

## Trade and technical jobs in the ADF

**This area presents young people, and also very much those not so young, with some excellent opportunities. For this issue we will explore the many opportunities available to gain trade/technician (TR/T) qualifications and experience in the defence forces.**

On your first browse through the defence jobs website you will notice the significant number of opportunities that exist – currently 30 different technical jobs.

We have listed all 30 jobs and the respective service they belong to in table one. To make it easier for you, we have further divided these jobs into three different categories in table two – these being aviation, traditional and high-tech/specialist. Hopefully, table two will break down the choices into areas that you can more closely relate to.



### Why go for TR/T?

Publicity over the past couple of years has highlighted a shortage in TR/T in many sections of Australian industry. The skill shortage is particularly acute in the resource industry, off-shore industries, aviation and many others – including Defence.

The reasons for this are many – but two of the principal reasons being the massive expansion in secondary students going onto tertiary studies in the 1990s, coupled with many sectors of Australian industry ceasing to train apprentices.

TR/T jobs in the ADF present excellent opportunities. Some of the reasons people should consider them include:

- » Good pay from start of training
- » Theory completed in one block
- » Adult applicants accepted
- » Training standards far exceed most civilian opportunities
- » Civilian accreditation
- » Advanced training opportunities
- » ADF benefit package

It would not be an exaggeration to say that people who commence a TR/T career in the ADF in many ways are guaranteeing they will never be unemployed, as the advanced and specialist training available to ADF applicants is virtually limitless and people with a military TR/T background are very keenly sought by civilian industry.

### Training, pay and conditions

With all trade jobs the Initial Minimum Period of Service (IMPS) is six years. But, it is important to note, approximately the first 18 months of this period will be devoted to training.

Training in all three services commences with military training (MT). This is the induction and training course that all enlisted ranks go through. In the Navy this is conducted at HMAS Cerberus in Victoria, for the RAAF at RAAF Base Wagga Wagga, NSW, and for Army applicants at the Army base at Kapooka, near Wagga Wagga, NSW.

Typically this period of initial military training will last for approximately 10 weeks.

Trainees will then move on to the trade-training phase of the process. This period is known as initial employment training (IET). There are three principal facilities (but many others, depending on the specialty) that are used; they being HMAS Cerberus, Victoria, RAAF Base Wagga Wagga and The Army

Logistics Training Centre near Wodonga, Victoria.

An interesting point to note is that just because you have joined the army, for example, does not necessarily mean you will be doing your IET at an Army training centre. It makes sense if you think about it – the Army sends its trainee aviation technicians to the RAAF School of Technical Training, and the RAAF will send its trainee vehicle mechanics to The Army Logistics Training Centre. In short, each service will use the facility that best meets their respective needs – and sometimes you may attend more than one facility to complete your IET.

IET may last between 40 to 72 weeks, depending on the trade.

After you complete IET you will usually commence a period of on the job training (OJT). This is where the fun really starts and you get to use your new-found skills in anger.

OJT will typically last for between 10 to 18 months, after which you will be considered fully qualified.

Naturally though, for the first few years, it is very much a learning process and seeking advice and guidance from seniors in the trade is an important aspect of learning and showing a positive attitude. Those who show the most motivation and skill will always be selected first for advanced training courses and deployments, and be given the fullest consideration if they elect to study for an advanced diploma or engineering degree.

One of the key benefits of the TR/T path is that you get paid reasonably well even when you are training. You will start on recruit pay of about \$30k/yr for the first 10 weeks. Then advancing to \$35k for the first six months of IET, with about a \$2200 pay rise after 6 months and another \$2200ish in another six months.

*[Editor's note – in issue #20, p29, I argued that trade trainees are at a serious pay disadvantage over non-technical ADF members. Even though the tradesman will eventually be on a higher fortnightly wage, it could take him 10 years or more to catch up on his non-tech comrade who started earning a proper wage, and accumulating rank seniority etc, far sooner. Food for thought.]*

After finishing IET, salary inclusive of various service allowances, will be between \$55k to \$70k depending on the pay group your trade fits under. You also have to keep in mind that you will be eligible for a wide range of other ADF benefits such as rental





