**Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal**

# STATEMENT

*Defence Act 1903*
s.58H—Functions and powers of Tribunal

## AIR FORCE: NETWORK TECHNICIAN EMPLOYMENT CATEGORY REPORT BACK
(Matter 21 of 2025)

MS B O'NEILL, PRESIDENT

MS A LESTER, MEMBER

CANBERRA 28 JANUARY 2026

MAJGEN G FOGARTY AO RETD, MEMBER

**[1]**　This statement arises from the requirement set by this Tribunal in Matter 6 of 2019[1] – Air Force: Network Technician (NETECH) – for the Australian Defence Force (ADF) to provide an interim report back in 2022,[2] and a final report back in 2025. This statement should be read in conjunction with the initial decision, as well as the interim report.

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

**[3]**　The NETECH matter established the NETECH employment category from the categories of Communication and Information System Controller (CISCON), and Communication Electronic Technician. It also provided transitional salary provisions.

**Introduction**

**[4]**     The NETECH decision endorsed the following specific actions:

  a.  Establish a new Air Force employment category named Network Technician in the Graded Other Ranks Pay Structure with six skill grades ranging from Pay Grade 3 to Pay Grade 7; and

  b.  Disestablish the CISCON employment category for the Permanent Air Force, retaining the category in the Reserves for the immediate future.

**[5]**     Paragraph 7.9 of the ADF's submission in the NETECH matter proposed the following key performance indicators (KPIs) to report back on in 2022 and 2025:

  a.  KPI 1: The effect on capability as measured by the number of members who successfully transitioned to the NETECH employment category.
  b.  KPI 2: Work value assessment for the Warrant Officer Network (WON) skill grade.
  c.  KPI 3: The number of members still on salary protection provisions at the five-year review.
  d.  KPI 4: Data from employment satisfaction surveys relating to career progression and development, remuneration, and training.
  e.  KPI 5: Stability of the NETECH and CISCON (Reserve) employment categories at the time of the reviews.

**[6]**     The 2022 interim report back noted, with some concern, the separation rates for Network Technicians remained well above the Air Force average. We noted the remunerative options developed by the ADF to improve retention rates. The ADF advised that Air Force will conduct a review of the entire NETECH category in late 2022.[3]

**Key Performance Indicators Summary**

*KPI 1: The effect on capability as measured by the number of members who successfully transitioned to the NETECH employment category*

**[7]**     This KPI focuses on the success of the transition of members, including completion of transition training, and maintenance of capability within the workforce until ab-initio personnel could begin joining.

**[8]     Established** – The ADF advises that the number of transferred members who remain in the new NETECH employment category is 521, down from the initial 614 transferees. The NETECH employment category has attracted 254 ab-initio recruits and as of July 2025 the number of trained members totals 803. Of the original transferred members, all but three have completed the required transition training, and these three members are all in SERCAT 3 or 5, with varying levels of service.[4]

*KPI 2: Work value assessment for the Warrant Officer Network skill grade*

**[9]**     This KPI assesses the productivity evaluation and work value analysis of the WON skill grade.

**[10]**     **Established** – The ADF advises the work value of the WON has now matured to a stage where higher remuneration for personnel undertaking these duties can be justified. Eight WON-identified positions have been in place since January 2022 to allow for productivity evaluation and work value analysis.[5]

**[11]**     The WON-identified positions exist at Air Force Headquarters, Joint Operations Command, Air Command, and Wing Headquarters levels – appropriate for the expected leadership, responsibility and accountability required as network operators, technical subject matter experts (SMEs), and senior enlisted leaders.[6]

**[12]**     Applicants for the WON are expected to demonstrate both technical mastery and social mastery, in addition to an appropriate level of experience and high regard in their field of expertise. The ADF submits internal relativities, and links with the Joint Capabilities Group and Army Signals Warrant Officer SMEs, add justification for the NETECH positions being set at WON levels.[7]

**[13]**     The ADF advises that as of June 2025, eight NETECH personnel have been selected in a competitive process, via the Career Management Board, to re-grade to NETECH WON.[8] We note the ADF submission that the NETECH WON career pathway, and recruitment and retention efforts, would benefit from an additional pay grade increase. We acknowledge the ADF is considering bringing a case before the Tribunal on this topic.

*KPI 3: The number of members still on salary protection provisions at the five-year review*

**[14]**     **Established** – The ADF advises all NETECH personnel have now transitioned from salary protection arrangements.

*KPI 4: Data from employment satisfaction surveys relating to career progression and development, remuneration, and training*

**[15]**     This KPI focuses on an Establishment Review survey conducted in 2021 and a workforce survey offered to NETECH personnel in May 2025.

**[16]**     **Partially Established** – The ADF advises the survey in 2021 was too early in the transition period to provide meaningful insights. It further advises that only 83 responses, equating to 13% of the NETECH workforce, were received in answer to the 2025 survey.[9] We consider that this response rate does not provide a reliable or accurate representation across the NETECH employment category.

**[17]**    Whilst more positive responses were seen regarding career progression and development, and less positive responses for trade training, the small sample size allows for only a partial analysis. We note the ADF's submission that Air Force will continue to engage with the workforce in various formats to maintain general employment category satisfaction.[10]

*KPI 5: Stability of the NETECH and CISCON (Reserve) employment categories at the time of the reviews*

**[18]**    This KPI focuses on demand versus overall supply and workforce data trends within the employment category.

**[19]**    **Established** – The ADF advises the overall fill rate for all positions across the NETECH workforce is 85.4%, showing positive retention of personnel despite the growth in establishment positions.[11] The ADF further advises that the CISCON category remains open only for Reservists and is not accepting new entrants. In these circumstances it is expected the workforce size will continue to reduce naturally through separation, retirement, or transfers.[12]

## Retention Initiatives

**[20]**    The ADF advises that since the interim report back was completed, several ADF-wide initiatives to support recruitment and retention have included the NETECH category.[13] We agree the success of these programs are currently sufficient to address the prior workforce concerns and note there are no plans to extend any retention bonuses at this time.

## Conclusion

**[21]**    We note the Commonwealth's submissions.[14]

**[22]**    We agree with the ADF submission that Air Forces' proactive workforce management for the NETECH category has had a positive effect on the recruitment, retention, and career structures. We note Air Force will continue to engage with personnel to better understand satisfaction levels and opportunities for improvements in training.

**[23]**    In closing, we are satisfied this reporting meets the intent for the required final report back and there are no further reporting requirements in this matter.

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

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[1] Air Force: Network Technicians | Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal
[2] Air Force Network Technicians - Report Back | Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal
[3] Air Force Network Technicians - Report Back | Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal
[4] ADF Submission *Final Report Back – Air Force Network Technician*, 21 November 2025 (ADF1), page 5, paragraph 2.4
[5] ADF1, page 6, paragraphs 2.5 and 2.6
[6] ADF1, page 6, paragraph 2.6
[7] ADF1, page 6, paragraph 2.6
[8] ADF1, page 6, paragraph 2.6
[9] ADF1, page 8, paragraphs 2.14-2.15
[10] ADF1, page 10, paragraph 2.18
[11] ADF1, page 16, paragraph 3.6
[12] ADF1, page 14, paragraph 2.28
[13] ADF1, page 3, paragraph 1.6. See also Continuation bonus | Pay and Conditions, Bonuses | Pay and Conditions, and Targeted Workforce Segments | Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal
[14] Commonwealth Submission *Final Report Back – Air Force Network Technician*, dated 27 November 2025