



Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal

DECISION

Defence Act 1903

s.58H—Functions and powers of Tribunal

NAVY INTELLIGENCE OFFICER

(Matter 12 of 2025)

MS B O'NEILL, PRESIDENT

MS A LESTER, MEMBER

CANBERRA, 21 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 Navy's Intelligence Officer employment category and career continuum, to better enable it to inform and support decision-making in the Maritime domain.

[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. Commander J Harvey-Collings CSM, SO1 Navy Intelligence, Navy Intelligence and Information Warfare Branch, gave evidence for the ADF.

Background

[3] The Tribunal last considered this employment category within the Graded Officer Pay Structure (GOPS) *Part 3 Intelligence*, Matter 6 of 2009.² Our decision established the formal Navy Intelligence community along with a four-tiered skill grade continuum which remains in force today. In Matter 3 of 2024, the Tribunal considered the related employment category of *Navy Intelligence Sailor*.³ In this matter we accepted structural and nomenclature proposals aimed to modernise the employment category and provide a coordinated intelligence capability.

[4] The *2024 National Defence Strategy* (NDS) highlights the need to deliver a larger and more lethal Navy, create a robust intelligence community, and focus on deterrence and denial actions.⁴ Intelligence is a critical component of the NDS and requires a modern, robust, well-trained, informed and responsive workforce to deliver the necessary capabilities in the Maritime, and all other, warfighting domains.⁵

Submissions

ADF

[5] The ADF submission proposes to contemporise Navy Intelligence training, align the career continuum with the Navy Mastery system, and provide increased support, exposure and experience to personnel, resulting in equitable progression of qualified and experienced officers.

[6] The ADF specifically seeks to:

- a. rename the employment category from Intelligence to Navy Intelligence Officer (NIO);
- b. update the skill grade nomenclature to be consistent with the proposed NIO and the Navy Mastery Model;
- c. establish an additional pay grade placement in GOPS at Pay Grade 8 for a proposed 'Master' Navy Mastery Stage;
- d. amend the NIO career progression pathway;
- e. transition existing NIO members from their current skill grade to the equivalent Navy Mastery Stage in the proposed career continuum; and
- f. advance a small number of existing NIOs to the proposed 'Master' Stage through a NIO Endorsement Board.

[7] The proposed establishment of the Master stage at Pay Grade 8 is the only pay increase sought in this submission. The ADF states the introduction of the Master Stage is needed to address the current misalignment within the most complex senior roles. It will be reserved for NIOs with appropriate education, experience and exposure to succeed in the most arduous Commander – Captain roles. Inclusion of the Master Stage at Pay Grade 8 will also allow NIO personnel to be competitive when applying for selective tri-service positions within the Defence Intelligence Group.⁶

[8] The ADF submits that the current career progression structure is no longer fit for purpose as it has resulted in *'ambiguity and subjectivity in skill grade progression, and is not responsive to changes in operational tempo or platform availability'*.⁷ The proposed progression removes reliance upon performance of certain jobs, participation in courses not run by Navy, and participation in certain at-sea or on-platform roles. It aligns career progression with Navy Mastery Stages, reflecting distinct increases in work value, and removes bottlenecks for NIO personnel experiencing delays due to factors outside of Navy's control.

[9] The ADF outlines a clear transition plan for all personnel within the employment category. This will involve assessment of skill grades, allowing for most personnel to simply be assigned to the equivalent Mastery Stage. Due to amended progression requirements, some members may be transitioned at a higher Mastery Stage. No personnel will be disadvantaged.⁸

[10] The ADF notes this assessment of skill grades will inform personnel not only of their transition level, but will also outline the requirements for progression to the next Mastery Stage. Should non-reduction provisions be required for any member, they will be informed and provided with a timeline for completion. A 5 year non-reduction provision is sought.⁹

[11] A separate transition process is expected to allow a small number of NIOs to progress to the new Master Stage. Candidates for advancement will be reviewed by a panel of personnel who will provide recommendations to the Head of Profession for endorsement.¹⁰

