



# Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal

## DECISION

*Defence Act 1903*

s.58H—Functions and powers of Tribunal

### **Nuclear Submarine Workforce – Tranche 4 – Information Systems Technician Networks Submariner Category** (Matter 04 of 2026)

MS B O'NEILL, PRESIDENT

MS A LESTER, MEMBER

CANBERRA, 29 JUNE 2026

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 application<sup>1</sup> seeks to establish one new Virginia-class nuclear submarine (SSN-V) non-nuclear employment category within the Graded Other Ranks Pay Structure (GORPS). It also requests a minor technical amendment to the nuclear powered submarine (SSN) remuneration principle within the Officer Aviation Pay Structure (OAPS).

[2] We considered this matter in a hearing on 27 May 2026. Mr P Keane assisted by Mr P Rudd appeared for the ADF and Mr K Wong assisted by Ms T Karacic appeared for the Commonwealth.

## Background

[3] The Tribunal has previously considered the complex needs and unique strategic challenges faced by the ADF's transition to SSN capability. The establishment of employment categories requiring nuclear qualifications, along with non-nuclear submariner categories, were approved in the following Matters:

- 7 of 2024 *Nuclear Submarine Workforce – Tranche 1*.<sup>2</sup>
- 11 of 2024 *Non-Nuclear SSN Workforce – Tranche 2*.<sup>3</sup>
- 13 of 2025 *Nuclear Submarine (SSN) Tranche 3*.<sup>4</sup>

[4] The successful transition to SSN capability requires a workforce with operational skills and qualifications for the both the SSN-V initially, and in time the AUKUS SSN. This workforce requirement is in addition to maintaining Collins Class Submarine (CCSM) capability, with the ADF submitting *'the workforce transition will be lengthy, involve different submarine platform types and crews, and continue to be in a state of transition until the early 2050s.'*<sup>5</sup>

## Submissions

[5] The ADF submission proposes to establish a new SSN employment category in the sector of Communications and Cyber to be known as Information Systems Technician Networks – Submariner (ITN-SM). This is a non-nuclear position, with proposed salary placements consistent with other employment categories in the Communications and Cyber segments.<sup>6</sup>

[6] The ADF specifically seeks to:

- Establish one new SSN-V employment category to be known as ITN-SM.
- Set salary placements in GORPS for the ITN-SM.
- Protect the salary of ADF and CCSM personnel transferring to the ITN-SM category in recognition of the priority to develop the SSN-V workforce.
- Amend the current remuneration structure within OAPS for Nuclear Qualified crew who will commence shore postings as part of their structured Nuclear Submarine career and training pathway.<sup>7</sup>

[7] The ADF submits the ITN-SM is a technically diverse and cyber focused role, with understandably complex training requirements. ITN-SM personnel design, operate, secure and restore complex networks, servers and information systems that support both submariner operations and shore-based commands. They provide support for classified systems and management of satellite, tactical and commercial communications.<sup>8</sup> Following completion of training courses, ITN-SM personnel are expected to undertake an initial posting of up to three years at sea. On completion of this sea going posting *'personnel will then undertake category related shore postings either overseas or in Australia'*.<sup>9</sup>

[8] Entry into the ITN-SM employment category is proposed to be via internal Navy transfers, transfers from other ADF employment categories, and ab initio recruitment. The ADF submits all modes of entry will utilise the GORPS pay placements outlined in this proposal, with recruiting expected to begin in July 2026.<sup>10</sup>

[9] With regard to the minor technical amendment sought, the ADF submits that *‘as the AUKUS partnership has matured, the ADF has identified a limitation in the previously proposed conditions’*.<sup>11</sup> In accordance with Division 3A of Determination No. 2 of 2017 *Salaries*, submariners in the Nuclear Powered Submarine Officer, Nuclear Marine Engineer Officer Submariner, and Nuclear Technician employment categories are eligible to be paid under the OAPS *only* when posted to a seagoing SSN.<sup>12</sup>

