



Representative Association of Commissioned Officers  
Cromhlachas Ionadaitheach na nOifigeach Coimisiúnta



08 August 2016

**Mr. David Denny**  
**Principal Officer**  
**Remuneration, Industrial Relations & Pension Division**

A Chairde,

### **RACO - PUBLIC SERVICE PAY COMMISSION**

On behalf of commissioned officers of the Defence Forces, I would like to thank DPER for the opportunity to express our concerns prior to the full launch of the Public Service Pay Commission.

#### **Defence Forces Conciliation and Arbitration Scheme**

Since 1989 RACO has represented Defence Force (DF) commissioned officers in relation to their unique remuneration and conditions of military service. The Oireachtas objective in the establishment of Representation was to provide “a representative voice on remuneration and other conditions of service”, thereby providing an onus on all concerned to provide a scheme designed and capable of delivering effective negotiation mechanisms.

The delivery of change in a positive atmosphere requires not just commitment in policy documents but the actual practice of respect, transparency, consistency in process and conclusion of process prior to decision making. These fundamentals are clearly enshrined by the original minute on the introduction of Representation by the Minister of Defence in 1989.

#### **Positive Engagement**

Over these last 20 years, RACO members have been the leaders and managers in the DF that have implemented and delivered on the elements of successful and unrivalled process of change and modernisation. RACO is of the view that despite the positive commitment of its members to re-organisation and reform, Management continues to frustrate or subvert the current C&A Scheme and Parallel processes resulting in less than harmonious industrial relations. This is leading to a situation where large numbers of well-educated and sought-after officers are rejecting these changes by electing to retire voluntarily and well in advance of their normal retirement on age grounds.

RACO is very cognisant of other Representative Associations in the Parallel Process seeking trade union status from the EUHR, but unlike these Associations, RACO accepts the position that there is no industrial relations actions Representative Associations can take to influence decisions (for all the obvious reasons). This acceptance is firmly on the understanding that Management would be transparent in their actions and engage with the association on issues that affect their Members.

#### **Parallel Process**

For some time now RACO has been expressing its concerns to the Official Side and questioning the relevance of the current Parallel Process. Social Partnership, the structures under which the Parallel Process was introduced, is dead since 2009. The Association's experience shows

that the real negotiations are solely being conducted with the Public Service Unions of the ICTU. This was evidenced by the large number of "side deals" that were negotiated by Public Service Unions and summarised in the Chairman's Notes. The continued absence of appropriate negotiation status at such National Pay Talks places our Members at a significant disadvantage to Public Sector Unions. These Unions are voting on pay & conditions that directly affect our Members. How can the Association have confidence in a Parallel Process in which they are denied credible negotiation status? In the context of a changing Workplace Relation landscape, the Association and Government must now consider how best to address the current obvious imbalance of the Parallel Process and develop adequate mechanisms and structures through which to address Representative Associations.

A motion put to our Biennial Delegate Conference by the National Executive in November 2015, requested the Minister for Defence commence an external review of the C&A Process as a consequence of this dysfunction. The Members requested that the Minister support such a review in an effort to rebuild the loss of confidence in the "only" Industrial Relations Process open to our Members. Regrettably, RACO has heard nothing on this matter since.

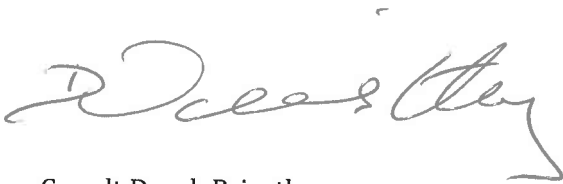
### **Time for Review**

If a Public Service Pay Commission is to be productive, effective and deliver on the objective of achieving an effective representative voice on remuneration and other conditions of service, we ultimately would suggest that a review of the current DF C&A Scheme and the operation of the Parallel Process is now well overdue. To this end, and at this early stage of the developing the process, we respectfully ask that the Minister Donohoe T.D. also seriously deliberate on the merits of reviewing both.

### **Pay Commission**

Notwithstanding seeking a review of the DF C&A scheme and parity of esteem providing equity for Associations in the Parallel Process Parallel, RACO simply requests that DPER and the new Commission continue to bring it into the process at early stage and ultimately be given the opportunity for meaningful engagement on members' concerns involving negotiations about their pay and conditions of service. We trust that any roles and mythology to be employed will inherently adopt such a position.

Is mise le meas,



Comdt Derek Priestley  
Deputy General Secretary