterparts following completion of initial training’*.<sup>13</sup>

[18] He outlined what he perceived to be the benefits of the proposal, including improved retention, enhanced recruitment, enhanced operational effectiveness and equity across the services. Adding that *‘the proposition also seeks to modernise the NPCO continuum and introduces the Navy Mastery stages of Foundation, Intermediate, Advanced and Master. These Mastery stages provide members with visibility and transparency requirements for career progression with the intent of allowing Navy to assist members in having longer and more fulfilling careers’*.<sup>14</sup>

## Consideration

We conducted our deliberations cognisant of the *Navy Policing and Security: Future Workforce Requirements* workforce review completed in 2021 which identified ‘a lack of sustainment to Navy, Maritime and Joint Security and Policing outcomes by the Naval Police Coxswain workforce, due to low attraction to the roles, an ageing workforce and growing mid rank hollowness.’<sup>15</sup>

[19] We accept the NPCO employment category is one of the few Navy workgroups that have not been reviewed since the introduction of the GOPS in 2007 and note that, at the time, the structure did not allow for additional qualifications or specialist pay points. We accept this means that the NPCO employment category is currently excluded from pay grade advancement with NPCOs remaining on pay grade 2 for their entire career unless they attain Charge or Command positions.

[20] It is clear the strategic environment within which the NPCOs operate has expanded, and we accept that ‘this security environment is markedly different than previously, which requires a fundamentally new approach to Australia’s defence – one that leverages and coordinates all arms of national power to achieve an integrated approach to Australia’s national security.’<sup>16</sup>

[21] In this regard, we note the creation of the JMPU and consider the resultant effects to both the numbers of NPCO members needed, and the uplift in required training, skills and experience in these roles. We further note NPCO members are expected to contribute to activities with Navy’s surface combatant fleet upgrade, within select aspects of the AUKUS agreement, and take on increasing demands to lead emergency and incident management, and humanitarian situations. We acknowledge ‘Navy intends to enhance and professionalise policing and security effects to the Navy and Joint Force using the Defence Security Principles Framework. This will ensure Navy meets the requirements of seaworthiness, alongside force protections, combat and maritime policing.’<sup>17</sup>

[22] We acknowledge the proposed restructure aligns with Navy’s Mastery Principles and the NPCO Mastery Career Profile. We accept this alignment will generate ‘suitably qualified and experienced NPCOs through improved career transparency’ and that ‘Navy aims to provide longer, more fulfilling careers that tailor to individual strengths, preferences and career stages’.<sup>18</sup>

[23] In the hearing we sought clarification of the training undertaken by NPCO members and their Air Force and Army counterparts. We accept the evidence of CAPT Nipperess confirming the exact same military police training is completed by all Services. He agreed NPCO members are currently demonstrating work value equivalent to their counterparts, but not being recognised.

[24] We accept this evidence is likely to lead to NPCO members being frustrated in situations where, for example, they are posted to the JMPU on pay grade 2 and work with Air Force and Army counterparts who receive pay grade 5. Like the Commonwealth, we ‘support attempts to seek remunerative parity with Service equivalent categories where work value is similar’.<sup>19</sup>

[25] In the hearing we sought advice on any consideration given to external relativities for the workforce with civilian policing structures and paygrades. We accept the response that for this employment class the work value focus has been primarily on internal relativities across the Services and *‘the focus has really been about bringing [NPCOs] up to their Army and Air Force counterparts’*.<sup>20</sup>

[26] Whilst we consider workforce expectations to be a matter for the ADF, we note the evidence that workforce feedback has been extremely positive, especially in regard to the proposed use of the Navy Mastery Stages.<sup>21</sup>

## **Conclusion**

[27] In closing, we agree the work value of NPCO members has increased and should be recognised by modernisation of the category, which will be achieved by this proposal to offer six pay grades across seven ranks and career stages, aligned with the Navy Mastery Stages.

[28] We accept the NPCO workforce will transition to the restructured employment category from Q1 of 2025 with all individuals transitioning to the pay grade appropriate to their currently held qualifications, skills and experience. We note members will be provided with non-reduction provisions, where required, for a period of five years.

[29] Determination 6 of 2025 gives effect to our decision from 1 August 2025.

MS B O’NEILL, PRESIDENT  
MS A LESTER, MEMBER  
MAJGEN G FOGARTY AO RETD, MEMBER

### *Appearances:*

*Ms K Hagan for the ADF assisted by Flight Lieutenant L Hawkett*

*Mr K Wong for the Commonwealth assisted by Mr C Johnson*

### *Witness:*

*Captain M Nipperess, Director of Security, Directorate of Policing and Security - Navy.*

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- <sup>1</sup> DMR BN97617012 Listing Application: Naval Police Coxswain Officer dated 12 March 2025
- <sup>2</sup> Navy Mastery Stages are a component of the Navy Mastery System used to generate suitably qualified and experienced personnel. This is comprised of avenues of development across Maritime, Technical and Social Mastery.
- <sup>3</sup> Transcript 10 April 2025 page 3 lines 31-34.
- <sup>4</sup> ADF Submission Matter 6 of 2025 Naval Police Coxswain Officer dated 25 March 2025 (ADF1) page 13 paragraph 4.14
- <sup>5</sup> ADF 1. page 26 paragraph 6.6
- <sup>6</sup> Commonwealth Submission Matter 6 of 2025 Naval Police Coxswain Officer dated 1 April 2025 (CWLTH1) page 5 paragraph 27
- <sup>7</sup> CWLTH1 page 5 paragraph 27 and transcript page 5 lines 16-17
- <sup>8</sup> CWLTH 1 page 6 paragraph 28
- <sup>9</sup> Affidavit of Captain M Nipperess RAN dated 1 April 2025 (ADF2) page 2 paragraph 7
- <sup>10</sup> ADF2 page 3 paragraph 11
- <sup>11</sup> ADF2 page 3 paragraph 12
- <sup>12</sup> ADF2 page 3 paragraph 14
- <sup>13</sup> ADF2 page 5 paragraph 25
- <sup>14</sup> ADF2 page 6 paragraph 25
- <sup>15</sup> ADF1 page 10 paragraph 4.2
- <sup>16</sup> ADF1 page 11 paragraph 4.5
- <sup>17</sup> ADF1 page 11 paragraph 4.5-4.7 and page 13 paragraph 4.12
- <sup>18</sup> ADF1 page 20 paragraph 5.4
- <sup>19</sup> Transcript page 5 lines 13-14
- <sup>20</sup> Transcript page 18 lines 43-44
- <sup>21</sup> Transcript page 14 lines 1-4