

FLEXIBILITY IN THE WAY YOU WORK AND SERVE



A GUIDE TO FLEXIBLE
ARRANGEMENTS IN THE
PERMANENT FORCE



AUSTRALIAN
DEFENCE FORCE



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Flexibility Matters

This guide is intended to help ADF members better understand their options to work and serve flexibly within the Permanent Force.

People are the ADF's most valuable asset. To attract and retain members today and into the future, the ADF is committed to providing a contemporary and flexible work environment.

The nature of military service requires members to be flexible. At points throughout their career members are likely to deploy to remote locations and be required to work long hours and weekends over sustained periods.

The nature of military service also places expectations on families to adapt to new locations and manage when members are separated from them.

Members themselves are seeking flexibility in their work to achieve a better balance between their personal commitments and service responsibilities.

In response the ADF has made available Flexible Work Arrangements (FWAs) and more recently, introduced the Total Workforce Model consisting of a spectrum of service categories (SERCATs) including the option for Flexible Service Arrangements (FSAs).

FSAs and FWAs work together to provide the flexibility the ADF requires to attract and retain members and provide options to make it easier for all members to meet their personal and work requirements.

YOU SHOULD KNOW

When serving under an FSA members will be transferred to Service Category 6 (SERCAT 6). SERCAT 6 and FWAs may be used in conjunction to meet individual flexible work requirements.

Flexible Work Arrangements

The ADF introduced the FWA policy to accommodate member requests for **enduring changes to daily work routines and/or work locations.**

The FWA policy does not apply to occasional requests to work different hours on a particular day or to work from home for short periods. These requests are managed through consultation with a member's CO / manager.

THERE ARE FOUR TYPES OF FLEXIBLE WORK ARRANGEMENTS:

Variable Working Hours (VWH)

Home Located Work (HLW)

Alternate Located Work (ALW)

Remote Overseas Work (ROW)

A member can request to work under more than one type of FWA at the same time. A member can also use FWAs in conjunction with SERCAT 6.

All types of flexible work arrangements are approved by the member's Commanding Officer, apart from ROW which is approved by the relevant Service Career Management Agency (CMA).

YOU SHOULD KNOW

Under a flexible work arrangement the number of hours you work does not change, just when you work these hours may be different. To reduce your working-hours you need to apply for transfer to SERCAT 6.

WILL FWAs ALWAYS BE APPROVED?

Flexible working only works where the needs of the ADF and the needs of the member can both be met. This requires open and honest discussions between the member, supervisor and chain of command before the application is processed.

Variable Working Hours



VWH allows members to vary daily work routines from the normal working routine of their unit or work area.

The total hours a member works under a VWH arrangement cannot be less than the specified minimum working hours for their unit or work area. For example, a member may start later each day, to manage school drop off, and will also finish later each day. The total hours worked over the week is unchanged.

Known as a compressed working week, a member may apply under VWH to work longer hours on some days and shorter hours on other days.

For example, a member who travels long distances on weekends to see family, may finish early on a Friday and start late on a Monday, and make up the hours by working longer days from Tuesday to Thursday.

YOU SHOULD KNOW

The ADF has a duty of care to ensure longer days are reasonable from a health and safety perspective. Other factors including productivity, and team dynamics will also be taken into consideration.

Prior to VWH I was struggling with managing school drop off. Now I start a little later and can still pick up the kids from after school care on time.

Through my HLW arrangement I work from home two days a week. I attend meetings virtually and good communication means I feel connected with my team. I really appreciate having the extra personal time that would otherwise be spent commuting.

Home Located Work



HLW allows members to work from home.

The HLW approving authority must be satisfied that the working environment at home is safe and the health of the member is not compromised. If considered necessary, the approving authority may require an assessment of the home work place be undertaken before approving an HLW request.

YOU SHOULD KNOW

You cannot use HLW as a substitute for ongoing dependent care. You will need to ensure you have suitable arrangements in place so you can work productively and efficiently from home.

Alternate Located Work

ALW allows members to work from a location other than their posting location.

This work may be conducted at home or at another Defence establishment. If a member is working from home at the alternate location they will also need to apply for HLW.

YOU SHOULD KNOW

If you are on HLW or ALW you must ensure your work is not accessible to unauthorised persons (including family and friends) and your work area and devices comply with Defence Security Principles Framework.

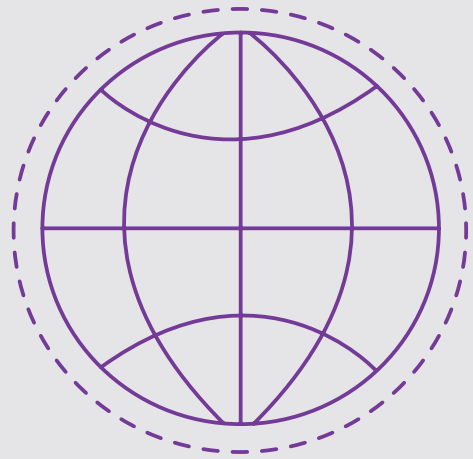


It is great to work closer to home and still be able to access all I need from a Defence establishment. My ALW gives me extra time that I spend with my parents who are now needing some extra support.

