



## **DEFENCE MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **EMPLOYER SUPPORT PAYMENT INCREASES TO MORE THAN \$1000**

Employer Support Payments (ESPs) will rise to \$1035.90 after July 1, 2006, for every week employee reservists are away from their civilian jobs, once the qualifying period of two weeks and other eligibility criteria are satisfied.

The ESP Scheme was introduced in 2001 to provide financial assistance to both employers and self-employed reservists. The weekly payment helps offset the costs associated with the absence of Reservist employees who are performing Defence service.

Reserve Policy's ESP Director, Mr Doug Stedman, said that employers across the nation were currently receiving more than \$1.4 million a month from the scheme.

"Releasing Reservists from their civilian roles for extended periods can sometimes cause staffing problems, particularly for small businesses," said Mr Stedman.

"This increase to the ESP will help employers bridge gaps created by regular staff taking time off from their day jobs to serve the country."

ESP support is available to full-time or part-time self-employed reservists who gain the majority of their income from a recognised business, or employers of Reservists who are in full-time, part-time work, or who are employed on a regular and reliable basis.

In order for an employer to qualify for ESP payments, their Reservist employees must serve five or more consecutive days. Employers can then submit the claim form available from the web at [www.defence.gov.au/reserves](http://www.defence.gov.au/reserves). Defence staff are available on 1800 803 485 or [esp@defence.gov.au](mailto:esp@defence.gov.au) to help resolve any queries about the claims process.

Mr Stedman said that the Budget for 2006 has enhanced employment conditions for Reservists and that the new ESP payment provided employers with the flexibility necessary to support the Federal Government's goal of building a strong and sustainable active Reserve force.

"Once the employer has qualified for the ESP, the \$1035.90 a week can be used by them in whatever way they need," said Mr Stedman.

"This payment could be used for employing casual workers to fill a Reservist's temporarily vacant position."

"This flexibility is an added advantage because employers are in the best position to decide how the money should be spent."

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