Commonwealth

[12] The Commonwealth supports the ADF submission, noting NIOs are responsible for delivery of intelligence not only in the Maritime domain, but also to Air, Land, Space and Cyber domains, and are integral to intelligence organisations such as Defence Intelligence Enterprise and the National Intelligence Community.¹¹

[13] The Commonwealth supports the ADF in '*promoting flexibility and equitable outcomes in career progression*' and the transition to '*sustainable, consistent and transparent career structures and progression through the Navy Mastery System*'.¹² The Commonwealth further supports the setting of appropriate experience and exposure requirements for complex senior roles.¹³

Witness Evidence

[14] Commander J Harvey-Collings CSM, Navy Intelligence, provided written and oral evidence in support of the proposal. She outlined the significant change in the role of the NIO since our last review of the employment category, noting two areas in particular where greater capability will be required from NIOs that were not envisaged in 2009. The first is undersea warfare, which '*will see us requiring a greater number of NIOs suitable for submarine service and the highly complex and tense situation they find themselves in*'.¹⁴ The second area is Acoustics Intelligence, which is a niche specialisation. Other new capabilities needed by NIOs include targeting skills, geospatial assessments, battle damage assessments, and cyberspace threat intelligence.¹⁵

[15] Commander Harvey-Collings acknowledged challenges with the current career continuum, noting subjectivity in progression, difficulties caused by tightly specified requirements, and capabilities measured solely by time served rather than technical mastery gained. She elaborated '*one of the key roadblocks we've felt in the past few years is this requirement to conduct 12 months of sea time and it was really an entirely quantitative measure...12 months at sea for one person does not equate to 12 months at seas for another person*'.¹⁶

[16] Commander Harvey-Collings gave evidence of the need to modernise the training program for NIOs and the perceived benefits in aligning technical mastery and experiences to the Navy Mastery Stages. She notes the system of Navy Mastery Stages ‘allows individuals to have a better understanding of their individual mastery and where that places them in their career continuum’.¹⁷ She further noted the proposed changes will offer junior NIOs greater support, mentoring, and exposure to officer skills, providing a level of confidence and assurance that they are ready to proceed to sea or to other postings where they have reduced supervision.¹⁸

[17] When invited to expand further on expected outcomes of the proposal, Commander Harvey-Collings noted ‘we’re recognising that NIOs gain really valuable experience and exposure over time, so we’ll have a more measured and equitable time in career progression than what we see right now. It’s also going to be more flexible to allow for the change in our circumstances. And overall, we see that it will be more achievable with no roadblocks.’¹⁹

Consideration

[18] We accept the logic of renaming the employment category from “Intelligence” to “Navy Intelligence Officer” for consistency with the Navy Intelligence Sailor employment category and to align with similar categories within the other services. Similarly, Navy has aligned the nomenclature in career pathways and skill grades to that of the Navy Mastery Stages wherever possible since the system was introduced in 2022, and we agree it is appropriate to include the NIO employment category in this system.

[19] We accept this proposal has been made in the context of the 2023 Defence Strategic Review, 2024 National Defence Strategy and the 2024 Integrated Investment Program (IIP), all of which outline a strategic shift from a balanced force to an integrated, focused force across the five domains. The IIP details new capabilities and increased investments in existing capabilities, requiring an uplift in intelligence capability, including changes to the scope of tasks expected of an NIO.²⁰

[20] During the hearing we sought advice on how the proposed changes would affect personnel who were experiencing difficulty being released to complete training courses. Commander Harvey-Collings advised the situation is expected to improve because personnel will now ‘be required to maintain a minimum time in the skill grade and in an Intelligence position. So in many ways we have a longer period of time in which they can seek to be released to attend those courses...many of [the courses] now are in Navy’s control, [therefore] we’re more likely to see people released for them’.²¹ She elaborated ‘we’ve also designed the program so that we can change [the courses] as required...it does allow us to wear a bit better any changes in things like course names and availabilities.’²²

