



AUSTRALIAN DEFENCE FORCE RESERVES AND EMPLOYER SUPPORT

Operation CIVIL ASSIST 2025 Employers of Reserve members and call out exercises

What you need to know:

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

Operation Civil Assist 2025 will be conducted between **17 and 22 October 2025**.

Reserve members will be notified by their unit if they are required for Operation Civil Assist 2025 and all identified Reserve members are required to render defence unless an *exemption* applies.

Do I need to release my employee?

Yes. Employers must release employees that are Reserve members to undertake defence service on Operation Civil Assist 2025 unless your business or organisation has received an *exemption*.

Which employers have an exemption?

The Chief of the Defence Force (CDF) has directed that Reserve members employed in certain *Worker Group* businesses and organisations are not required to render service on Operation Civil Assist 2025. A list of *exempt* organisations is available at: www.reserveemployersupport.gov.au.

How do I seek an exemption?

Where there are **extenuating reasons**, employers of Reserve members may apply to Defence to have their business or organisation, or a specific employee Reserve member, *exempt* from Operation Civil Assist 2025.

Employer-initiated exemption requests should be made through the ADF Reserves and Employer Support Directorate, by contacting 1800 DEFENCE.

Do I have to pay my employee?

Employers are not obligated to pay an employee while they are absent on defence service unless the Reserve member is using a form of paid leave.

Example: A Reserve member renders 2-weeks of defence service and elects to use annual leave during the first week. In this scenario, the employer is obligated to pay their employee's wages during the first week but not the second.

What type of leave should my employee use?

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, during periods of defence service and as a minimum, an employee may be released on *leave without pay*.

Can I direct my employee use leave?

No. It is unlawful for an employer to direct an employee to use any leave (e.g. annual leave) while rendering defence service. However, an employee may request to use leave and any request should be considered in accordance with your leave policy and the provisions of the *Fair Work Act 2009*.

Will my employee accumulate leave?

This depends on the nature of the defence service...

- If your employee Reserve member is rendering defence service on **continuous full-time service** (known as CFTS or SERVOP C), then the absence is to be no less beneficial than if the employee Reserve member was on *leave without pay*. If *leave without pay* is not defined in your Workplace Agreement or Enterprise Bargaining Agreement, you should refer to your state/territory legislation to ascertain whether leave should accumulate as this may vary state-to-state or
- If your employee Reserve member is rendering **other** defence service (i.e. not CFTS), then the period is to be taken as paid service, regardless of whether the employee Reserve member is using *paid leave* or *leave without pay*. This means that the employee Reserve member will continue to accumulate leave as if they are in the workplace.

Defence service on Operation Civil Assist 2025 will be rendered on Reserve Service Days (i.e. *other* defence service).

What about superannuation?

If your employee Reserve member is not using paid leave while on Operation Civil Assist 2025, there is no obligation to make superannuation contributions.

Is there any financial assistance available?

The Employer Support Payment Scheme (ESPS) provides financial assistance to employers of Reserve members who are absent from the workplace on eligible periods of defence service.

In order to assist with the costs associated with the absence of the employee Reserve member during Operation Civil Assist 2025, the CDF has modified some of the normal requirements for ESPS and reduced the minimum period of continuous defence service from 5-days to 2-days, set aside the 3-month employment requirement and waived some of the evidentiary requirements.

For applicants that employ Reserve members in full-time work (38+ hours/week), the ESPS support payment is equivalent to the *average weekly wage*. For financial year 2025-26, this is \$1,975.80 per week.

Applications must be made via the *ESPS Online Claim System* at, www.reserveemployersupport.gov.au.

Where can I get more information?

PH: 1800 DEFENCE (1800 333 362) E: yourCustomer.Service@defence.gov.au W: www.reserveemployersupport.gov.au