



Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal

DECISION

Defence Act 1903

s.58H—Functions and powers of Tribunal

AIR FORCE: AERONAUTICAL LIFE SUPPORT TECHNICIAN

(Matter 9 of 2025)

MS B O'NEILL, PRESIDENT

MS A LESTER, MEMBER

CANBERRA, 28 JULY 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 application¹ seeks to contemporise the nomenclature and salary placement of Air Force's Aeronautical Life Support Fitter (ALSFITT) employment category within the Graded Other Ranks Pay Structure (GORPS).

[2] We considered this matter in a hearing on 11 June 2025. Ms K Hagan appeared for the ADF and Mr K Wong for the Commonwealth. Flight Sergeant Kurush Bilimoria, of the 1st Aviation Regiment, gave evidence for the ADF.

Background

[3] The ALSFITT employment category is responsible for maintaining, repairing, installing and fitting the ADF's aeronautical life support equipment and safety systems, and conducting aircrew and passenger training on the proper use of this equipment. It is paramount that ALSFITT personnel achieve and maintain a high level of technical expertise and attention to detail in this critical safety role, which maintains operational readiness and mission capability across the ADF.²

[4] The Tribunal has considered aspects of the ALSFITT employment category previously, most recently in Matter 14 of 2022 - *Air Force: Technical/Engineering Workforce Leading Aircraftman/Leading Aircraftwoman Supervisor*, wherein the work value and evolution of responsibilities were reassessed, and the differences between ‘technical supervision’ and ‘military supervision’ were acknowledged.³

[5] ALSFITT personnel were included in the single pay grade uplift for employment categories identified in Matter 4 of 2025 - *Targeted Workforce Segments*.⁴ However, this inclusion ‘*did not involve any analysis or consideration of the increased work value and modernisation of the ALSFITT employment category in terms of more traditional work value concepts such as changes in capability, increased range or complexity of skills, or qualifications required.*’⁵

Submissions

ADF

[6] The ADF submission details significant changes to the nature, scope and complexity of ALSFITT duties, and the current misalignment of salary with other Aviation Technician personnel. It outlines an increase in work value and recognises that the training package undertaken by ALSFITT personnel was upgraded in 2021 to an Australian Qualification Framework (AQF) Level 4. This upgrade provides trained ALSFITT personnel with a Certificate IV in Aeronautical Life Support Equipment.⁶

[7] The ADF submits this recognition allows ALSFITT Warrant Officers to be eligible for competitive selection for Warrant Officer Engineering (WOE). However, due to limitations within the existing salary structure of the ALSFITT employment category, no extant WOE skill grade exists. Therefore, remuneration at pay grade 9, in alignment with all other competitively selected WOEs, is not possible for ALSFITT personnel.⁷

[8] The ADF submits that new technologies such as modern aircraft platforms, Helmet Mounted Display Systems, and combat survival radios have ‘*significantly increased the complexity of aircraft system understanding, test procedures, fault-finding, trouble shooting and maintenance skills*’ required of ALSFITT personnel.⁸ The broader skill set required of ALSFITT personnel has resulted in supervisors and managers being responsible for multiple teams and trades. The ADF states these additional skill sets are addressed in the current training package, which qualifies ALSFITT personnel to receive skill grades aligned with other Air Force Aviation technical categories.⁹

[9] The ADF specifically seeks to:

- a. change the employment category name from Air Force Aeronautical Life Support Fitter (ALSFITT) to Aeronautical Life Support Technician (ALSTECH);
- b. update the skill grade name from Advanced ALSFITT to Advanced ALSTECH;
- c. increase pay grades by one for three specific skill grades, to align with other Air Force Aviation Technical Trades;

- d. create the skill grade of ALSFITT 2 and have a pay placement at pay grade 5; and
- e. create the skill grade ALSTECH Warrant Officer Engineer and have a pay placement at pay grade 9.

Commonwealth

[10] The Commonwealth supports the application, recognising the benefits *‘in aligning ALSFITT skill grade structures and pay with other Air Force Aviation trades, and ensuring consistent remuneration across Warrant Officer Engineering roles.’*¹⁰

[11] The Commonwealth also notes the application will result in 56 ALSFITT personnel moving to new skill grades with the majority of personnel to receive an increase in pay. No personnel will experience a decrease in pay.¹¹

Witness Evidence

[12] Flight Sergeant (FSGT) K Bilimoria, of the 1st Aviation Regiment, provided written and oral evidence for the ADF in support of the proposal. He outlined the evolution of the employment category, noting its transition to a self-sufficient, technically apt workforce, responsible for diagnosing and rectifying defects in technologically advanced equipment.¹² Additionally, he provided a briefing to the Tribunal members who visited No 1 Squadron at Air Force Base Amberley in 2024.

