



Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal

DECISION

Defence Act 1903

s.58H—Functions and powers of Tribunal

ADF Training Systems Officers

(Matter 02 of 2026)

MS B O'NEILL, PRESIDENT

MS A LESTER, MEMBER

CANBERRA, 29 JULY 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 application¹ seeks to restructure Training Systems Officers (TSO)² employment categories, make nomenclature changes, establish new skill grades, and increase pay grade placements for both Navy and Air Force.

[2] We considered this matter in a hearing on 27 May 2026. Mr P Keane, assisted by Mr P Rudd appeared for the ADF. Ms T Karacic, assisted by Mr K Wong, appeared for the Commonwealth. Lieutenant Commander (LCDR) Richard Gill, Navy Employment Category Development Branch, and Wing Commander (WGCDR) Rebecca Evans, Headquarters Combat Support Group, gave evidence for the ADF.

Background

[3] TSOs perform a wide range of functions that enable and enhance capability within their own service and across the wider Australian Defence Organisation.³ They operate across allied, technically complex multi-domain environments and ‘*routinely advise senior stakeholders on the integration of training into capability planning, development and implementation*’.⁴

[4] The Tribunal last considered Navy’s Training System employment category in Matter 4 of 2013 *Training Systems Officer: Senior Training Specialist*.⁵ In this matter the Tribunal recognised the strategic responsibilities of Senior Training Specialists within the Training Systems skill grade structure and approved a new pay grade 5 placement. The Tribunal acknowledged that Senior Training Specialists were advising senior Navy Leaders on training requirements, regulatory compliance and workforce planning, and undertaking high level customer engagement.⁶

[5] The Tribunal last considered Air Force TSOs in Matter 15 of 2012 *Air Force Training Systems Officer*.⁷ In this matter the Tribunal approved the transition of Air Force Education Officer specialists to the TSO employment category, with no increase in pay grade placements at that time. The ADF submitted the name of TSO more accurately recognised the role Air Force Education Officers had in promoting the National Training System, implementing the Defence Training Model, and managing the Air Force training system.⁸

[6] The current structure of the relevant employment categories, and their pay grades within the Graded Officers Pay Structure (GOPS), are shown below:

Table 1. Navy Training System employment category⁹

Indicative Rank	Skill Grade	Pay grade
Midshipman - Lieutenant	Under Training	3
Sub Lieutenant - Lieutenant	Primary Qualification	3
Lieutenant - Lieutenant Commander	Training Systems Specialist	4
Lieutenant Commander - Commander	Senior Training Specialist	5
Commander - Captain	Principal Training Specialist	6

Table 2. Air Force TSO employment category¹⁰

Indicative Rank	Skill Grade	Pay grade
Flight Officer	Grade 1	2
Flight Officer – Flight Lieutenant	Grade 2	3
Flight Lieutenant – Group Captain	Grade 3	4

Submissions

[7] The ADF submits that since the Tribunal last considered the TSO employment categories, the scope, strategic impact and market value of TSO roles have expanded. This submission is intended to ensure remuneration outcomes align with the work value delivered by TSOs at each level and reflect the increased demands and responsibilities of the roles.

[8] The ADF specifically seeks to:

Navy

- Amend the employment category name from Training Systems to Training Systems Officer.
- Amend skill grade nomenclature to align with the ADF Mastery Framework.
- Retain the ‘Under Training’ and ‘Foundation’ (currently classified as ‘Primary Qualification’) skill grades at pay grade 3.
- Establish the ‘Foundation Plus’ skill grade at pay grade 4.
- Increase the pay grade placement for the ‘Intermediate’ skill grade (currently classified as ‘Training Systems Specialist’) by one grade to pay grade 5.
- Increase the pay grade placement for the ‘Advanced’ skill grade (currently classified as ‘Senior Training Specialist’) by one grade to pay grade 6.
- Retain the pay grade placement for the ‘Master’ skill grade (currently classified as ‘Principal Training Specialist’) at pay grade 6.

