



Australian Government
Defence Force Remuneration Tribunal

DECISION

Defence Act 1903
s.58H—Functions and powers of Tribunal

AIR FORCE: PERSONNEL PSYCHOLOGIST (Matter 5 of 2018)

MS I. ASBURY, PRESIDENT

MR A. MORRIS, MEMBER

CANBERRA, 31 OCTOBER 2018

RADM J. GOLDRICK AO CSC RAN RTD, MEMBER

[1] This decision relates to a listing application¹ made by the Australian Defence Force (ADF) under s.58H of the *Defence Act 1903* in Matter 5 of 2018 – *Air Force: Personnel Psychologist* to establish four skill and pay grades within the psychologist specialisation.

[2] We considered this matter on the papers and in conference. We were assisted in our discussions by Squadron Leader D. Merkx, from the Directorate of Personnel – Air Force on 24 October 2018.

Background

[3] The ADF employs psychologists across all three Services either in the Permanent or Reserve Forces, or both. Until 2016 the Air Force psychologist specialisation only existed in the Reserve Force, however the *2016 Defence White Paper*² identified the need for six full time Permanent Force positions which were subsequently established on 6 March 2017.

Submissions

[4] The ADF states that Air Force is now seeking to align the psychologist specialisation with Navy and Army, as well as with industry standards. It submits that a restructure will enable the capability to attract suitably experienced officers while also retaining current members.

[5] Air Force proposes to amend the current one skill grade and one pay grade (pay grade 2) structure to four pay and skill grades (pay grades 2 through to 6) based on the four existing skill grades in Navy and eight skill grades within Army.

[6] The ADF submits that the proposed structure of four skill and pay grades will start at the Flying Officer rank. Progression through the grades will be based on the value of Service experience, military and professional training and professional education and experience as detailed below:³

Skill grade	Pay Grade	Indicative rank
SG1	PG2	Flying Officer
SG2	PG3	Flight Lieutenant
SG3	PG4	Flight Lieutenant
SG4	PG5	Squadron Leader and above
SG4 ⁴	PG6	Squadron Leader and above

[7] The Commonwealth supports the proposal and is satisfied that the structure provides a sustainable psychologist workforce that aligns with Navy, Army and industry.⁵

Consideration

[8] We accept that since the advent of the Graded Officer Pay Structure (GOPS) in 2007 the Air Force psychology workforce has not had its value assessed by the Tribunal. We noted that when GOPS was established the Air Force psychologist specialisation only existed as a small Reserve function and that members were placed in pay grade 2. At that time both Navy and Army had more established psychology workforces and included them in their GOPS submissions at pay grades 2 through to 8.

[9] We considered the evidence that Air Force is experiencing a range of challenges in attracting suitably experienced and ‘job-ready’ candidates to the psychology specialisation. We accept that *“a number of applicants have either delayed or declined appointment to the entry level positions in Air Force because of the lower remuneration rates”*.⁶

[10] We note the affidavit of Squadron Leader Merx in regard to the title of ‘personnel psychologist’ and in providing examples of psychology expertise across the Services. We gave consideration to her statement that Air Force is *“trying to develop the skills of psychologists and remunerate them in terms of their skill and understanding of the organisation, not necessarily just related to their rank and promotional courses”*.⁷

[11] We note that this matter affects three permanent members and 17 Reserve members and that Air Force also “engages a number of psychologists who are civilians, and who work in Personnel Branch in cooperation with the uniformed psychologists”.⁸

[12] We agree that the proposal demonstrates “sufficient similarity to Navy and Army pay grades, structures and career progression models as to be unlikely to impact their respective workforces”.⁹

Conclusion

[13] We agree that the proposed increase in skill and pay grades is likely to enable the specialisation to attract and retain suitably experienced psychologists to deliver the capability sought.

[14] Determination 11 of 2018 will give effect to our decision from 1 November 2018.

MS I. ASBURY, PRESIDENT

MR A. MORRIS, MEMBER

RADM J. GOLDRICK AO CSC RAN RTD, MEMBER

¹ DMR/OUT/2018/11 Listing Application – Air Force – Personnel Psychologist Submission dated 5 April 2018.

² <http://www.defence.gov.au/whitepaper/>

³ ADF Submission dated September 2018 page 9 paragraph 5.1.

⁴ Plus one pay grade for Air Force Command if applicable

⁵ Commonwealth submission Matter 5 of 2018 – Air Force - Personnel Psychologist dated 24 October 2018.

⁶ ADF submission page 8 paragraph 4.3.

⁷ Affidavit Squadron Leader D Merx dated 19 October 2018 page 5 paragraph 20.

⁸ Affidavit page 3 paragraph 13.

⁹ Commonwealth submission page 6 paragraph 41.