



Australian Government
Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal

DECISION

Defence Act 1903

s.58H(2)(a)—Determination of the salaries and relevant allowances to be paid to members

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ARMOURED CORPS – ARMOURED CAVALRY

(Matter No. 12 of 2015)

THE HON. A. HARRISON, PRESIDENT

THE HON. A. BEVIS, MEMBER

CANBERRA, 24 FEBRUARY 2016

REAR ADMIRAL J. GOLDRICK AO CSC RAN RTD,
MEMBER

[1] This decision arises from an applicationⁱ made by the Australian Defence Force (ADF) pursuant to s.58H of the *Defence Act 1903* to merge three current Royal Australian Armoured Corps (RAAC) crewman employment categories into a single Armoured Cavalry employment category and to address changes in respect to the skill grade for members on completion of initial employment training.

[2] An inspection in regard to this matter was conducted at the Combined Arms Training Centre, Puckapunyal on 17 and 18 November 2015.

[3] The application was heard in Canberra on 11 February 2016. During the hearing Mr J. Phillips SC appeared for the ADF and Mr B. King for the Commonwealth.

Background

[4] The existing structure of RAAC employment categories was established in Matter 7 of 1997ⁱⁱ - *Royal Australian Armoured Corps Trade Restructure*.

[5] The Tribunal more recently considered the RAAC in Matter 1 of 2015 – *Armoured Personnel Carrier (APC) Crewman*ⁱⁱⁱ which re-established the APC Crewman category with five skill grades and four pay grades.

[6] Under *Plan Beersheba*^{iv} the RAAC is directed to create an Armoured Cavalry Regiment (ACR) in each of the multi-combat brigades; this is as opposed to the current grouping with the majority of armour in the 1st Brigade. Each ACR will comprise of a Tank Squadron, a Combat Reconnaissance Vehicle Squadron and an APC Squadron.

Submissions

[7] The ADF proposes to restructure the RAAC by merging three current crewmen categories of Tank Crewman, Cavalryman and APC Crewman into one Armoured Cavalry category. Additionally the ADF submit that there have been “*significant changes to the training continuum and associated graduate capability*”^v that justify an increase in pay grade on completion of initial employment training.

[8] The ADF submit that the proposed restructure will “*provide increased workforce flexibility and training efficiencies by providing a single employment category that operates a variety of armoured fighting vehicle variants*”.^{vi}

[9] Specifically the ADF propose to:

- a. amalgamate three existing crewmen categories and retain the majority of pay placements;
- b. create a new skill grade on completion of initial employment training at pay grade 3;
- c. remove the existing crewman specialist skill grade from tank and cavalryman categories;
- d. establish a ‘surveillance operator’ within the Armoured Cavalry specialist role at pay grade 4;
- e. establish an Armoured Cavalry Commander - (APC) Patrol at pay grade 5;
- f. recognise APC (Section) Sergeant within Armoured Cavalry Sergeant at pay grade 5; and
- g. align all Armoured Cavalry Warrant Officers at pay grade 6.^{vii}

[10] In its written submission the Commonwealth supported the ADF “*propositions in relation to the restructure*” with the exception of the creation of “*a new skill grade for members on completion of initial employment training*”.^{viii} The Commonwealth subsequently modified its position with respect to the creation of a new skill grade, a matter we refer to later in this decision.

Evidence

[11] On 17 and 18 November 2015 we attended an inspection in support of the proposed restructure. On the first day we were presented with evidence which demonstrated the current and intended category composition and the tasks undertaken by RAAC personnel. The dark hours of the first evening, and the second day, concentrated on demonstrations of the operational complexities of fighting vehicles in a combat environment.

[12] Evidence was provided in affidavit, and in hearing, from Lieutenant Colonel (LTCOL) M. Murdoch, Commanding Officer of the 1st Armoured Regiment at the time of the inspection.