Air Force

- Amend skill grade nomenclature to align with the ADF Mastery Framework.
- Increase the pay grade placement for the current ‘Training Systems Officer Grade 1’ skill grade (to be reclassified as ‘Foundation’) by one grade to pay grade 3.
- Increase the pay grade placement for the current ‘Training Systems Officer Grade 2’ skill grade (to be reclassified as ‘Foundation Plus’) by one grade to pay grade 4.
- Increase the pay grade placement for the current ‘Training Systems Officer Grade 3’ skill grade (to be reclassified as ‘Intermediate’) by one grade to pay grade 5.
- Establish a new skill grade, classified as ‘Advanced’, at pay grade 6.
- Establish a new skill grade, classified as ‘Master’, at pay grade 6.
- Establish a Legacy skill grade at pay grade 2 (closed to new entrants) for Legacy Training Systems Officer Grade 1 members who do not meet new minimum education requirements.

[9] A current strategic goal of the ADF is the development of a highly skilled workforce to successfully deliver and operate new capabilities. The ADF states that *‘the upskilling required for the ADF, underscores the vital nature of the enabling function of the TSO workforce’*.¹¹

[10] The ADF submits that TSOs are expected to contribute to the ongoing evolution of the Defence Learning Environment and Service Ecosystems, including by the use of *‘modern, scalable training technologies and methods aligned to achieve Service and Joint capability effects’*.¹² It further submits that although there are some environmental and structural differences between Navy and Air Force, that *‘harmonisation of remuneration frameworks will strengthen Defence’s*

ability to attract and retain highly skilled TSOs and sustain integrated training system outcomes’.¹³

[11] The proposed structure of the TSO employment category highlighting the shared use of the ADF Mastery Framework is shown below:

Table 3. Proposed TSO employment category¹⁴

Indicative Rank	Skill Grade	Pay grade
Flight Officer – Flight Lieutenant	Grade 1 <i>Air Force Legacy</i>	2
Midshipman - Lieutenant	Under Training <i>Navy only</i>	3
Sub Lieutenant - Lieutenant Flight Officer	Foundation	3
Sub Lieutenant - Lieutenant Flight Officer – Flight Lieutenant	Foundation Plus	4
Lieutenant - Lieutenant Commander Flight Lieutenant – Wing Commander	Intermediate	5
Lieutenant Commander - Commander Wing Commander – Squadron Leader	Advanced	6
Commander - Captain Squadron Leader – Group Captain	Master	6

[12] The Commonwealth supports the proposal, noting the expansion of the employment category to include additional skill grades for Air Force, uplifting the pay grade of two skill grades for Navy, and aligning nomenclature with the ADF Mastery Framework.¹⁵

[13] The Commonwealth recognises the parities identified between the employment category across Navy and Air Force, which supports the proposal for a harmonised structure.¹⁶ It notes ‘*both Navy and Air Force will require a period of transition for impacted members following the commencement of the new employment category to allow for assessment and review of members skills and qualifications*’.¹⁷

Witness Evidence

[14] LCDR R Gill and WGCDR R Evans provided written and oral evidence in support of the proposal. They both explained the expanded role and accountability of the TSO, and highlighted current challenges of attracting and retaining suitable candidates.¹⁸

[15] LCDR Gill described how contemporary TSOs are ‘*increasingly required to exercise independent judgement, system-level thinking, and shared accountability for training outcomes across Navy and Defence*’. He outlined his perception of how the current remuneration structure can be improved ‘*by updating pay grade alignments to more accurately reflect the expanded scope, independence and consequence associated with contemporary TSO roles*’.¹⁹

[16] LCDR Gill noted that the intent of this proposal ‘*is obviously to recognise the work value, but also as a lever to support retention for those that do consider leaving. Sometimes it’s not*

*because the recognition is not there, but sometimes it is, and for those that might be thinking about looking in other areas, then I think that recognition of that work value is significant’.*²⁰

[17] WGCdr Evans concurred with LCDR Gill’s evidence on the intent of the proposal, noting for Air Force *‘the current differences in pay between Services may influence candidates to join Navy or Army over Air Force. The proposition seeks to address this, which will positively influence attraction’.*²¹ She spoke of her direct experience with this pay disparity, working alongside Navy colleagues who have *‘shared the same initial employment training since 2021, employ Air Force personnel in Navy units, and have worked side by side or interchangeably in a number of positions across the organisation’* and how this *‘is something that has had a negative impact on morale and retention’* within Air Force.²²

