



# Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal

## DECISION

*Defence Act 1903*

s.58H—Functions and powers of Tribunal

### **NAVY: MARITIME LOGISTICS OFFICER**

(Matter 9 of 2026)

MS B O'NEILL, PRESIDENT

MS A LESTER, MEMBER

CANBERRA, 31 AUGUST 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 an additional pay grade (PG) within the Graded Officer Pay Structure (GOPS) of PG 4 for Maritime Logistics Officers (MLOs).

[2] We considered this matter in a hearing on 29 July 2026. Mr P Keane appeared for the ADF assisted by Mr P Rudd. Mr K Wong appeared for the Commonwealth. Lieutenant Commander Danica Thompson, Maritime Logistics Officer Employment Category Manager, gave evidence for the ADF.

### **Background**

[3] MLO personnel provide the logistical support necessary to generate and sustain Navy capability and ensure the readiness of ships and naval units. As MLOs progress through their careers, they undertake increasingly complex responsibilities across the maritime, joint, and broader Defence environments. This proposal seeks to introduce an additional remuneration point

within the existing MLO continuum following completion of the Foundation to Intermediate pathway established under Navy's Mastery Framework.<sup>2</sup>

[4] The Tribunal most recently considered the employment category in Matter 13 of 2025 *Nuclear Submarine Workforce Tranche 3 Logistics, Personnel and Health SSN Workforce*.<sup>3</sup> This matter established a new employment category stream, MLO-Submariner, within the existing MLO employment category. Personnel in this category will follow the standard Royal Australian Navy (RAN) MLO career continuum prior to joining the nuclear-powered submarine workforce. This will include completion of the standard Foundation and Intermediate skill grades, and upon selection, completion of Supply Officer and Submarine Officer basic training courses in the United States.<sup>4</sup>

[5] The Tribunal also considered the MLO employment category in Matter 6 of 2013 *Navy Supply Branch*, which approved the change in nomenclature from Supply Officer to MLO and recognised the need to develop a specialised logistics workforce.<sup>5</sup>

## Submissions

[6] The ADF submits the employment category has undergone substantial transformation in its workforce structure, training continuum and capability expectations. More recently, Navy introduced the Mastery Framework, establishing a formalised approach to professional development and career progression across the Foundation, Intermediate, Advanced and Master proficiency levels.<sup>6</sup>

[7] The ADF submits that the current remuneration structure does not adequately recognise the work value of officers operating at the Intermediate Mastery level. Under the current arrangements, officers attain PG 3 upon completion of their Primary Qualification and remain at that level until achieving Charge Qualification, notwithstanding substantial increases in responsibility, autonomy and professional contribution during the intervening period.

[8] The ADF specifically seeks to establish an additional pay grade of PG 4 upon completion of the Foundation to Intermediate pathway as shown in Table 1 below.

Table 1: Proposed MLO PG Structure

| Indicative Rank Range | Mastery Level               | PG2 | PG3 | PG4 | PG5 |
|-----------------------|-----------------------------|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| MIDN-LEUT             | Under Training              |     |     |     |     |
| ASLT-LEUT             | Foundation (PQ)             |     |     |     |     |
| SBLT-LEUT             | Intermediate (PQ and 2 yrs) |     |     |     |     |
| LEUT-LCDR             | Intermediate Plus (CQ)      |     |     |     |     |

[9] This proposed pathway requires attainment of the Primary Qualification and the completion of two years of consolidation in core tactical and technical logistics roles. The ADF submits that achievement of these milestones signifies the *‘transition from supervised development to autonomous delivery of logistics outcomes across Defence. Introducing PG 4 acknowledges the work value of MLOs who achieve this level of mastery’*.<sup>7</sup>

[10] The ADF further submits that Intermediate-stage MLOs lead logistics functions, support capability development, provide specialist advice, and routinely contribute to operational and strategic outcomes. It asserts that these officers operate with significantly greater autonomy than Foundation-stage officers and that *‘these settings require adaptability, initiative, and the ability to deliver under pressure, reflecting the increased expectations of Intermediate Mastery level MLOs’*.<sup>8</sup>

[11] Intra-Service and inter-Service relativities add justification for the addition of PG 4 to the MLO structure. The critical enabling functions delivered by MLOs in supporting operations at sea, ashore and within joint and integrated environments across Defence, closely match those provided by the Maritime Human Resource Officer role. Maritime Human Resource Officers are placed at PG 4 after completing primary qualifications and one year of structured development including completion of a professional development journal.<sup>9</sup> The proposal enables MLOs to reach PG 4 at a similar time to their Army and Royal Australian Air Force (RAAF) counterparts, notwithstanding Service-specific workforce structures and breadth of initial postings.<sup>10</sup>

