

# Alternatives to Work for the Dole



## What is Work for the Dole?

Work for the dole (WftD) is a default activity for most jobseeker recipients between the ages of 18 and 60. Work for the Dole is often characterised as real-life work experience but this is misleading, it is usually nothing more than unpaid busy work. There are also cases of people being injured on WftD sites after engaging in unsafe labour they should have been paid for.

## The mandatory 'activation' period

Your provider may encourage you to do WftD in what is known as the 'activation' requirement period. When you start your 'activation' period will differ depending on whether you are in face-to-face (F2F) or online services. Your provider is required to notify you about this requirement 30 days beforehand on the Workforce Australia platform - web or mobile app.

The requirement to undertake an activity will start 6 months after commencing F2F services, while people self-managing their mutual obligations online will have this requirement begin after 4 months of commencing online employment services.

However, if after being in online employment services for 12 months, you transfer to F2F services, the requirement to undertake an activity will begin 3 months after commencing F2F services.

The 'activation' period generally lasts for 6 months, followed by 6 months off. This cycle will continue as long as you are engaged, without an exemption, in employment services.

## Length of participation in WftD

If you unjustly end up being forced into WftD, the minimum period you will be required to undertake the activity is 8 weeks. There is no set maximum period you can be required to keep doing a WftD placement but it cannot extend past the 6 month duration of the activation period.

The amount of time you spend doing Work for the Dole depends on your circumstances.

15 to 30 hours per fortnight: for individuals aged 60 years and over, or with part-time mutual obligation requirements

30 to 50 hours per fortnight: for individuals aged 18 to 59 years, with full-time mutual obligation requirements.

## When you may be able to avoid WftD

It is important for you to know there are other activities you can do instead of WftD. These include voluntary work, part-time work, approved study courses, language, literacy, and numeracy activities as part of the Skills for Education and Employment program or the Adult Migrant English Program and some non-vocational programs and services

Meeting the 'activity requirement obligation' will generally be satisfied if you already have been studying, working or doing other 'suitable activities'.

### Payment reduced

If you are receiving a reduced rate of jobseeker payment due to working part-time, you do not have to do WftD. If you obtain paid work while doing work for the dole, you no longer need to complete your current WftD placement.

### Age

If you are over 60, you cannot be required to do WftD.

Jobseeker recipients over 55, who have been receiving the payment for longer than 12 months, can fully satisfy their mutual obligation requirements with 30 hours per fortnight of volunteer work, or a combination of volunteer and paid work.

### Volunteering

You may be able to undertake voluntary work instead of doing WftD. Some providers will try to force you to do WftD at one of their affiliated organisations eg. Salvos/ Vinnies stores but volunteer work does not need to be done through your provider directly for it to count toward your mutual obligation requirements. However, volunteer work needs to be done through an approved organisation or be approved by Services Australia.

### Other reasons why WftD participation may not be required

You are exempt from activities, for example, due to health reasons and you have a medical certificate.

You have an illness, injury or disability that will be aggravated by the work conditions.

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## **My provider is forcing me to do WftD. What can I do?**

If you think any of the above reasons should exclude you from participation in this pointless and potentially dangerous exercise, you should try to discuss this with your provider. Alert them to the rules (they should know them!) and if you find you are not being listened to, feel stuck and/or bullied, you might want to consider an internal complaint to a branch or regional manager.

**Alternatively, you can directly contact the National Customer Service Line via phone 1800 805 260 or the Digital Services Contact Centre 1800 314 677**

**Call the AUWU hotline if you want to report something particularly serious about what you have already experienced in a WftD placement. You can contact us on (03) 9811 70**