

Appendix I

Chapter 4: The ADF Workforce Pipeline: Women's representation and critical issues – Section 4.4 Career management and progression

Promotions Boards

All boards observed by the Review were for promotion to mid-to-senior officer ranks – the Navy board was for promotion to Lieutenant Commander, the Army board for promotion to Colonel, and the Air Force board for promotion to Squadron Leader. In each case the process was thorough and involved, and some brief observations follow.

Navy board

The Navy board attended by the Review was for promotion within one specific primary qualification (PQ). It was staffed by six officers who were one rank or two ranks (in the case of the Chair) more senior than the rank candidates were competing for promotion to. The board included one 'independent' member, one woman, and the others were from different areas within the primary qualification in question. There were 127 candidates examined. Career managers and a note taker were also present.

A substantial dossier was compiled for each candidate, and this was available to the board members before they met. Based on this material, board members independently submitted scores for PQ competency, performance, professional development, potential and NGN signature behaviours and values. These scores were tallied and the candidates were ranked. When the board met they discussed each candidate, paying particular interest to areas where there was an outlying score given by one board member. Board members also noted any instances where they had any perceived or real conflicts of interest.

Candidates were then ranked in several rounds of examination (e.g. round one 'deciding who will definitely not be promoted', round two, identifying a benchmark 'who is competitive for promotion', round three, assessing all those above this point, and deciding 'who will be recommended for promotion').¹⁰² Candidates were considered for their capacity to be both 'qualified and generalist' officers at the next rank, which appeared to offer some scope for the promotion of officers who had not followed the traditionally prescribed career path.¹⁰³

Finally, according to the Chief of Navy's promotion board guidance, 'the officer's overall performance [should be considered] through the prism of Navy's signature behaviours and values.'¹⁰⁴ All candidates were given a score for their signature behaviours at the board attended by the Review, but the ability for assessment in this area was much more limited than in others. While there were seven categories into which 'performance' and 'competence' could be ranked, there were only four quite generic categories for signature behaviour rankings, one of which applied to the vast majority of those examined.¹⁰⁵ The board had little material for assessing candidates in this area other than attendance at mandatory courses and any conduct records. This made this item more of a check against standard behaviour rather than a chance to examine any positive or proactive displays of leadership in this area.

Army board

The Army board attended by the Review was not category specific. It was staffed by 12 officers who were one rank or two ranks (in the case of the Chair) more senior than the rank that candidates were competing for promotion to. There were 117 candidates examined. The board included one woman, and the Review was informed that women who sit on the boards are drawn from various parts of the Army with the aim of having a diverse panel and varied opinions.¹⁰⁶ DOCM-A is considering ways that it can increase diversity, including by having civilian members on its promotion boards.¹⁰⁷

A document of approximately 40 to 50 pages in length which included six years' worth of performance reviews and other supplementary documents was provided to the board before they met. Individuals were independently assessed against four pillars – performance, qualifications, experience and potential – and given a blind vote in a number of categories which were submitted to DOCM-A to compile for the purposes of an initial ordering for further examination.

The board examined candidates with a process similar to the Navy board. Army board members were encouraged to identify and communicate any conflicts of interest for any particular candidate, with the discussion being led by a member with particular knowledge of the individual, or one who gave an outlying score. The ordering was adjusted, and candidates were assigned one of four bands. Band one was for those likely to be promoted in this round (and if there were insufficient positions, then in the next round), band two for those highly competitive, some of whom may be promoted, band three for those unlikely to be promoted at this time and band four for those not to be re-examined by a board.

After all candidates were considered for promotion within the primary/traditional 'command and leadership' pathway, the board examined applicants for promotion through Army's 'pathway strategy'. 'Pathways' was introduced in 2007 to provide alternative career pathways and allow Army to acknowledge and retain skills and individuals who may not advance along its traditional pathway, and to give the Chief a wider range of personnel to prospectively promote.¹⁰⁸ Candidates could be considered through the traditional stream, and also one of the pathway categories. Pathways categories include logistics, aviation, information management, capability and project management, personnel, operations, plans and training, intelligence, and specialist.¹⁰⁹

Air Force board

The Air Force board attended by the Review was category specific. It was staffed by four officers who were one rank or two ranks (in the case of the Chair) more senior than the rank that candidates were competing for promotion to. There were 106 candidates examined. The board members were drawn from the category in question, and there was one woman. The personnel manager for this category and a secretary were also present.

The Air Force process differed from the Navy and Army processes in a few key ways. There appeared to be less material circulated to the board before the day of the meeting, and there were no pre-submitted independent votes. For this reason, candidates were not examined in a prospective merit order, but by seniority. The personnel manager would introduce each candidate, and talk the board through some details which were projected onto a screen at the front of the room. These details included seniority, three years of PAR and other report scores, postings and any administrative issues. The Chair informed the board that the PAR and other scores prominently noted in each candidate's introduction would be a guide, but that they should pay more attention to the narrative element of any reviews. The panel then reviewed files for each candidate available to them on personal computers. From this point, the process more closely mirrored the Navy and Army boards.

Consideration of individual candidates happened in several rounds. In the first round, the panel decided whether or not the candidates would be broadly competitive for promotion, and assigned them to one of several bands. After this round, the board began to rank candidates by finding 'benchmark' individuals, and then comparing them to others who were similarly placed.