[13] LTCOL Murdoch gave detailed written evidence of the benefits of the restructure which he stated *“include transferability of skills between previously stove-piped ‘platform based trade structures’; the opportunity to benefit from common training skills at the School of Armour; the removal of redundant skill grades; and the re-introduction of the Armoured Personnel Carrier trade”*.^{ix}

[14] LTCOL Murdoch detailed the administrative constraints of needing to *“seek permission through Army Headquarters to be able to [change the employment category] to conduct... conversion training to the other platform”* whereas the proposal would allow the commander to *“handle the cross-load of people within the organisation completely in-house”*.^x

[15] In his affidavit, and in oral evidence, LTCOL Murdoch outlined the historical changes in the initial employment training continuum *“In 1997... was 53 days in length, in 2009 it was increased to 86 days, now the training occurs over a period of 110 days”*.^{xi}

[16] He gave detailed evidence on the benefits of the current initial employment training and the resultant skill levels of the graduates stating that *“what I’m getting now is a person... who requires far less supervision and frees up my ability as a crew commander, and all the other crew commanders in the Regiment, to be able to exercise the other functions... importantly that’s had a significant impact... on safety”*.^{xii}

[17] LTCOL Murdoch made the observation that the training is *“much better delivered and the quality assurance is of a higher level [at the School of Armour and that] in the unit the people that are delivering that training aren’t necessarily trainers. Some people are very good at their job but that doesn’t mean they’re a good trainer. So the standard at which its being delivered varies at a unit whereas at a training establishment they are specifically trained as an instructor and need to meet set standards”*.^{xiii}

[18] In cross examining LTCOL Murdoch the Commonwealth addressed their concerns with regard to initial employment training and the skills acquired. In reply LTCOL Murdoch detailed that training in the unit (as opposed to at the School of Armour) *“can take me between six months... two years but, not unusually, 18 months. It’s still the same quantity of training that’s being delivered but my windows of opportunity in a regiment are reduced as to when I can deliver that training. Also I’ve got people trickle-feeding so I can’t do people en-masse necessarily. So that’s why it takes me much longer in a unit to deliver what is primarily only 50 days of training that still takes me a year and a half”*.^{xiv} In their closing statement the Commonwealth stated they were *“persuaded by the arguments today, both the*

oral and the inspection evidence” stating “it is clear that there has been a work value change”. As a consequence the Commonwealth indicated that opposition to this aspect of the ADF proposition was no longer pressed.^{xv}

[19] Evidence during the inspection informed us on the “*complexity of the tasks and equipment expected of a surveillance specialist, including the similarity of training and...equipment between the multi-spectrum surveillance system*”.^{xvi}

[20] We heard evidence from LTCOL Murdoch that the work value of supervisors of APC, Tank and Cavalry squadrons is inseparable and that the “*roles, responsibilities and experience levels are identical*”.^{xvii}

Consideration

[21] We considered the evidence that the RAAC construct has been designed to enable the workforce to meet the requirements of *Plan Beersheba* by transitioning from single platform, single role categories to a single category capable of the operation of all vehicles within the ACR.

[22] We accept the evidence of LTCOL Murdoch that to “*rationalise three trade structures into one removes administrative barriers...and increases the flexibility afforded to a regimental Commanding Officer to achieve direct capability requirements*”.^{xviii}

[23] We also accept the evidence that due to increased skills on completion of initial employment training, and the subsequent improved capability, soldiers will require less supervision and guidance when joining a regiment which will enhance the collective capability of the RAAC.

[24] Evidence in regard to the restrictions and quality of training within an operational unit, as opposed to at the School of Armour, was considered in detail and we note the operational and administrative burdens that have been reduced by the current initial employment training as well as the increased skills of the graduates.

[25] We accept the evidence that there have been significant changes to the training continuum and associated initial employment graduate capability and that units now consistently receive a soldier who is fully employable and deployable. We accept the evidence of LTCOL Murdoch that “*the work value that a...graduate provides to the regiment immediately upon arrival is now equivalent to that of a soldier under the previous regime after serving six to eighteen months in a regiment*”.^{xix} We agree that the work value of the graduate from initial employment training should be recognised at pay grade 3 and that this category should replace the previous three categories.