[10] The ADF states that this limitation has created the unintended consequence of personnel at specific points in their structured SSN career and training pathway becoming ineligible for the OAPS. The ADF requests consideration for nuclear-qualified submariners to remain placed in the OAPS during their shore posting *‘to ensure continuity, equity, and alignment with the intent of the nuclear submarine workforce employment model’*.<sup>13</sup>

[11] The Commonwealth supports establishing the ITN-SM employment category, noting requirements under the AUKUS program and the necessity to fulfill Government directives on ADF capability. It also acknowledges the proposed skill grades and career continuum for the ITN-SM.<sup>14</sup>

[12] The Commonwealth supports the changes sought to Determination No 2 of 2017 *Salaries*, *‘which would otherwise disadvantage these members by rendering those posting ashore ineligible for OAPS placement’*.<sup>15</sup>

## **Consideration**

[13] We accept this proposal has been made in the context of the recommended initiatives presented in the *National Defence – Defence Strategic Review 2023*<sup>16</sup> and the *National Defence Strategy* published in 2024.<sup>17</sup> We note this material’s current assessment of the challenging strategic environment in the Indo-Pacific region and the need to strengthen *‘Australia’s national resilience’* and focus on *‘Defence’s international engagement efforts on enhancing interoperability and collective deterrence’*.<sup>18</sup> We note one of the ADF’s key immediate priorities is the *‘acquisition of conventionally-armed nuclear-powered submarines through AUKUS to improve deterrence capabilities’*.<sup>19</sup>

[14] We acknowledge the tranche approach to SSN establishment has *‘provided the ADF flexibility in designing a contemporary remuneration structure’* and has allowed for adaptation of plans as *‘priorities changed, timings for new employment categories were clarified, and career and training continuums were developed’*.<sup>20</sup>

[15] We accept this proposal is consistent with the overarching submarine workforce remuneration principles detailed in Matter 7 of 2024, namely that:

- Not all remuneration elements will require a difference between CCSM and SSN, there should be no unjustified differentiation.
- Salary placements are based on work value analysis of CCSM and SSN categories.
- For non-Nuclear Qualified employment categories, additional SSN training and skills may be recognised with differential pay. Otherwise, the same outcomes should apply with appropriate SSN skill grade and pay grade triggers to be identified.<sup>21</sup>

[16] We note all Royal Australian Navy (RAN) SSN personnel will be required to *‘undertake SSN training, achieve US Navy (USN) competency gates, and post to USN platforms for extended periods to achieve RAN Sovereign Ready milestones.’*<sup>22</sup> We accept this has warranted development of new employment categories mirroring the USN, including the alignment of skill grades with appropriate pay grades.<sup>23</sup> We further note the ITN-SM category *‘was recently established by the USN in recognition of the need for network security specialists’.*<sup>24</sup>

[17] We acknowledge there is no direct or functional equivalent of the ITN-SM employment category within the CCSM structure, as it has a unique work requirement driven by the SSN operating model. We note placement of the ITN-SM role within GORPS has been informed by the RAN submarine employment categories of Information Systems Technician Communications – Submariner (ITR-SM) and Information Systems Technician Electronic Warfare – Submariner (ITE-SM).<sup>25</sup>

[18] ITR-SM and ITE-SM personnel are responsible for the operation, routine care, repair and management of advanced electronic equipment and computers used in submarine systems.<sup>26</sup> We agree these roles are an appropriate basis to inform placement of the ITN-SM category and note the proposed skill grade triggers, ranks and pay grade placements.<sup>27</sup>

[19] We acknowledge the proposed placements also take into account the USN career continuums and that a *‘test and adjust’* approach is in place to allow Navy to commence in-service and ab-initio recruiting *‘while a more detailed gap analysis between CCSM and SSN training, roles and responsibilities is undertaken’.*<sup>28</sup> We note that *‘should the placements prove to not be appropriate, revised placements may be sought in future cases once the categories are established and more accurate work value becomes known over time.’*<sup>29</sup>

## **Conclusion**

[20] In closing, we agree with the requirement for the ITN-SM employment category which will provide *‘a critical enabling information support function to the command and technical employment categories already established for the SSN capability’.*<sup>30</sup>

[21] We accept that personnel who require transition arrangements will be individually managed *‘including being provided with advice specific to their own circumstance from the Service career management team’.*<sup>31</sup>

[22] Consistent with the Tribunal’s previous decisions in the SSN Tranche 1-3 matters, we agree to provide salary protection provisions for in-service ADF personnel. We acknowledge this will be necessary to assist with attracting suitable personnel in sufficient numbers required for training, and recognises the priority to develop the SSN workforce.