[13] FSGT Bilimoria detailed the *‘massive shift in what is expected’* of supervisors and managers in the ALSFITT employment category.¹³ He explained the increased responsibilities and delegations, noting in some instances these are more numerous than responsibilities of his peers in other Aviation and Avionics fields.¹⁴ He elaborated on his own experiences, noting *‘I didn’t think that when I got to the rank of Flight Sergeant I’d be looking after five trades, let alone five trades between two services.’*¹⁵

[14] FSGT Bilimoria attested to the fresh sense of purpose felt by ALSFITT personnel when their increased capability, and the importance of the role, was acknowledged by the introduction of a Certificate IV in Aeronautical Life Support Equipment being awarded as part of their training.¹⁶

[15] FSGT Bilimoria gave evidence of feelings of frustration within the ALSFITT workforce, stemming from pay discrepancies between ALSFITT personnel and the rest of the Air Force Aviation technical trades. He explained *‘the majority of us thought that it would have been just automated that a pay alignment and pay increase sort of came shortly after that Certificate IV’.*¹⁷ He elaborated *‘We’re executing roles that were once outside of our scope. We’re doing that more and more as days go on and in some instances matching or exceeding our peers doing the same, similar roles, but [they] are being remunerated appropriately...’.*¹⁸

Consideration

[16] We conducted our deliberations cognisant of the *2020 Defence Strategic Update* which identified Australia's need for a '*robust and resilient defence industrial base with a more integrated approach to sovereign maintenance capabilities*'.¹⁹

[17] We agree with the proposals designed to contemporise nomenclature to align with all other Air Force Aviation Technical Trades. Firstly by replacing the employment category name of Aeronautical Life Support *Fitter* with Aeronautical Life Support *Technician*, and secondly, by replacing the skill grade name of Advanced Aeronautical Life Support *Fitter* with Aeronautical Life Support *Technician*. We accept these changes are in recognition of personnel attaining AQF Level 4, in addition to the desire for alignment, and '*will lead to improved morale and retention as [personnel] will feel more integrated and connected to the larger Air Force aviation technical community*'.²⁰

[18] It is clear there has been an increase in work value and output within the employment category, as ALSFITT personnel now provide and maintain all aeronautical life support equipment and functions for the entire ADF. We accept these changes '*have introduced new procedures and increased the range and complexity of tasks for the ALSFITT employment category*'²¹ and that the workforce '*has developed a higher level of skill, technical authority and expertise*'²² which has not yet been acknowledged by in an increase in remuneration.

[19] We acknowledge the evidence of FSGT Bilimoria in relation to the misalignment of salary, and accept this is likely to lead to frustration, job dissatisfaction, lack of motivation and potentially retention issues, within the employment category. We note the employment category currently enjoys healthy numbers, in part due to retention bonuses and the recent Targeted Workforce Segments pay case, and expect this proposal to assist with morale, recruitment and retention efforts.²³

[20] We accept that the two new proposed skill grades are needed for consistency and alignment with all other Air Force Aviation Technician trade employment categories. We agree the anticipated ALSFITT 2 at pay grade 5 provides a logical skill and pay step between ALSFITT1 at pay grade 4, and ALSTECH, now to be remunerated at pay grade 6.

[21] Similarly, we recognise the need for extension of the employment category to include the skill grade ALSTECHMGR – WOE, to be remunerated at pay grade 9. Creation of this skill grade will assist ALSTECHMGR personnel to be competitive for selection as a WOE, and ensure any personnel selected will be appropriately remunerated.

Conclusion

[22] In closing we agree that the proposal suitably reflects the increased work value and output of the employment category. It establishes appropriate remuneration structures to better recognise the skill sets, qualifications, and responsibilities of aeronautical life support personnel at all levels, and align these with other Air Force Technical Trades.

[23] We accept the protocols to be followed for implementation and communication of the proposed changes, noting all personnel will be informed of their current skill grade and what is required for progression to the next skill grade. We note that no personnel will experience a negative salary impact.

[24] We note that the ADF intends to provide us with a review of the success of the implementation of the amending determination within two years of its commencement.

[25] Determination 8 of 2025 gives effect to our decision from 14 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 Ms T Karacic

Witness:

Flight Sergeant Kurush Bilimoria, 1st Aviation Regiment, Robertson Barracks.

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- ¹ BN94540910 *Listing Application Air Force: Aeronautical Life Support Fitter* dated 17 April 2025
- ² ADF Submission *Matter 9 of 2025 Air Force: Aeronautical Life Support Technician* dated 16 May 2025 (ADF1) page 5, paragraphs 1.1 and 1.2
- ³ [DFRT Matter 14 of 2022](#)
- ⁴ [DFRT Matter 4 of 2025](#)
- ⁵ ADF 1 page 11, paragraph 2.10
- ⁶ ADF 1 page 20, paragraph 4.11
- ⁷ ADF 1, page 24, paragraph 4.22
- ⁸ ADF 1 pages 18-19, paragraphs 4.3-4.6
- ⁹ ADF 1 pages 20-21, paragraphs 4.9-4.17
- ¹⁰ Commonwealth Submission *Matter 9 of 2025 Air Force: Aeronautical Life Support Technician* dated 30 May 2025 (Comm 1) page 6, paragraph 28
- ¹¹ Comm 1, page 6, paragraph 30
- ¹² Affidavit of FSGT Kurush Bilimoria dated 29 May 2025, (ADF2) page 6 paragraph 23
- ¹³ Transcript page 14, line 41
- ¹⁴ Transcript page 15, lines 13-16
- ¹⁵ Transcript page 15, lines 18-20
- ¹⁶ ADF 2, page 6, paragraph 24
- ¹⁷ Transcript page 16, lines 6-8
- ¹⁸ Transcript page 16, lines 11-15
- ¹⁹ [2020 Defence Strategic Update | About | Defence](#)
- ²⁰ ADF 1, page 28, paragraph 5.4
- ²¹ ADF 1, page 13, paragraph 3.2
- ²² ADF 1, page 13, paragraph 3.3
- ²³ ADF 2, page 9, paragraphs 32-34