

DEFENCE FORCE REMUNERATION TRIBUNAL

MATTER NO 15 OF 2006

ROYAL AUSTRALIAN ELECTRICAL AND MECHANICAL ENGINEERS

GROUND TRADES RESTRUCTURE

STATEMENT

The Australian Defence Force (ADF) has sought changes to the remuneration structure of the Royal Australian Electrical and Mechanical Engineers (RAEME) ground trades.

RAEME is the Army Corps responsible for the maintenance, recovery and repair of Army's aircraft, vehicles, watercraft, weapon systems and technical equipment. The ADF case dealt only with the ground trades. The ADF submitted that air trades are to be addressed with other aviation areas of the ADF at a later date.

The Tribunal had the benefit of an inspection at Robertson Barracks in Darwin and briefing on the work of the trades. Restructure of the RAEME ground trades results from an Army review in 2003 and consideration of training requirements for Reserves.

The ADF proposed:

- placement of the following in Pay Group 3: Australian Regular Army (ARA) and Army Reserve (ARes) members of the Fitter Armament, Mechanic Vehicle, Technician Electrical and Technician Electronics Systems categories who possess a Certificate III in their trade upon enlistment;
- introduction of a specialist skill grade at the Craftsman level in Pay Group 5 for the mechanical trades and in Pay Group 6 for the Technician Electronics Systems category; (ARA);
- placement in Pay Group 5 of ARA members of the mechanical trades at the Advanced skill grade (completion of Subject 2 and Subject 4 for Corporal courses), with a consequential increase to Pay Group 5 for ARA members of the mechanical trades at the Supervisor skill grade;

- placement in Pay Group 6 of ARA members of the electrical/electronics trades at the Advanced skill grade (completion of Subject 2 and Subject 4 for Corporal courses), with a consequential increase to Pay Group 6 for ARA members of the electrical/electronics trades at the Supervisor skill grade;
- increasing pay placement for Artificer Mechanic Grade 2 from Pay Group 5 to Pay Group 6 (ARA)
- reducing to Pay Group 4 the Technician Electrical Grade 3 (ARes) and the Technician Electronics Systems Grade 3 (ARes);
- reducing to Pay Group 5 the Artificer Electronics (ARes);
- re-naming “Mechanic Recovery Advanced” as “Mechanic Recovery Specialist”, in line with other RAEME ground trades;
- establishing an Advanced grade for the Mechanic Recovery trade, in line with the other RAEME ground trades, with an associated increase to Pay Group 4 for Mechanic Recovery Grade 2 (ARA) on completion of Subject 2 and Subject 4 for Corporal courses;
- reducing to Pay Group 3 the Mechanic Recovery Advanced Grade 1 (ARes) and the Mechanic Recovery Supervisor Grade 1 (ARes);
- increasing to Pay Group 5 the Mechanic Recovery Manager Grade 2 (ARA)

The ADF submitted that its proposal took account of advances in technology and personal accountability and liability resulting from adoption of the Technical Regulatory Framework (TRF). It also noted the requirement for members at all ranks to work with limited or no supervision, applying greater skill levels. The ADF was satisfied that its proposed placements are consistent with the RAN Marine Technician trade, which is a benchmark category.

The ADF sought non reduction provisions for about 20 Reserve members affected by lower placement of their skill grades, providing time for them to qualify at the next skill grade.

The Commonwealth supported the ADF proposal.

The Armed Forces Federation of Australia (ArFFA) also supported the proposed restructure but expressed a view that remuneration for trainees in the technical trades was inadequate and should be addressed as soon as possible.

We agree with ArFFA's submission. But it is not a matter of reviewing trainee pay rates only. Extended time on trainee rates is a function of training requirements before a member is deployable in a designated role. There is no obstacle that we know of to recognising an intermediate point where a member may be deployable in a more limited, but necessary, capacity. In our view such a re-appraisal would be wise in the technical trades, many of which are recruiting priorities in a competitive market. We encourage the ADF to address this as a matter of urgency.

Having considered the submissions and evidence in this case, we have determined to approve the structure proposed by the ADF, as supported by the Commonwealth and ArFFA.

The date of effect for the new structure will be on and from 14 December 2006. The parties should provide a draft determination to the Tribunal Secretariat by the end of January 2007.