[18] During the course of the hearing, we sought clarification on the intent of aligning career paths and salaries between Navy and Air Force TSOs, querying whether the roles were interchangeable. We accept LCDR Gill’s evidence that the two services train together at initial employment training and at the Foundation stage, and that further areas of the Mastery Career Pathway are being assessed for opportunities for alignment. LCDR Gill explained *‘there’s a real opportunity that throughout the Mastery Career Pathway of both Navy and Air Force that we can operate in joint environments together’.*²³

[19] We also sought further detail on the education pathway for developing entry level teaching and TAFE staff into the analysts, advisors and policy specialists outlined in the more advanced skill grades within the Mastery Career Pathway. We accept LCDR Gill’s description of the career pathway, noting the requirement for an evidence journal at Foundation stage, and the experience and exposure personnel gain *‘applying the Defence policy around evaluation, both at the lower end and the more strategic end’.*²⁴ We accept that as personnel progress through the Mastery Career Pathway and obtain a higher rank, they have already been in the position for several years, have large amounts of experience, and have been exposed to different types of training, evaluation and assessment methods.²⁵

[20] We considered the evidence showing recruitment into the TSO employment category from TAFE and school teaching. We queried the salary levels for personnel at the Foundation level of the Mastery Career Pathway. LCDR Gill provided evidence of slightly higher earnings outside of Defence, however we accept his observation that *‘the attraction of being in Defence and the benefits you receive in addition to your normal salary is attractive for some as well, particularly teachers that are faced with the challenges of being a teacher with parents and marking and all that sort of thing’.*²⁶

[21] We sought further information on what is involved with the Initial Employment Training for personnel who join as a qualified teacher. We note LCDR Gill’s evidence of recent changes to the training to better prepare personnel for their first posting, and in particular to provide support to Subject Matter Expert instructors. LCDR Gill stated that *‘a lot of Instructors are not specialised in instruction per se, even though they’re trained or they’re highly competent in what they do. So, one of the significant things a Training Systems Officer must do is support Instructors to be the best Instructors they can be to be able to convey the knowledge and experience that they have’.*²⁷

[22] We considered the evidence of WGCDR Evans that Air Force is experiencing challenges with retention of TSO personnel around the six-year mark. We sought more information about where the personnel who separate at this time go after they leave. We accept WGCDR Evans' evidence that some personnel remain within the ADF, simply transferring to a different employment category or to a TSO role with a different service. We note that the ADF will try to retain personnel lost to industry in a Reserve capacity wherever possible.²⁸

Consideration

[23] At the end of the hearing, we sought clarification on salary market data relied upon by the ADF in its written submissions under the heading 'external relativities.' The submission provided data from Hays consulting group of salaries for equivalent roles in the wider labour market. This data was said to support the proposition that the pay grade increases proposed would align ADF salaries with comparable civilian rates for similar work ('external relativities') and address attraction and retention issues. The ADF states the proposed salaries were '*justified not only by the increased complexity and strategic consequences, but also by the need to remain competitive with Defence industry and government employers seeking similar skillsets*'.²⁹

[24] We noted the broad salary ranges in the data presented, which did not identify the market median or relevant percentiles. We requested information regarding the salaries paid and the market percentile placement of comparable roles in public sector agencies to better assess the 'push and pull' or competitive factors relied upon to support the increases proposed. We noted that evidence which explores the employment market for similar skill-sets and experience is useful for the Tribunal, however this evidence needs to be clear in whether it is comparing a salary-only component or a whole benefit package.³⁰ We highlighted that a contextual comparison of ADF roles with the Australian Public Service (APS) is important to ensure we are providing fairness and equity across the public sector for similar functions. We noted that comparison evidence from entities such as Australian Federal Police (AFP) and Border Force (ABF) would be particularly useful, due to the scale and complexity of the training burden faced by those organisations.³¹

[25] After a brief adjournment, we agreed to progress this matter on the basis of further evidence. We held over our decision and committed to provide the ADF with written questions to assist our consideration of the matter.

Further Evidence

[26] We provided the ADF with further questions on the data relied upon in the original submission. In particular we sought:

- Hays data showing the 25th, 50th and 75th percentile for the categories of training and education, organisational development (OD)/capability, defence specialist, and systems engineering.
- The 50th percentile for the public sector for each of those categories.
- Placement within the APS salary and career structure of comparable roles in the APS and Commonwealth agencies to the Navy and Air Force roles within the proposed pay grades.

