



Employing Former ADF members

EMPLOYER GUIDE

Former members of the Australian Defence Force (ADF) have an extensive range of skills and attributes that make them valuable employees in the civilian workforce.

The Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) provides support and benefits to former ADF members who have been injured as a result of their military service including assistance in getting them job-ready and into the workforce. DVA also supports employers who provide suitable and sustainable civilian work to former ADF members.

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BENEFITS OF EMPLOYING A FORMER ADF MEMBER

The range of skills and behaviours acquired by ADF members through their military service and training can be very beneficial to civilian employers. These include:

- learning new skills quickly;
- highly motivated and punctual;
- communicating effectively to keep people informed;
- completing tasks efficiently and on time;
- working independently and as part of a team;
- demonstrating leadership but also able to follow instructions;
- well-presented and courteous; and
- working with a variety of people from different backgrounds and with varying levels of experience.

Many former members continue to live by a number of core ADF values including honesty, honour, initiative, integrity, respect and teamwork which are key qualities required in any workplace.

WORK TRIALS

Having a former member undertake a work trial in your workplace is a great way to assess their suitability and aptitude for a job and the company before employing them.

A work trial is a work experience placement where the former member is placed in your workplace for an agreed period of time (usually 12 weeks). The former member may work full-time, part-time, or have a gradual return to work. This is something that can be determined up front with the former member and their rehabilitation provider.

BENEFITS FOR EMPLOYERS

Whilst participation in a work trial can provide significant benefits to a former member, there are also a range of benefits for you as the employer, including:

- gaining a temporary, supported worker;
- assessing the former member's ability to undertake future employment, and if employment is offered, having a trained employee ready to start;
- assisting the former member with reaching their rehabilitation goals; and
- enhancing the reputation of the company by actively assisting a former member in returning to health and transitioning to civilian life.

BENEFITS FOR FORMER MEMBERS

The benefits for a former member participating in a work trial include:

- testing out their capacity for work;
- gaining civilian work experience;
- demonstrating skills to a potential employer;
- updating existing skills;
- receiving training and developing new skills;
- becoming more competitive in the job seeking process;
- gaining confidence in themselves and their abilities; and
- forming new social and professional relationships and expanded support networks.

ESTABLISHING A WORK TRIAL

Once an employer has indicated a willingness to host a work trial, a DVA-approved rehabilitation provider will find a suitable former member according to the needs and goals of the organisation and the former member.

Following the matching of a former member with an employer, an agreement will be reached detailing the length of the work trial, roles and responsibilities and the work duties of the work trial participant. This agreement will be developed through discussions between the employer, the participant, DVA, the rehabilitation provider, the participant's doctor and if appropriate, any other relevant party. It is then signed by the participant, employer, rehabilitation provider and DVA rehabilitation coordinator.

As part of the process, DVA will identify and provide any essential training or required workplace modifications, aids and appliances that would assist the participant. DVA covers the costs of these expenses.

For the duration of the work trial, the rehabilitation provider will remain in regular contact with both the employer and participant to monitor progress and provide any support that is required.



INJURY INSURANCE FOR FORMER MEMBERS PARTICIPATING IN WORK TRIALS

DVA will provide coverage for any ongoing effects or natural progression of the former member's accepted conditions. New injuries are covered by the Group Personal Accident Insurance Policy whilst the former member is participating in a work trial.

Public liability coverage is also provided for the former member during the work trial. However, employers will have the normal obligations under work health and safety laws.

FINANCIAL AND COMPENSATION COVERAGE

During the work trial, DVA will continue to pay the participant an income replacement payment. The employer does not make any contribution to the participant's salary.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE EMPLOYER

The responsibilities of the employer include:

- providing a safe and healthy workplace in accordance with work health and safety laws and the participant's medical needs;
- providing adequate supervision and support to the participant;
- offering regular feedback regarding performance and progress;
- communicating any issues impacting the participant's ability to work to the rehabilitation provider; and
- expecting the same conduct and discipline displayed by any other employee.

THE RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE PARTICIPANT INCLUDE:

- attending the workplace at the agreed times and undertaking the agreed work;
- reporting any issues impacting their ability to work to their supervisor or rehabilitation provider; and
- demonstrating the same level of discipline and conduct displayed by any other employee.

AFTER THE WORK TRIAL

If you find that the former member is the right fit for the job and the company after at the completion of the work trial, you may choose to offer them a job.



DVA SUPPORT FOR EMPLOYERS

A DVA-contracted rehabilitation provider will work with you and the former member to arrange suitable work duties that meet both of your respective needs and goals.

Other support available through the rehabilitation provider may include:

- a workplace assessment prior to the commencement of employment;
- arrangement and payment for any necessary workplace modifications, aids and appliances that will assist the former member;
- organising and paying for essential qualifications needed for the job;
- remaining in regular contact with you and the former member; and
- post placement monitoring and support.

In addition, DVA will continue to support the health management of the former member through payment of treatment and income replacement for any time off work required.

