



Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal

STATEMENT

Defence Act 1903

s.58H—Functions and powers of Tribunal

AIR FORCE: OFFICER AVIATION PAY STRUCTURE – FINAL REPORT BACK

(Matter 20 of 2025)

MS B O'NEILL, PRESIDENT

MS A LESTER, MEMBER

CANBERRA, 21 JANUARY 2026

MAJGEN G FOGARTY AO RETD, MEMBER

[1] This decision arises from the requirement, set by this Tribunal in Matter 5 of 2016¹, for the Australian Defence Force (ADF) to report back on the progress of the establishment and implementation of the Air Force Officer Aviation Pay Structure (OAPS). This report back statement should be read in conjunction with our decision in that matter and the interim report back².

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

[3] The OAPS commenced on 7 March 2018 and introduced a single salary spine of 38 increments with multiple differentiated competency streams. It established a flexible transfer protocol between the established Specialist, Command and Staff pathways, and supported an aligned Human Resource (HR) strategy.

[4] The report back performance indicators proposed by the ADF may be summarised as the 'transition status' and the 'overall health' of the Officer Aviation workforce since the establishment and implementation of the OAPS.

Interim Report Back – April 2021

[5] The interim report noted several anticipated challenges with the implementation of the OAPS and also raised some unexpected concerns. Workforce transition from legacy pay systems to OAPS, and salary placements along the new spine, provided anticipated difficulties. Unexpected issues became apparent with the discovery of an Officer Aviation Remuneration Structure (OARS) allowance oversight³.

[6] The ADF provided evidence of dissatisfaction with OAPS by senior members who had a previous legacy entitlement to Pilot equivalent placements. Conversely, positive feedback was received by younger members across all Officer Aviation streams, who appreciated the clarity and flexibility of OAPS and the aligned HR strategy⁴.

Current Report Back – December 2025

Performance Indicators – Transition Status

[7] The ADF advises the OAPS HR reform and transition has progressed as intended⁵.

[8] The ADF advises that out of 2,556 members in the permanent and reserve Officer Aviation workforce, only 27 are yet to transition to the OAPS. Of these 27 members, 23 are on track to transition by 2027 in accordance with the original schedule⁶.

[9] We accept the four remaining members are experiencing unexpected challenges in transiting to the OAPS. We note three of these members are reservists who are at risk of not completing the required number of service days, considered to be a minimum of 20 days per annum. We note one member belongs to a legacy transitional salary scheme and will not reach a transition trigger until promotion. We accept it may be necessary for a submission to be made to this Tribunal for active management of these cases⁷.

Performance Indicators – Overall Health

[10] The Officer Aviation workforce continues to grow and enjoys a lower-than-average separation rate at 5.5%, compared with the Air Force at 6% and the ADF as a whole at 7.3%⁸.

[11] The ADF advises the overall time to promotion remains stable, with the average time in rank decreasing at Pay Grade O4. We note this will be monitored to ensure adequate experience profiles and balance within the workforce⁹.

[12] We agree the OAPS is performing as expected, providing flexibility for workforce managers to generate necessary workforce effects and balance cohort experience. We acknowledge the force structure targets of the 2024 National Defence Strategy (NDS) and note the Officer Aviation numbers across the streams are sitting at around a 10% deficit, distributed relatively evenly at each rank¹⁰.

Conclusion

[13] As the OAPS introduced significant reform, we requested multiple report backs be provided by the ADF. The ADF's submissions outline positive progress, showing continued growth, stabilising separation rates, and the successful transition of the majority of members.

[14] We agree with the ADF that this positive, stable implementation allows for effective workforce behaviour analysis. We note any workgroups identified for remediation will be addressed through specific submissions for amendment within the overall OAPS framework¹¹.

[15] We acknowledge the Commonwealth's submissions in this matter.

[16] We accept that in the coming years it will be necessary to progress amendments to the OAPS and the OARS allowances in order to sustain the Officer Aviation workforce capability and to meet the intent of the NDS. We further accept new Air Force capabilities are being introduced that will alter some roles within the Officer Aviation workforce.¹²

[17] In closing, we are satisfied with the implementation of the OAPS and the ongoing evaluation being conducted. In the current circumstances where there is well progressed member transition, a stable and healthy workgroup, and plans to return to us for future Officer Aviation structure and role changes, we are satisfied this reporting meets the intent of a final report back.

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

¹ [DFRT Decision 5 of 2016 Air Force Officer Aviation Payment Structure](#)

² [DFRT Decision 4 of 2021 Officer Aviation Pay Structure Report Back](#)

³ [DFRT Decision 4 of 2021 Officer Aviation Pay Structure Report Back](#), Paragraph 11

⁴ [DFRT Decision 4 of 2021 Officer Aviation Pay Structure Report Back](#), Paragraph 14

⁵ ADF Submission *2025 Report Back on Matter 5 of 2016 Air Force: Officer Aviation Pay Structure*, (ADF1) dated November 21, 2025, page 3, paragraph 2.2

⁶ ADF1, page 3, paragraph 2.2

⁷ ADF1, page 3, paragraph 2.3

⁸ ADF1, page 4, paragraph 2.4

⁹ ADF1, page 4, paragraph 2.5

¹⁰ ADF1, page 4, paragraph 2.6

¹¹ ADF1, page 4, paragraph 2.8

¹² ADF1, page 4, paragraph 2.8