



DEFENCE RESERVES SUPPORT

Supporting Australia's Reservists and their Employers

PRIVATE SECTOR LEAVE GUIDELINES

An overview of Private Sector Leave guidelines
for employers of Defence Reservists

The guidelines have been developed by the Defence Reserves Support Council (DRSC), an advisory body established by the Australian Government, which comprises of representatives from peak employer groups, industry bodies and unions including the Australian Chamber of Commerce and Industry, the Australian Industry Group, the Council of Small Business Organisations of Australia and the Australian Council of Trade Unions. The tertiary sector, women's and youth groups and indigenous organisations are also represented on the Council.

The guidelines provide clear direction for employers, Reservists and the Australian Defence Force (ADF) in relation to Reservists employed in the private sector. Employers are strongly encouraged to adopt the guidelines as a best-practice model for supportive workplace arrangements and practices. A policy for the public sector has already been introduced.

Employer actions

Employers are encouraged to develop policies that provide clear support for their employees to undertake Defence service. Supportive employers are encouraged to:

- Have a clear human resources policy for employee participation in the Defence Force Reserves with provision for Defence leave, acknowledging that Reserve training enhances job performance as well as contributing to national security
- Sign statements of support for the Reserves, displaying these publicly and incorporating them in the organisation's HR manuals. Statements are available on the Defence Reserves Support website
- Ensure every level of management in the organisation is aware of the supportive policy
- Recognise the accomplishments of Defence service by employees in the organisation's newsletters and other publications
- Grant, as a minimum, two weeks (10 working days or 14 calendar days) Defence leave each year, in addition to the employee's annual leave, either as paid or unpaid leave or on a top-up pay basis
- Provide additional Defence leave, on request from the ADF, for attendance at training or for deployment on an operation or exercise

- Support Reservists during their first year of Defence service to enable the member to complete recruit or initial-employment training, in order to allow Reservists to achieve the necessary employment competency skills and qualifications
- Ensure that any absence on Defence service does not break an employee's continuity of service for the purposes of seniority and employment
- Preserve access to other entitlements during absences on Defence service, including counting periods of up to six weeks leave without pay as service for accrual of annual leave and long service leave entitlements
- Commit, wherever possible, to the provision of job opportunities and benefits for Reservist employees, consistent with those for other employees
- Review the Reservist's salary or conditions along with other employees if a periodic review is undertaken while the Reservist is absent on Defence service. If a new workforce agreement is signed during the Reservist's absence, then the Reservist should be considered as an employee for the purposes of that agreement
- Actively address the Reservist's re-integration into the workforce, without detriment, after compulsory deployment or absence on military duties including training

Where employers currently provide levels of support exceeding these guidelines, they are strongly encouraged to maintain their present levels of support into the future.

Defence Reserve Service (Protection) Act 2001

The Act provides that an employer must not prevent or hinder an ADF Reservist from undertaking Defence Service, including the training necessary to prepare for that service.

It also makes it unlawful for an employer to discriminate against, disadvantage or dismiss an employee for undertaking Defence service.

Reservist and ADF actions

The guidelines also contain recommended actions for the ADF and Reservists to ensure the needs of employers are met.

These actions include:

- Providing sufficient notice of a Reservist's requirement for Defence service
- Seeking to identify alternative dates for the Defence service if it causes significant operational difficulties for the employer
- Whenever possible to not withdraw from or cancel a course or other period of Defence service at short notice if Defence leave has been arranged with the employer
- To advise the employer of qualifications or skills a Reservist has gained as a result of Defence service
- To inform the employer about the Employer Support Payment Scheme and opportunities to participate in or observe Defence activities

How do I find out more information?

1800 803 485

www.defencereservessupport.gov.au