[26] We should indicate that having heard the witness evidence, the revised position of the Commonwealth in respect to the skill grade on completion of initial employment training was an appropriate and proper concession to be made at that time.

[27] We accept that the skill grade of Crewman Specialist as introduced in 1997 has not been utilised and no longer has relevance to the proposed employment structure^{xx}; we agree the removal of the skill grade.

[28] On the evidence presented in the ADF submission and demonstrated at the inspection, we agree that the work value of the surveillance operator should be recognised at pay grade 4. We are persuaded that a surveillance operator does have an enhanced role with respect to work value noting the complexities of the equipment and roles and that they “*leave the School of Armour completely able to integrate and provide the work value required*”^{xxi} in order to provide analytical advice.

[29] On the evidence presented, we agree that the category of Armoured Cavalry Commander (Patrol) be established at pay grade 5.

[30] We considered the ADF submission that the work value of an APC (Section) Sergeant is not considered greater than that of an APC, Tank or Combat Reconnaissance Vehicle (CRV) (Troop) Sergeant^{xxii} and agree that the role be remunerated at pay grade 5.

[31] We accept the evidence that the amalgamation of the Supervisor APC Squadron Operations, Tank and CRV Warrant Officer will become a single Armoured Cavalry Warrant Officer and be employable, with the requisite cross training, within any of the three Squadrons within an ACR,^{xxiii} and agree to the required alignment of the categories at pay grade 6.

Conclusion

[32] Having considered all of the evidence we are persuaded that each of the propositions sought by the ADF are justified.

[33] Determination 4 of 2016 will give effect to our decision with an operative date of 7 April 2016.

THE HON. A. HARRISON, PRESIDENT
THE HON. A. BEVIS, MEMBER
REAR ADMIRAL J. GOLDRICK AO CSC RAN RTD, MEMBER

Appearances:

Mr J. Phillips SC assisted by Ms Robertson for the ADF

Mr B King assisted by Mr S Leung for the Commonwealth

ⁱ Listing application – Royal Australian Armoured Corps Review DMR/OUT/2015/18 dated 21 August 2015.

ⁱⁱ Decision - Matter 7 of 1997 – RAAC Trade Structure Review dated 17 December 1997 and Determination 1 of 1998.

ⁱⁱⁱ Decision – Matter 1 of 2015 - Royal Australian Armoured Corps (RAAC) – Armoured Personnel Carrier Crewman dated 8 April 2016 and Determination 2 of 2015.

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- ^{iv} Plan Beersheba is a phased program adjusting Army's force structure so that optimal capability is generated to meet strategic guidance and contemporary threats.
- ^v ADF1 Royal Australian Armoured Corps Armoured Cavalry ECN 060 11 – 12 February 2016 - page 14 paragraph 27.
- ^{vi} ADF 1 page 6 paragraph 2.
- ^{vii} ADF1 page 6 paragraph 5.
- ^{viii} CWLTH1 – Matter 12 of 2015 – Royal Australian Armoured Corps Restructure dated 25 January 2015.
- ^{ix} ADF3 - Affidavit – LTCOL M. Murdoch dated 4 February 2016 page 2 paragraph 5.
- ^x Transcript of 11 February 2016 page 8 line 44 – page 9 line 3.
- ^{xi} ADF3 – page 3 paragraph 9.
- ^{xii} Transcript page 9 lines 21 – 25.
- ^{xiii} Transcript page 11 line 12 – 18.
- ^{xiv} Transcript page 22 lines 24 – 32.
- ^{xv} Transcript page 31 lines 16 – 20.
- ^{xvi} Inspection report paragraphs 21 and 22.
- ^{xvii} ADF3 page 4 paragraph 13.
- ^{xviii} ADF3 – page 2 paragraph 6.
- ^{xix} ADF3 – page 3 paragraph 10.
- ^{xx} ADF1 page 18 paragraph 34 sub paragraphs e – g.
- ^{xxi} Transcript page 20 line 33.
- ^{xxii} ADF1 page 21 paragraph 34 sub paragraph o.
- ^{xxiii} ADF 1 page 21 paragraph 34 sub paragraph p and q.