[21] We are cognisant that whilst the employment category’s classification has been downgraded from ‘Critical’ to ‘at Risk’, and it consistently meets inflow targets, and the overall separation rate is lower than the Navy average, the high separation rate at the Lieutenant Commander and Commander ranks poses a significant risk. We particularly note the evidence of Commander Harvey-Collings outlining the workforce hollowness and risks associated with this increasingly junior workforce.²³

[22] We accept that the proposed changes to the career continuum will more adequately prepare NIOs for complex senior roles by introducing the requirement to accrue minimum periods of time in skill grade and in intelligence positions. We agree this *‘will encourage NIOs to remain in category actively providing an intelligence capability...the proposed continuum will encourage a closer alignment of skill grade and rank in the best interest of generating suitably experienced and qualified personnel.’*²⁴

[23] We agree the proposed changes to the career continuum and alignment with the Navy Mastery Stages will provide a flexible pathway that *‘allows NIOs to develop the education, experience and exposure to successfully undertake their role in all environments and domains.’*²⁵

Conclusion

[24] In closing, we agree the submission adequately considers the changed strategic intelligence environment NIOs are now required to work within, and further agree the proposals appropriately reflect the increased complexity and criticality of the employment category.

[25] We note whilst many of the proposed changes may appear to be administrative in nature, we accept they will create a more transparent and equitable career progression pathway for NIOs, resulting in a modern, well-trained workforce that is responsive to operational needs.

[26] We accept the majority of NIO personnel will transition from their current skill grade to the equivalent Navy Mastery Stage, whilst a small number of more senior NIOs may advance to the Master Stage at pay grade 8.

[27] Determination 9 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 *Squadron Leader L Hawkett*

Mr K Wong for the Commonwealth assisted by *Ms T Karacic*

Witness:

Commander J Harvey-Collings, CSM, SO1 Navy Intelligence, Navy Intelligence and Information Warfare Branch

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- ¹ DMR/BN96724744 *Listing Application: Navy Intelligence Officer* filed 22 April 2025.
- ² Graded Officer Pay Structure Part 3: Intelligence; DFRT Matter 6 of 2009
- ³ [Navy Intelligence Sailor](#); DFRT Matter 3 of 2024
- ⁴ [2024 National Defence Strategy | About | Defence](#)
- ⁵ ADF Submission Matter 12 of 2025 *Royal Australian Navy: Navy Intelligence Officer* dated 22 May 2025 (ADF 1) page 5 paragraph 1.3 and page 6 paragraphs 1.5 and 1.7
- ⁶ ADF 1; page 27, paragraphs 4.18 and 4.19
- ⁷ AFD 1; page 26, paragraph 4.11
- ⁸ ADF 1, page 36, paragraphs 6.10 and 6.11
- ⁹ ADF 1, page 37, paragraph 6.14
- ¹⁰ ADF 1, page 37, paragraph 6.13
- ¹¹ Commonwealth Submission Matter 12 of 2025 *Royal Australian Navy" Navy Intelligence Officer* dated 30 May 2025 (Commonwealth 1) page 3 paragraph 7
- ¹² Commonwealth 1 page 7, paragraphs 26 and 27
- ¹³ Commonwealth 1 page 7, paragraph 28
- ¹⁴ Transcript page 10 lines 31-33
- ¹⁵ Transcript page 11 lines 3-16
- ¹⁶ Transcript page 13 lines 1-3
- ¹⁷ Transcript page 14 lines 21-23
- ¹⁸ Transcript page 15 lines 15-28
- ¹⁹ Transcript page 18, lines 3-7
- ²⁰ [2024 Integrated Investment Program | About | Defence](#)
- ²¹ Transcript page 19 lines 38-44
- ²² Transcript page 20, lines 8-12
- ²³ Affidavit of Commander Jo Harvey-Collings CSM, dated 28 May 2025 (ADF 2) page 7 paragraph 18
- ²⁴ ADF 2, page 11 paragraph 38
- ²⁵ ADF 2, page 11 paragraph 39