DVA aims to ensure that the respective needs and goals of both the employer, and the former member, are being met and will be sustainable in the long-term.

INJURY INSURANCE FOR FORMER MEMBERS IN EMPLOYMENT

DVA will provide coverage for any ongoing effects of natural progression of the former member's accepted conditions. However, DVA will not cover any new injuries or aggravations of a former member's accepted conditions due to an incident which occurs in the workplace once the former member is your employee. This should be covered by your workers' compensation insurance.



UNDERSTANDING THE MILITARY EXPERIENCE AND TRANSITION TO CIVILIAN LIFE

Former ADF members face unique experiences during their military career and transitioning to civilian life. Understanding how a former member's experiences can influence their outlook may assist you in developing a positive and constructive working relationship.

The military experience is unique for every former member and depends on a range of factors including the time and place of their service, military occupation, deployments and circumstances of their discharge (i.e. voluntary or medical).

Some former members may not have participated in deployments that involved war or peacekeeping operations. Others may have been involved in humanitarian deployments such as domestic or international disaster relief operations, or protecting Australia's border and offshore maritime interests. Some may have performed critical background roles in supporting others on the front line.

Social and community attitudes towards conflict and the military at the time the former member served and discharged can also shape their experience.

MILITARY TRAINING

The ADF is a highly disciplined and structured work environment. Military personnel pride themselves on their responsiveness, problem-solving skills, teamwork and ability to work in high-pressure environments. Their experience in the ADF may also have led to the development of leadership skills and the ability to rapidly adapt to new technologies.

Many former members will have acquired professional or trade qualifications that are recognised in the civilian workforce, for example mechanics, health professionals, carpenters and drivers.



IMPACT OF MILITARY EXPERIENCE

Some former ADF members may continue to identify with their military service after leaving, and others may decide to align themselves with their post-military lives. Rarely do former members consider their military service to be an insignificant period in their lives.

Most former members join the military as young adults, which is an important time in life for shaping values, beliefs and attitudes. Some of the values former members will identify with can include: courage, excellence, honesty, honor, initiative, integrity and respect. These values mean many former members are loyal and hardworking employees who actively participate in and value being part of a strong working team.

Due to the regularity of deployment cycles, many former members will have had to learn new jobs/tasks very quickly and carry out these duties as a member of different teams at various times during their military careers. These abilities translate equally into the civilian workplace and mean that former members are highly adaptable.



DISCHARGING FROM THE ADF AND TRANSITIONING TO CIVILIAN LIFE

Meaningful work can play an important role in helping a former member transition to civilian life by providing:

- purpose through work where they feel they are contributing and are part of a team;
- mentoring to adjust to their new work environment; and
- an appreciation of how their military skills or attributes are valued in the civilian workplace.

A member's discharge from the ADF may be voluntary, for example due to family, personal or career reasons or involuntary such as due to medical reasons. The ADF requires its members to always be 'deployment ready' and sets high standards for their health and fitness. Medical discharge occurs when a member's injury prevents them from being fit for deployment on an ongoing basis. Whilst some former members may have been discharged for serious injuries as a result of their service, others may have been discharged for medical conditions, like diabetes, that prevent them from being deployed.

Successful adjustment to civilian life will depend on the former member's capacity to recognise and acknowledge their transferable military skills and ability to overcome some of the difficulties which may be experienced after ADF separation, including:

- the 'loss' of their military identity, military family, culture and lifestyle;
- reintegration into the civilian family unit and/or adjusting to life with a significant other;
- having to geographically relocate;
- the need to re-establish support/social networks including health and community connections in a new home location; and
- finding that they may no longer have the same connections or commonalities with their pre-ADF friends.

The Department of Defence, DVA and ex-service organisations also provide former members with a range of support services to help them with different aspects of transitioning into civilian life.

HEALTH NEEDS

Some former members injured while serving in the ADF may have multiple physical injuries and/or mental health conditions. The vast majority of members who medically discharge are well trained, motivated and resilient individuals who successfully manage and overcome the impacts of their health conditions and ultimately go on to have long and meaningful civilian careers. Most former members experiencing health conditions would also prefer to remain in the workforce because of the psychological, social and financial benefits in doing so.

DVA provides support and services to former members in managing or overcoming their conditions, as well as any workplace modifications required to support the former member working.

As an employer, your obligations under work health and safety laws towards the former ADF member are the same for any other employee. Employers who provide workplace mentoring, encouragement, and support will not only help former members develop their civilian career, but will contribute greatly towards their recovery. In return, employers will gain a loyal and committed employee.



FURTHER INFORMATION

If you are employing a former member who is undertaking a DVA rehabilitation program or hosting a former member in a DVA-approved work trial and you are concerned about their health or well-being, please contact their DVA-contracted rehabilitation provider who can assist to identify and resolve any issues.

For further information on employing a former ADF member, DVA work trials and general information on vocational rehabilitation, please contact DVA directly on **(08) 8290 0398** or email at **rcg.adelaide.rehab@dva.gov.au**

www.dva.gov.au