We sought a comparison to APS roles with job titles and duties relating to instructional design, learning design, training analyst, training and education governance manager, education and training strategic advisor. We sought comparative data relating to the APS as a whole or to one or two key service delivery agencies, noting it would be helpful to include ABF the AFP.

[27] The ADF provided a supplementary submission in which it submitted the Hays data is ‘drawn from aggregated market salary ranges rather than a formally structured percentile dataset. As such, precise statistical percentiles are not available’.³² It submitted that indicative percentiles could be drawn with the lower bound of the salary range presented being the 25th percentile, the mid-point the 50th percentile, and the upper bound the 75th percentile, across the data provided for the categories of training and education, OD/capability, defence specialist and system. Using this approach, the indicative percentiles across the relevant categories are as follows:

Table 4. Indicative Percentiles across relevant categories³³

Category	25th Percentile	50th Percentile	75th Percentile
Training & Education	\$100k	\$150k	\$250k
OD / Capability	\$100k	\$170k	\$260k
Defence Specialist	\$110k	\$170k	\$260k
Systems Engineering	\$100k	\$175k	\$260k

[28] The ADF submits that APS remuneration data does not provide a breakdown comparable to the Hays data, and as such a 50th percentile cannot be provided isolated to the public sector.³⁴ The ADF provided information about the placement of public sector positions with comparable training design functions and position titles into employment classifications and salary bands applying in relevant public sector agencies. Information was provided regarding comparable roles within the APS, the AFP and ABF and the applicable enterprise agreement salary categories, generally from levels APS 5 to Executive Level 2. Looking at this information broadly, and assuming APS, ABF and AFP salaries are paid at the mid-point of the applicable classifications and salary bands, it can be concluded these Commonwealth agencies offer salaries between the 25th and 50th percentiles of the total salary market range explored in the Hays data provided. These salaries are generally less than the rates proposed in the submission.

[29] The ADF states that ‘it does not undertake direct role-to-role comparisons when determining remuneration. Consistent with the arguments put forward by the ADF in Matter 03 of 2007 - Graded Officer Pay Structure (GOPS), ADF remuneration is founded on an internally coherent work value framework that assesses roles relative to each other across Defence to ensure maintenance of capability, rather than assessing them against external civilian positions. This framework accounts for the ADF having a closed workforce system, and the unique characteristics of military employment, including command and leadership responsibilities, operational accountability, workforce generation obligations, and the requirement for members to serve without limitation in support of national objectives. These factors are not directly replicated or acquirable in civilian labour markets and therefore cannot be reliably benchmarked through role equivalence alone.’³⁵ The ADF further submitted that ‘external relativities and labour market conditions are considered at an aggregate level to ensure that Defence remains broadly

*competitive; however, they are not used as determinative or role-specific benchmarks,’ and that the structural difference of ADF roles ‘together with the unique conditions of service, limit the utility of direct comparison and require that external data be used contextually rather than as a like-for-like reference point’.*³⁶

Conclusion

[30] We consider that total employment market salary data provides broad contextual information at best. The data presented in this matter is of limited utility for assessing whether salary is a significant causal factor driving recruitment and retention. It does not compare the full package that comprises the employment offer (including allowances, superannuation, pensions, housing and health). Further, the data was presented as a very broad salary range without information about the market percentiles within that range, and as such does not allow valid conclusions to be drawn about the competitive position (based on salary alone) of the ADF offer. Where assertions are made that attraction into an employment category is drawn from a specific pool of external applicants (such as the TAFE or teaching service) or that there is an outgoing flow of personnel to a specific external market sector (such as Defence contractors), then a specific analysis of employment offerings (comparing ‘like with like’) is required to assess whether remuneration is a likely causal factor in driving attraction or retention.

[31] We are not persuaded that the whole-of-market salary data presented in this submission supports a conclusion that the salaries proposed are necessary to remain competitive with employers seeking similar skill-sets or are necessary to attract or retain staff into this employment category.