Remote Overseas Work

ROW allows members to continue to work in their ADF position while residing overseas.

ROW typically applies when the member is accompanying their recognised dependent partner who is serving on an overseas posting. The approval of ROW is not an overseas posting or short term overseas duty for conditions of service purposes. The approving authority for a ROW is the relevant Service CMA.



YOU SHOULD KNOW

Your application for ROW must include formal advice from the local Australian Diplomatic Mission about any limitations that will apply while working in the host country.

Applying for a Flexible Work Arrangement

An application to undertake an **FWA** is made by completing web form *AE 406-ADF Application for Flexible Work*.

YOU SHOULD KNOW

Applications for an FWA will be considered on a case by case basis. In certain circumstances it may not be feasible to work under an FWA.

Members should discuss with their supervisor what FWA options are appropriate for their personal circumstances and how the arrangements would affect their work commitments.

Members are encouraged to read the FWA policy in the Military Personnel Policy Manual (MILPERSMAN) and familiarise themselves with the application process.

In most circumstances, the approving authority for an FWA (except ROW) is the member's commanding officer/manager.



- Flexible work options are often used to help parents balance the demands of job and family.
- Flexible work may also be used by members to reduce the burden of long commutes, to pursue personal interests or study, or to care for aging parents.
- FWA policy is available in MILPERSMAN, Part 7, Chapter 1 – *Flexible Work Arrangements for members of the Australian Defence Force*.

The FWA process

1

PREPARE

Investigate whether the role can be done under an FWA. If it can, consider the types of FWA and select the best option.

3

APPLY

Member completes Form AE 406 – *ADF Application for Flexible Work* and submits to CO / manager.

2

DISCUSS

Member and CO / manager discuss how an FWA could work for the member, unit and Service. This may also include discussion with the CMA.

4

REVIEW

Once the FWA begins the member and CO / manager continue to track how it's working. It's important to keep the conversation going to ensure FWA success for the individual, team, unit and Service.

Flexible Service Arrangements

A Flexible Service Arrangement (FSA) allows a permanent member to render a pattern of service other than full-time; while still meeting their 'continuous full-time service' obligation.

Flexible service allows a member to reduce the hours and days they would normally work.

The ability to render flexible service was introduced under the ADF Total Workforce System (TWS). When a permanent member enters into an FSA, they will transfer from SERCAT 7 to SERCAT 6. The minimum FSA period is normally 3 months; however an approving authority may approve a shorter period. The duration of an FSA is subject to the discretion of the approving authority.

There are some circumstances that will cause an FSA to be varied or to cease early.

For more details on the circumstances in which this may occur refer to MILPERSMAN Pt 2, Chapter 5, Annex A.

YOU SHOULD KNOW

As a permanent member you are liable to return to full-time duty when required however, your Service is expected to honour the FSA and should only revoke the arrangement for operational, capability, disciplinary or other unforeseen requirements.

Patterns of service

When a member transfers to SERCAT 6 their existing work schedule is replaced with the work schedule approved under the Flexible Service Arrangement. The new work schedule represents the member's pattern of service.

YOU SHOULD KNOW

Your work schedule is used to calculate your salary and allowances each pay fortnight. Consequently, if your SERCAT 6 work schedule reflects you working fewer days in a fortnight, then the salary and allowances you are paid in that fortnight will be reduced proportionally.

THE FOLLOWING ARE EXAMPLES OF WHAT PATTERNS OF SERVICE MIGHT LOOK LIKE:

A DAYS PER FORTNIGHT PATTERN

Member works between 1 day and 9 days in a fortnight;

A MONTHS PER YEAR PATTERN

Member works certain months (a month is a 28-day cycle) in a one-year period. For example:

1 month on → 2 months off
2 months on → 4 months off
6 months on → 6 months off

A WEEKS PER MONTH PATTERN

Member works certain weeks in a one-month period (a month is a 28-day cycle). For example:

1 week on → 3 weeks off
2 weeks on → 2 weeks off
3 weeks on → 1 week off

A CUSTOMISED PATTERN

This may be a combination of any of the other patterns of service mentioned.



LACW ALICIA CHANNELLS

SERCAT 6

Firefighter / Mum

"After the birth of my son, I wanted to be able to spend more time with him but still have the flexibility to continue my career. SERCAT 6 has made my return to work extremely enjoyable and I cannot fault the support from the section and the Air Force"

Transfer to SERCAT 6

An application to undertake a Flexible Service Arrangement is made by completing Form *AE 427-Service Category (SERCAT) Form*. Submission of the form constitutes a request to transfer to SERCAT 6.

Members are encouraged to read the SERCAT 6 policy in MILPERSMAN and familiarise themselves with the application process before applying. Members should also discuss with their supervisor how their proposed pattern of service will affect work commitments prior to submitting their application. The member's supervisor and commanding officer are required to make a recommendation on the SERCAT Form. Even if an application is not supported by the member's unit, it must be forwarded to the approving authority in the Career Management Agency (CMA) for consideration.