**TABLE 1 – Current TR/T training opportunities listed on [www.defencejobs.gov.au](http://www.defencejobs.gov.au)**

| Army                          | Air Force  | Navy                              |
|-------------------------------|--|-----------------------------------|
| Aircraft Life Support Fitter  | Aircraft Armament Technician                           | Electronics Technician            |
| Aircraft Structural Fitter    | Aircraft Life Support Fitter                           | Aviation Technician Aircraft      |
| Aircraft Technician           | Aircraft Spray Painter                                 | Aviation Technician Avionics      |
| Avionics Technician           | Aircraft Structural Fitter                             | Electronics Technician Submariner |
| Carpenter                     | Aircraft Technician                                    | Marine Technician                 |
| Electrician                   | Avionic Technician                                     | Marine Technician Submariner      |
| Electronics Technician        | Carpenter  |                                   |
| Fitter Armament               | Communication Electronic Technician                    |                                   |
| Metalsmith                    | Electrician  |                                   |
| Plumber                       | Fitter & Turner (Ground Mechanical Engineering Fitter) |                                   |
| Technician Electrical         | Motor mechanic (Ground Support Equipment Fitter)       |                                   |
| Telecommunications Technician | Plumber  |                                   |
| Vehicle Mechanic              |  |                                   |

**TABLE 2 – Job categories**

| Traditional           | High Tech/ Specialist               | Aviation                     |
|-----------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| Electrician           | Electronics Technician              | Aircraft Life Support Fitter |
| Carpenter             | Fitter Armament                     | Aircraft Structural Fitter   |
| Plumber               | Metalsmith                          | Aircraft Technician          |
| Technician Electrical | Telecommunications Technician       | Avionics Technician          |
| Vehicle Mechanic      | Communication Electronic Technician | Aircraft Armament Technician |
| Motor Mechanic        | Marine Technician                   | Aircraft Spray Painter       |
| Fitter & Turner       | Marine Technician Submariner        | Aviation Technician Aircraft |
|                       |                                     | Aviation Technician Avionics |

assistance, housing-loan subsidies, medical, dental and so on.

**Categories of trade**

As you can see from table two, we have divided the trades into three categories in an effort to simplify the process – aviation, traditional, and high-tech/specialist.

There are excellent opportunities across all three areas but there are some issues that need consideration.

First let’s consider the aviation tech jobs. These involve specialising in different areas of aircraft maintenance for fixed wing if you are in the RAAF, or choppers in the Army and Navy. Broadly, people specialise in either structures or avionics but the RAAF has some further sub-specialties such as spray painting. The civilian equivalent is an AME or LAME (licenced aircraft mechanical engineer) which your ADF qualifications will more than adequately prepare you for. The great news here is that there is a critical shortage of AMEs and LAMEs worldwide with the average age of the civilian aircraft tradesperson being 55 years old – so you will have a choice of jobs if you decide to leave the ADF after your service. But keep in mind you may be limited to working in the aircraft maintenance sector unless you do further training.



We also have a section for traditional trades such as electricians, plumbers, carpenters, fitters, vehicle mechanics and so on. Most people will have a good understanding of these types of roles. The ADF roles are very similar except with a higher standard of training in a much broader skill set, plus military training. The final section is for high-tech trades or specialist trades. The high-tech area is mainly some of the electronic/electronic communication areas – certainly an excellent background to be skilled in given the direction technology has moved over the past two decades. The marine technical qualifications we would categorise as

a specialist trade, as we would an Army metalsmith. An armament fitter is also a specialist trade and, while we see nothing wrong with it, keep in mind there is no direct civilian equivalent.

**TR/T is for me – but which service?**

Do you like boats, water and can you live in close quarters? Then the Royal Australian Navy is the obvious choice. The reality is that junior trades will be doing a lot of sea time in their first few years, so if this is something that really appeals, seriously consider the RAN.

Most TR/T jobs are in the RAAF and Army. You need to think carefully about each organisation, its culture and the type of operations each performs. Many people also regard base location as an important consideration. The RAAF is the most technical of the services and could perhaps be where the academic culture is also strongest.

There are many who have served in more than one branch of the ADF who will readily tell you that military and leadership skills are strongest in the Army. They will say that in the Army everyone is expected to be a leader.

Whichever way you go, the bottom line is that TR/Ts present fantastic opportunities for those who are looking for a good job, good pay and excellent training.