



# Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal

## STATEMENT

*Defence Act 1903*

s.58H—Functions and powers of Tribunal

### **NAVY CLEARANCE DIVERS**

(Matter 10 of 2025)

MS B O'NEILL, PRESIDENT

MS A LESTER, MEMBER

CANBERRA, 03 JUNE 2025

MAJGEN G FOGARTY AO RETD, MEMBER

[1] This statement arises from a listing application<sup>1</sup> from the Australian Defence Force (ADF) seeking to provide technical specification for Advanced Clearance Divers (ACDs). This proposal is designed to rectify the overtraining of ACDs, alleviate significant workforce shortages, provide enhanced technical capability, and improve retention in the Petty Officer rank and beyond.

[2] We considered this matter on the papers in May 2025.

[3] The Navy Clearance Diving employment category is a specialist category within the Graded Other Ranks Pay Structure (GORPS) responsible for delivering underwater services in three separate Force Elements:

1. Maritime Explosive Ordinance Disposal;
2. Expeditionary Reconnaissance and Clearance; and,
3. Underwater Damage Repair.

[4] At present, all ACDs are trained and qualified to be a supervisor in all three Force Elements, however are employed in only one of these activities.<sup>2</sup>

[5] The ADF states that the inefficiencies in this training model result in significant training delays and workforce shortages, and increase the risk of the employment category not meeting its capability requirements. The inefficiency of requiring all ACDs to complete an intensive 45 week course covering all three Force Elements is further highlighted by the high discharge rate in this employment category, due to the physically arduous nature of the training and employment activities.<sup>3</sup>

[6] The proposal amends the ACD career pathway, allowing for training, qualification, and specialisation in only one of the three Force Elements. This alteration will result in significantly reduced training times and is expected to enhance capability within the employment category.<sup>4</sup>

[7] The ADF specifically proposes to:

- a) Introduce technical specialisation at the ACD mastery level (Clearance Diver Grade 3) which will result in changes to the training continuum. The ACD will be trained and employed in one of the three existing employment areas of Maritime Explosive Ordinance Disposal, Expeditionary Reconnaissance and Clearance, and Underwater Damage Repair; and
- b) Continue to remunerate the ACD at the extant pay placement of Pay Grade 8 in the GORPS for an ACD (Clearance Diver Grade 3)<sup>5</sup>.

[8] The ADF proposition has no impact on pay structures or rates and will not require a determination. Additionally, no organisational restructure, new roles or new positions are required.

[9] The Commonwealth supports the ADF proposal, noting in particular the reduced training burden, and expected easing of workforce shortages. The Commonwealth further notes that Navy Career Management may be required to manage member preferences to ensure appropriate supply across the three Force Elements.<sup>6</sup>

[10] We accept the reduction in training time from 45 weeks to less than 20 weeks will reduce the training burden placed upon the Training Authority Maritime Warfare. This reduction will deliver benefits to prospective trainees and trainers by providing improved learning outcomes, allowing a return to the workforce sooner, and may address retention concerns.

[11] We note the advancements in technical complexity of diving equipment and systems since our consideration of Matter 13 of 2002 – Clearance Diver<sup>7</sup>, and the further capability growth required to support nuclear powered submarines under Pillar One of the AUKUS agreement.<sup>8</sup>

[12] We accept *'the complexity of each Force Element is such that the ACD can no longer maintain the depth of knowledge and required level of licensing and/or currency'* in all three specialisations.<sup>9</sup> The proposed pathway will allow for an ACD capability that is appropriately specialised and *is in accordance with Navy Mastery principles and aligns the clearance diver employment category with Navy's Mastery approach to management of its workforce'*.<sup>10</sup>

[13] We note the proposal is cost neutral, with no new skill grades or pay grades needed. The amended career pathway will be reflected in the Clearance Diver Mastery Career Pathway suite of documents.

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

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

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<sup>1</sup> DMR BN100420831 Listing Application: Navy Clearance Divers dated 17 April 2025

<sup>2</sup> ADF submission "Royal Australian Navy Clearance Divers" filed 13 May 2025, paragraph 1.1

<sup>3</sup> ADF submission, paragraphs 1.2, 1.3

<sup>4</sup> ADF submission, paragraph 1.4

<sup>5</sup> ADF submission, paragraph 1.7

<sup>6</sup> Commonwealth Submission "Royal Australian Navy Clearance Divers" filed 16 May 2025, paragraph 23

<sup>7</sup> Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal Matter 13 of 2002 – Clearance Diver.

<sup>8</sup> ADF submission, paragraphs 3.13-3.15

<sup>9</sup> ADF submission, paragraph 7.1

<sup>10</sup> ADF submission, paragraph 6.1