

Call out exercise – Operation Civil Assist 2026

Employed reserve members and employers information

Overview

At the request of Government, the Governor-General of Australia may issue a call out order to some or all of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) Reserves for defence service.

Operation Civil Assist is conducted annually to test Defence's preparedness through the rehearsal of a call out. This means it's not an official call out, but it is exercised like one.

Civil Assist 2026 will run from **18 to 20 September**. Reserve members will be notified by their unit if they are required and members are required to serve unless an *exemption* applies.

Guidance

Releasing reserve members

Employers **must** release reserve members to undertake defence service on Operation Civil Assist, unless the employer has received an *exemption*.

Work Group Exemptions

The Chief of the Defence Force (CDF) has directed that reserve members employed in certain worker categories and/or organisations are not bound to render service during Operation Civil Assist in 2026.

A full list of *worker group exemptions* is available via the website QR code below. Reserve members employed by an exempt organisation should notify their unit as soon as possible.

Leave from the workplace

There is no requirement to take any type of paid or unpaid leave while absent on defence service. However, most employment contracts contain provisions that some sort of leave be used.

In the absence of an employment contract and at a minimum, you may be released to render defence service on *leave without pay*.

Pay

Employers are not obligated to pay a reserve member when they are absent on defence service unless the reserve member is using a form of paid leave.

Service on Operation Civil Assist is rendered on reserve service days (RSD) and attracts standard RSD remuneration.

Financial assistance

The Employer Support Payment Scheme (ESPS) provides financial assistance to employers when reserve members are absent from their civilian workplace on eligible periods of defence service.

To support participation in Operation Civil Assist, the CDF has modified some standard ESPS eligibility requirements.

Applications must be submitted online via the [ESPS Online Claim System](#).

More information

Scan the website QR code below for further information.

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