[12] The Commonwealth supports the proposal. It accepts the submission that Intermediate-stage MLOs perform work of greater complexity and responsibility than officers newly attaining Primary Qualification and recognises the importance of workforce retention and progression within the employment category. The Commonwealth notes the relativities MLOs share with the Navy Maritime Human Resources Officer and the RAAF Logistics Officer.<sup>11</sup>

## **Witness Evidence**

[13] Lieutenant Commander (LCDR) Thompson, Maritime Logistics Officer Employment Category Manager, provided written and oral evidence in support of the proposal. She described the evolution of the MLO workforce since the introduction of the Mastery Framework and detailed the work value of contemporary Intermediate-stage MLOs. LCDR Thompson noted MLOs frequently perform roles that *‘require independent judgement, management of competing priorities, and engagement with senior military and civilian stakeholders. Despite the increased scope of responsibility, remuneration remains unchanged from the level applicable immediately after Primary Qualification’*.<sup>12</sup>

[14] LCDR Thompson gave evidence that officers who have completed the Foundation to Intermediate pathway are operating at a materially different level to those who have only recently attained Primary Qualification, and that the absence of a recognised remuneration progression point weakens the connection between demonstrated professional growth and formal recognition. She explained these officers *‘have successfully completed significant developmental milestones,*

*are delivering measurable operational outcomes, and receive no additional acknowledgement of that increased work value.’<sup>13</sup>*

[15] She also described workforce pressures affecting the employment category and the increasing time officers spend at the Intermediate Mastery stage before becoming eligible for Charge Qualification, noting that *‘many MLOs may now spend between six and eight years, and in some cases longer, remunerated at PG 3 despite operating at the Intermediate Mastery Stage’*.<sup>14</sup> LCDR Thompson explained that shortages currently exist at the Lieutenant Commander rank and that experienced Intermediate-stage officers represent the future source of Charge Qualified officers and Heads of Department, so retention of these trained, experienced staff is critical.

[16] LCDR Thompson spoke about the relativities of the position and detailed her experience when she was a Deputy MLO at PG 3. She stated she was *‘the Deputy Head of Department, working quite long hours, contributing to operational planning at PG 3, and I would look at my peers who were being paid more than what I was, with equivalent if not less workload than me’*.<sup>15</sup> LCDR Thompson described the impact on morale of this situation, stating that *‘as a Deputy at PG 3 we’re paid less than some of the trainees on board the ship with a significantly increased load on us. So, there’s a bit of dissatisfaction around that’*.<sup>16</sup>

## **Consideration**

[17] We accept this proposal aligns with the strategic priorities set out in the *National Defence Strategy* and the capability priorities of the *Integrated Investment Program*. We note the Government has identified the importance of the field of logistics in order to deliver national defence, and agree that *‘the ADF must attract and retain specialised and experienced logisticians who can deliver logistic outcomes in an ADF context’*.<sup>17</sup>

[18] We considered the evidence that the proposed MLO structure aligned with Navy’s Mastery Framework now provides a more structured means of assessing professional development and work value within the MLO employment category. We accept that Foundation-level officers focus on consolidating professional knowledge and skills through structured postings and supervised environments, whereas Intermediate-level officers are expected to operate with increased autonomy, lead logistics functions and contribute to operational and capability outcomes across Navy and the broader Defence enterprise.<sup>18</sup>

[19] We accept the assertion that completion of the Foundation to Intermediate pathway represents a significant professional milestone and agree that the introduction of PG 4 acknowledges the work value of MLOs who achieve this mastery.

[20] We considered the evidence concerning the nature of Intermediate-level employment. We note that these officers may be employed in organisations such as Joint Logistics Command, Joint Operations Command, Fleet Command and capability acquisition and sustainment organisations, and may also undertake appointments as Deputy Maritime Logistics Officers aboard Major Fleet Units. We accept that these roles require increased responsibility, accountability and independence when compared with Foundation-level employment.<sup>19</sup>

[21] We also considered the evidence regarding workforce progression within the employment category. We note that changes to workforce structures, constraints on key sea-going appointments, and efforts to stabilise the workforce have resulted in officers spending considerably longer operating at the Intermediate Mastery level before becoming eligible for Charge Qualification. We accept that under the current structure many officers remain remunerated at PG 3 despite undertaking duties of substantially greater complexity and consequence than those associated with newly qualified officers. We agree the proposal to establish PG 4 is an appropriate means to address the current limitations of the MLO structure.