[32] We agree that specific work-value based benchmarking to comparable roles in public sector agencies does not capture the work value of a range of unique characteristics of military employment, including command and leadership responsibilities, operational accountability, workforce generation obligations, and the requirement for members to serve without limitation in support of national objectives. However, the information presented on the remuneration applying to similar roles in public sector agencies does suggest that remuneration alone is not a key causal factor that may drive the flow of personnel between these employers. There are no doubt many, varied, and complex factors driving attraction and retention into the ADF beyond remuneration.

[33] Ultimately, we are persuaded that the scope, strategic impact and market value of TSO roles have expanded significantly, and now operate across complex technical, multi-domain environments. We are satisfied that the changes proposed are necessary to ensure intraservice defence relativities and parities between Navy and Air Force, modernise the employment category, and support the ongoing evolution of the Defence Learning Environment. We are satisfied that the uplift of the Foundation skill grade to pay grade 3 reflects the introduction of tertiary qualifications for members entering the category. Uplift of the Foundation Plus skill grade to pay grade 4 flows on from the uplift of Foundation, and reflects the increased scope of work that this skill grade now undertakes. Finally, we are satisfied that the uplift of the Intermediate skill grade to pay grade 5 recognises that members at this skill grade are specialists, working across complex environments.

[34] We are satisfied that the proposed employment category structures may increase the attractiveness of the employment category to potential candidates and assist with retention challenges. The inclusion of an Advanced and Master skill grade at pay grade 6 recognises the expansion of the scope of work, and increased complexity of the employment category since its creation, and recognises the increased management responsibility of personnel at this level. We are satisfied that the remuneration outcomes align with the work value delivered by TSOs at each level and reflect the increased demands and responsibilities of the roles.

[35] Determination 8 of 2026 gives effect to our decision from 30 JULY 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

Ms T Karacic for the Commonwealth assisted by Mr K Wong

¹ BN121110005/ 4 March 2026 *Listing Application*

² In this decision the term TSO is used when discussing either the Navy or the Air Force employment categories.

³ ADF Submission *ADF Training Systems Officers*, filed 30 April 2026 (ADF1), page 1, paragraph 1.1

⁴ ADF1, page 1, paragraph 1.2

⁵ [Navy Training Systems Officer - Senior Training Specialist | Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal](#)

⁶ [Navy Training Systems Officer - Senior Training Specialist | Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal](#)

⁷ [Air Force Training Systems Officer | Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal](#)

⁸ [Air Force Training Systems Officer | Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal](#)

⁹ ADF1, page 11, paragraph 3.8

¹⁰ ADF1, page 18, paragraph 3.28

¹¹ ADF1, page 21, paragraph 4.1

¹² ADF1, page 1, paragraph 1.2

¹³ ADF1, page 27, paragraph 4.30. Within Army, Education Officers perform a range of comparable functions to the TSO role within Navy and Air Force. The Army Education Officer employment category does not form part of this submission, however.

¹⁴ ADF1, page 4, paragraph 1.8

¹⁵ Commonwealth Submission *Matter 2 of 2026 ADF Training Systems Officers*, filed 12 May 2026 (Comm1); pages 7-8, paragraph 31

¹⁶ Comm1, page 8, paragraph 34

¹⁷ Comm1, page 9, paragraph 39

¹⁸ Affidavit of LCDR R Gill, dated 13 May 2026, (ADF2) and Affidavit of WGCDR R Evans, dated 13 May 2026 (ADF3)

¹⁹ ADF2, page 3 paragraph 14 and page 4 paragraph 18

²⁰ Transcript, page 12, lines 42-45 and page 13, line 1

²¹ ADF3, page 5, paragraph 8

²² ADF3, page 6, paragraph 9c

²³ Transcript, page 14, lines 26-28

²⁴ Transcript, page 15, lines 6-23

²⁵ Transcript, page 15, lines 33-35

²⁶ Transcript, page 16, lines 27-30

²⁷ Transcript, page 17 lines 32-35

²⁸ Transcript, page 27, lines 20-30

²⁹ ADF1, page 33, paragraph 4.44

³⁰ Transcript, page 28 lines 12-15 and 34-40

³¹ Transcript, page 29 lines 15-20

³² Further evidence submitted on 16 June 2026, page 1 paragraph 1

³³ Further evidence, page 1, paragraph 3

³⁴ Further evidence, page 1, paragraph 4

³⁵ Further evidence, page 2, paragraph 1

³⁶ Further evidence, page 2, paragraph 2