When submitting an application for an FSA it's important to consider the Service's processing and approval timeline.

The approving authority for an FSA is the Chief of Defence Force's (CDF) delegate in the relevant Service CMA.

In considering a member's request to undertake a Flexible Service Arrangement, matters taken into consideration include the member's personal circumstances, their reasons for undertaking flexible service, the effect it may have on capability and the unit and whether any mitigation arrangements are needed. If the CDF delegate does not approve a member's request for flexible service, an explanation for their decision will be provided to the member.

YOU SHOULD KNOW

Before submitting an application for an FSA you should discuss your request with your supervisor to address any matter that might be considered by the approving authority. The information you provide in your application will be treated as sensitive and private.

SERCAT 6

Effect on pay and conditions

The *AE 427 Service Category (SERCAT) Form* includes a statement that the member acknowledges their remuneration and conditions of service may change when they transfer to SERCAT 6.

It's recommended members seek independent financial advice to help them understand the financial impacts of undertaking flexible service.

PACMAN

The Pay and Conditions Manual (PACMAN) sets out the arrangements that apply when a member undertakes flexible service. Following is an overview only of the effect of flexible service on salary, allowances and some conditions of service.

PACMAN does not use the terms SERCAT 6 or Flexible Service Arrangement. Instead it uses the term 'member on a flexible service determination' to identify members in SERCAT 6.



Salary, service allowance and occupation based allowance

Salary and allowances will be paid for the days the member attends for duty under their pattern of service. For example, a member who has approval to work a 6 day fortnight would be paid 60% of their full-time salary.



Housing and accommodation benefits

Eligibility is unaffected by flexible service. The contribution paid by a member increases by 50% during non-working periods greater than 28 days or when the pattern of service is less than 50% of full-time equivalent.



Non-salary related allowance

Some allowances are pro-rated (e.g. uniform allowance, district allowance). Allowances that are paid on occurrence or as a reimbursement are not pro-rated (e.g. relocation and travel related costs).



Eligible/effective service

Service for eligibility to salary increments is treated as full-time service. Periods of flexible service will be treated as continuous eligible service for eligibility to the MSBS Retention Benefit. If a member is subject to a retention or completion bonus their accrued service for these bonuses will be pro-rated while rendering flexible service.



Recreation and long service leave

Leave credits will accrue on a pro-rata basis. Leave is not debited on a non-working day. When long service leave is taken while you are rendering flexible service, you will remain in SERCAT 6 and you'll be paid the equivalent of your full-time salary for the period of that leave.



Superannuation

The effect varies depending on the scheme:

DFRDB – There is no effect on superannuation benefits.

MSBS – Provided the member continues to pay their contribution, there is no effect on MSBS benefits.

ADF Super – When the member's fortnightly salary is reduced under their pattern of service, a reduced contribution will be paid to ADF Super.



Health and Medical

Members will continue to access full health and medical benefits. If you're hospitalised while you are rendering flexible service, you will remain in SERCAT 6 and you'll be paid the equivalent of your full-time salary for the period of hospitalisation.



MWD(U) Benefits

Separation allowance, food allowance and reunion travel benefits are pro-rated. The member is required to pay a contribution for accommodation, meals and utilities during non-working periods.

SERCAT 6

Accessing a Flexible Work Arrangement

SERCAT 6 members can apply for, and receive approval to, undertake an FWA.

This includes variable working hours, home located work, alternate located work and remote overseas work. For example, a SERCAT 6 member can work 4 days per week and have an approved FWA to work from home on 2 of those days.

A final word ...

An organisation's most valuable asset is its people and in the ADF's case, it seeks to deliver capability through an engaged and committed workforce. The Services aim to attract and retain the right people so they can meet current and future capability obligations. With that in mind, FWAs and FSAs provide greater workforce flexibility allowing people to better balance their military careers with their personal lives.

When considering requests for flexible work or flexible service, approving authorities will look to strike a balance between the individual's needs and those of the workplace, with the bottom line being the sustainment of capability. COs and supervisors should work closely with members of their teams, and when appropriate the CMAs, to identify ways of achieving that balance.

For more information

→ ADF

MILPERSMAN, Part 2, Chapter 5 –
Australian Defence Force Total Workforce
Model – Service Spectrum

MILPERSMAN, Part 6, Chapter 4 –
Transfer of Service Personnel across the
Service Spectrum

MILPERSMAN, Part 7, Chapter 1 –
Flexible Work Arrangements for Members
of the Australian Defence Force

→ NAVY

Navy People Career Management Agency

NPCMA.registry@defence.gov.au

NAVY.FWA@defence.gov.au

→ ARMY

Members are encouraged to talk to
their chain of command and their career
adviser about flexible work options.

Further information on FWA and
SERCAT 6 in Army is available on the
Directorate of Career Management
Support by emailing:

CMA.TransfertoSERCAT6@defence.gov.au

→ AIR FORCE

Air Force Career Manager

PERSBR-AF-DP@defence.gov.au



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