[22] We note the workforce data provided to us and the evidence of shortages at the Lieutenant Commander rank. We accept that retention of experienced Intermediate-level Maritime Logistics Officers is important in sustaining future logistics capability and generating the cohort of officers from which future Heads of Department and senior logistics leaders will emerge. We are satisfied that recognition of Intermediate-level work value through the introduction of PG 4 may contribute positively to attraction, retention and workforce continuity within the employment category.

[23] We note that advancement to PG 4 will only occur following attainment of Primary Qualification and completion of two years of consolidation in core tactical and technical logistics roles. We accept that these requirements provide an objective and transparent basis for progression and appropriately identify the point at which officers transition from supervised development to the autonomous delivery of logistics outcomes across Defence.<sup>20</sup>

[24] We acknowledge the transition arrangements intended by the ADF and accept that approximately 115 members will be eligible to transition immediately to PG 4. We note the MLO employment category manager will assess all MLOs against the proposed Mastery Levels and all personnel who meet the criteria will be transitioned on the implementation date. Personnel yet to complete the pathway will progress upon meeting the requirements.<sup>21</sup>

## **Conclusion**

[25] In closing, we agree that the contemporary roles undertaken by Intermediate-level MLOs involve increased responsibility, autonomy and professional contribution when compared with Foundation-level employment. We are satisfied that completion of the Foundation to Intermediate pathway reflects a demonstrable increase in capability, experience and work value.

[26] We agree that the introduction of PG 4 appropriately recognises this increase in work value and aligns remuneration outcomes with Navy's Mastery Framework. We are also satisfied that the proposal maintains appropriate intra-Service and inter-Service relativities while supporting the continued development of a suitably qualified and experienced logistics workforce.

[27] We further accept that recognition of Intermediate-level MLOs may support retention outcomes within the employment category and contribute to the development of future logistics

leaders required to sustain Navy capability. We note the evidence of workforce pressures and shortages at the Lieutenant Commander rank, and accept that retention of experienced officers during the Intermediate stage is critical to workforce health and future capability generation.

[28] We note that the ADF intends to provide the Tribunal with a review of the implementation of these changes within two years of commencement.

[29] Determination 10 of 2026 gives effect to our decision from 24 September 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

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<sup>1</sup> BS78759685/ 5 May 2026 *Listing Application*

<sup>2</sup> ADF Submission *Matter 09 of 2026 Navy Maritime Logistics Officer*, filed 25 June 2026 (ADF1), page 1, paragraph 1.2

<sup>3</sup> ADF1, page 8, paragraph 2.8; [Nuclear Submarine \(SSN\) Workforce Tranche 3 | Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal](#)

<sup>4</sup> ADF1, page 8, paragraph 2.8

<sup>5</sup> ADF1, page 7, paragraph 2.7; [Navy Supply Branch | Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal](#)

<sup>6</sup> ADF1, page 5, paragraph 2.1

<sup>7</sup> ADF1, page 16, paragraph 4.3

<sup>8</sup> ADF1, page 14, paragraph 3.15

<sup>9</sup> ADF1, page 20, paragraph 4.13

<sup>10</sup> ADF1, page 20 paragraph 4.14 and page 21, paragraph 4.15

<sup>11</sup> Commonwealth Submission *Matter 09 of 2026 Navy Maritime Logistics Officer*, lodged on 13 July 2026; (Comm1); page 4, paragraphs 16, 17, and 22

<sup>12</sup> Affidavit of Lieutenant Commander Danica Thompson, affirmed 9 July 2026, (ADF2) page 5, paragraph 20

<sup>13</sup> ADF2, page 5, paragraph 21

<sup>14</sup> ADF2, page 5, paragraph 23

<sup>15</sup> Transcript, page 12, lines 20-24

<sup>16</sup> Transcript, page 12, lines 24-27

<sup>17</sup> Transcript, page 2, lines 1-10; [2026 National Defence Strategy and 2026 Integrated Investment Program | About | Defence](#)

<sup>18</sup> ADF1, page 3, paragraph 1.4

<sup>19</sup> ADF1, Annex A; Nature of Work Assessment

<sup>20</sup> ADF1, Annex A; Nature of Work Assessment

<sup>21</sup> ADF1, page 26, paragraph 6.3