[23] We note the ITN-SM employment category continuum is currently indicative and is expected to be updated as information is clarified and a ‘*more fulsome longer-term remuneration model for all three pathways (RAN, USN and Royal Navy) of the SSN workforce*’<sup>32</sup> is developed. As detailed in the previous SSN matters, we note the ADF’s intent to return to the Tribunal by July 2029 with more mature career continuums for the SSN employment categories.

[24] With regard to the minor amendment sought to the SSN remuneration principle within the OAPS, we agree the change will ensure equity and continuity for personnel. We acknowledge the consequence of the prescriptive nature of the wording was unintended, and agree that nuclear-qualified submariners should remain placed in OAPS during their shore postings.

[25] Determination 06 of 2026 gives effect to our decision from 01 June 2026.

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

*Appearances:*

*Mr P Keane for the ADF assisted by Mr P Rudd*

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

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- <sup>1</sup> BN119682530/ March 2026 *Listing Application*
- <sup>2</sup> [Nuclear Submariner Workforce - Tranche 1 | Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal](#)
- <sup>3</sup> [Nuclear Submariner Workforce - Tranche 2 | Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal](#)
- <sup>4</sup> [Nuclear Submarine \(SSN\) Workforce Tranche 3 | Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal](#)
- <sup>5</sup> ADF Submission *Matter 04 of 2026 Nuclear Submarine Workforce Tranche 4 Information Systems Technician Networks Submariner EC*, filed 24 April 2026 (ADF1), page 9, paragraphs 1.1-1.2
- <sup>6</sup> ADF1, page 10, paragraphs 1.6 and 1.9
- <sup>7</sup> ADF1, page 10, paragraph 1.9 and page 31, paragraph 10.4
- <sup>8</sup> Commonwealth Submission *Matter 4 of 2026 Nuclear Submarine Workforce Tranche 4 Information Systems Technician Networks*, filed 18 May 2026 (Comm1), page 2, paragraph 11
- <sup>9</sup> ADF1, page 20, paragraph 5.11
- <sup>10</sup> ADF1, page 11, paragraph 1.11
- <sup>11</sup> ADF1, page 31, paragraph 10.3
- <sup>12</sup> ADF1, page 31, paragraph 10.3
- <sup>13</sup> ADF1, page 31, paragraph 10.6
- <sup>14</sup> Comm1, page 2, paragraphs 17 and 18
- <sup>15</sup> Comm1, page 2, paragraph 22
- <sup>16</sup> [National Defence: Defence Strategic Review 2023 | About | Defence](#)
- <sup>17</sup> [2024 National Defence Strategy and 2024 Integrated Investment Program | About | Defence](#)
- <sup>18</sup> ADF1, page 14, paragraph 3.4
- <sup>19</sup> ADF1, page 14, paragraph 3.4
- <sup>20</sup> ADF1, page 10, paragraph 1.8
- <sup>21</sup> ADF1, page 21, paragraph 6.1
- <sup>22</sup> ADF1, page 18, paragraph 5.3
- <sup>23</sup> ADF1, page 18, paragraph 5.3
- <sup>24</sup> ADF1, page 19, paragraph 1.7
- <sup>25</sup> ADF1, page 18, paragraph 5.1 and page 22 Table 2
- <sup>26</sup> [Nuclear Submariner Workforce - Tranche 2 | Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal](#)
- <sup>27</sup> ADF1, page 24, Table 3
- <sup>28</sup> ADF1, page 25, paragraph 6.21
- <sup>29</sup> ADF1, page 25, paragraph 6.21
- <sup>30</sup> ADF1, page 15, paragraph 3.9
- <sup>31</sup> ADF1, page 29, paragraph 8.8
- <sup>32</sup> ADF1, page 30, paragraph 9.3