



# Families living separately worksheet

## Defence Community Organisation

### Members with dependents unaccompanied

Sometimes, when a military member is posted, families may choose to remain in their current location while the military member moves alone to their new posting. When families choose to live apart in this way, it is called “Member With Dependents Unaccompanied” and is often referred to by the military as “MWDU” or “MWD(U)”.

Families choose this option for a range of reasons that support family stability. For example, “going MWDU” allows partners to keep their current job, children to stay at their school, and family members to maintain consistent access to healthcare.

Choosing to go MWDU is an important family decision. Families should research the new posting location and discuss the implications of living apart and its possible affect each family member before coming to a decision.

The polices governing MWDU and its accompanying entitlements are described in Chapter 8 of [Defence's Pay and Conditions Manual](#). You should read this chapter thoroughly before choosing to go MWDU.

This worksheet is raises issues for you and your family to discuss when you are together thinking about MWDU as an option.

### Why are you and your family considering MWDU?

What are your initial thoughts on the pros and cons of MWDU?

How did you reach the decision to consider this option?





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What will be the major obstacles you will need to consider and overcome should you choose to go MWDU?

Have you identified an end-date to MWDU? Is this a short-term decision based on the current posting order or an attempt to provide long-term plan for family stability?

Are you considering MWDU because of career opportunities, prior to the member's discharge or compulsory retirement age?

What do you imagine will occur when the member receives their next posting order?





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### Relationship dynamics

What are the strengths and weaknesses of your relationship?

How will MWDU affect the nature of your relationship?

How do you believe MWDU may affect your relationship in the short and long term? What strategies would you use in order to maintain a strong connection with each other?

What are the current strengths of your relationship that would protect against relationship difficulties?





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How will you provide each other with support for the duration of the separation? How will minor and major problems be resolved?

Describe the communication and problem-solving strategies you use in your relationship and how you resolve conflict? What are the strengths and weaknesses of these approaches?

### **Family and domestic issues**

How do other members of your immediate and extended family feel about you going MWDU?

Have you discussed the option of MWDU with your children? If so, what was their reaction? If not, why not?





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How do you see the military member maintaining a close relationship with your children for the duration of the unaccompanied posting? What strategies have you considered in order to alleviate any concerns?

What level of support can be expected from your extended family(s)?

How will you prepare and manage significant family events and milestones (for example, birthdays, anniversaries, etc)?

Are there any current or potential health issues that may affect your decision?





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What strategies have you considered for short-term reunions during leave periods and at the conclusion of the posting period?

Are there any special needs to be considered?

Are you considering MWDU to reduce disruption to the partner's employment opportunities or your children's education? Describe the options and alternatives you have considered to date.

Have you sought additional advice from any other source, like an in-school Aide or Mentor, a Regional Education Liaison Officer, a Chaplain, friends or family?





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### Practical arrangements

Do you have a full understanding of the MWDU policy and associated entitlements? Where did you source this information? Do you have any outstanding questions that you would like to clarify?

For the ADF member - You may be required to live-in for the duration of the posting: how do you feel about this possibility?

What provisions have you made to ensure that general household maintenance and other practical considerations for the duration of the unaccompanied posting?

Do all members of the family have access to appropriate transportation? If no, how have you agreed to negotiate access to the family vehicle(s)?





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What would be the impact on the family if operational requirements precluded the availability of reunion travel entitlements?

Have you considered household security and safety during the member's absence?

Do all appropriate family members have access to bank accounts?

In the context of the 'package of entitlements' that are available under MWDU categorisation, have you considered any potential impact on other financial commitments (for example, FBT, Centrelink, Child Support payments etc)?







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Are there any outstanding legal issues within the family? Have you considered Power of Attorney status and/or updated your wills?

### **Previous/current/future experience of service separations**

What has been your previous experience of service separations?

As this separation may last for two or three years, how do you believe this may impact and how would it be different to your previous experiences of separations?

Is the member being posted to a Unit with a high operational tempo? If so, how will you develop strategies to cope with this eventuality?





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How do you imagine that emergency situations within the immediate or extended family will be handled if MWDU option is chosen?

Do all members of the adult family have access to emergency funds? If not, how will this be managed?

Have you identified alternative sources of support? Are these people always available, at short notice, or have alternative avenues been considered?

Have you identified/sourced useful emergency contact numbers (for example, NWCC, ASL, hospital, Unit Duty Officer etc)?





Australian Government

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For more information on this factsheet and other Defence Community Organisation support services visit [www.defence.gov.au/dco](http://www.defence.gov.au/dco) or call the all-hours Defence Family Helpline on 1800 624 608.

The Defence Community Organisation offers a wide range of support services for the families of ADF members.

The best way to access these services is to call **1800 624 608**. The all-hours Defence Family Helpline is staffed by qualified human services professionals including social workers and psychologists.

