



**Australian Government**  
**Department of Veterans' Affairs**

## **Factsheet MRC36 – Voluntary Work**

### **Purpose**

This Factsheet explains what voluntary work is, how it is assessed and how it may affect DVA payments.

### **What is voluntary work?**

Voluntary work is any unpaid work that you do for recognised community or welfare organisations. DVA encourages veterans and members of the ex-service community to volunteer to assist community or welfare groups. Many veterans provide immeasurable support to ex-service organisations and other charities.

Studies have shown that volunteering is beneficial to well-being.

### **What voluntary work is not**

Voluntary work is not unpaid work you do for family, friends or a business enterprise formed for the purpose of making a financial profit.

### **How is voluntary work assessed?**

Undertaking voluntary work does not trigger an automatic reassessment of benefits that you are paid by DVA. This is regardless of whether you are paid under the *Veterans' Entitlements Act 1986* (VEA), *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988* (SRCA) or *Military Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 2004* (MRCA).

DVA accepts that the conditions under which you undertake voluntary work can be quite different to paid employment. Generally, as a volunteer, you are able to work at your own pace and time and with a greater degree of flexibility than in paid employment. Voluntary work is assessed according to your individual circumstances.

Voluntary work normally does not carry the same pressures and expectations as paid employment.

Incapacity benefits paid under the SRCA or MRCA are reviewed regularly. The review assesses a person's ability to earn during the period and is based on both medical and rehabilitation assessments.

### **How can voluntary work affect DVA payments?**

If you are receiving a pension or benefit from DVA you need to be aware that some types of unpaid work may affect your payments. Unpaid work for family, friends or a business enterprise formed for the purposes of making a profit is not classified as voluntary work.

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If you are receiving incapacity payments and/or certain types of disability pensions, and you do unpaid work in a job that aims to make a profit, then your payment may be affected. This is because this type of work may be assessed as being similar to paid work. You may therefore become ineligible to receive your current rate of pension or incapacity payments. For more information, contact DVA.

## **Incapacity payments and voluntary work**

Incapacity payments are payments for economic loss due to the inability to work, or work at the same level, because of an injury or disease that has been accepted under the SRCA or MRCA.

Incapacity payments are determined by calculating your normal earnings from your ADF employment, less what you are now able to earn.

Your ability to earn is worked out by what you actually earn or what we judge you have the capability of earning, taking into account things like your accepted conditions, your existing skills and any retraining that you may have undertaken.

## **How are incapacity payments reviewed?**

All incapacity benefit recipients are regularly reviewed. The frequency of reviews depends on your level of incapacity.

An incapacity review assesses your ability to earn and is based on rehabilitation and specialist medical assessments. The assessment takes into account your physical and mental capacities, your skills and training, work history, age and so on.

Voluntary work is not a trigger for a review. Undertaking voluntary work does not of itself imply that you are able to work in paid employment. Each case is considered on its individual circumstances.

## **Rehabilitation and voluntary work**

Rehabilitation is a key feature of the SRCA and the MRCA. Rehabilitation aims to provide the support you need to make a full recovery, reach optimum health and well-being and where possible, return to work. Rehabilitation is important because it reduces the human and economic cost of disability, both to you, and to the broader community.

Participation in rehabilitation, depending on capacity, can be a precondition of compensation for incapacity payments under the SRCA and MRCA. Most people will benefit from rehabilitation and be able to undertake paid employment again.

If you are not able to return to paid employment, voluntary work may be recommended, together with other activities, to assist recovery and foster well-being.

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## How is voluntary work treated under the VEA?

DVA regards voluntary work in the same way under the VEA, SRCA and MRCA. While the VEA does not have the equivalent of incapacity payments, voluntary work can be taken into account in determining the effect of your war– or defence-caused condition on your general lifestyle.

## Obligations

You must tell us within 14 days (28 days if you live overseas or receive remote area allowance) of changes to your circumstances that might affect the rate of payments that you receive. This includes starting work on a voluntary basis, particularly where you are working in an unpaid job for a business enterprise formed for the purposes of making a profit.

## Disclaimer

The information contained in this Factsheet is general in nature and does not take into account individual circumstances. You should not make important decisions, such as those that affect your financial or lifestyle position on the basis of information contained in this Factsheet. Where you are required to lodge a written claim for a benefit, you must take full responsibility for your decisions prior to the written claim being determined. You should seek confirmation in writing of any oral advice you receive from DVA.

## Related Factsheets

- [HSV108 Veterans' Vocational Rehabilitation Scheme \(VVRS\)](#)
- [MRC05 Rehabilitation](#)
- [MRC08 Incapacity for Work](#)

## More Information

### DVA General Enquiries

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[DVA Website](http://www.dva.gov.au): www.dva.gov.au

[Factsheet Website](http://factsheets.dva.gov.au): factsheets.dva.gov.au

\* Calls from mobile phones and pay phones may incur additional charges.