

## REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 requires employers to make reasonable adjustments so a person with a disability is able to perform the inherent requirements of the job, unless this would cause 'unjustifiable hardship'.

The concept of reasonable adjustment reflects the understanding that a person with disability can often perform tasks if adjustments are made to accommodate their disability related needs.

The aim of any reasonable adjustment is to minimise the impact of the disability to enable the person to fully take part in volunteer or paid work-related activities and effectively undertake the inherent tasks of a job. Without reasonable adjustments people with disability face many obstacles to participating in work-related activities.

### What Are Reasonable Adjustments?

Reasonable adjustments are any form of assistance or adjustment that is necessary, possible and reasonable to reduce or eliminate work-related barriers.

A reasonable adjustment could include changes to policies, work practices, physical layouts, provision of specialised equipment, mentor or a personal support worker to assist a person with disability to perform work tasks effectively, funded through a person's NDIS package.

In order to make reasonable adjustments for a person, the inherent requirements of the work-related activities need to be understood.

The inherent requirements of work-related activities relate to what needs to be accomplished in the job rather than *how* the job is accomplished. The focus should be on how a person's disability affects their ability to undertake work-related activities and what adjustments can be made to overcome this.

Reasonable adjustments are personalised and should be tailored to meet individual requirements and circumstances. A person with disability will understand their

abilities and what restrictions they have and are often the best person to advise what adjustments are needed.

Reasonable adjustments can be temporary or long-term and need to be reviewed regularly to make sure they remain relevant and effective for the person, as well as manageable within the work environment.

### **What Is Considered In Making Reasonable Adjustments?**

- Physical adjustment: modifying the worksite/workstation to make it accessible; changing the workspace/layout; providing portable ramps; providing close proximity parking spaces; making changes to lighting or ventilation; repositioning equipment at convenient locations or heights; providing additional equipment, tools or a personal support worker (funded through a person's NDIS package).
- Work arrangements: adjustments to work hours or duties such as, but not limited to, start and finish times, working from home, working remotely, or engaging personal support worker assistance.
- Adjustments to job tasks: modifying tasks or duties, adjusting work methods, providing additional training or a personal support worker, modifying work patterns, using pictures or Easy Read to explain concepts, printing documents on coloured paper suitable to individuals, revising work related policies and processes.
- Technological assistance: providing or modifying existing equipment and tools, electronic adjustable desk/ergonomic desk, larger monitors, specific phones for people who are hearing impaired, external noise reducing headphones for people sensitive to noise.

Using [Microsoft office 365 accessibility checker](#) when preparing documents.

[Microsoft Office 365 offers a wide range of accessible features and functionality](#), such as capacity to personalise display and setup, features that can be enabled within products such as PowerPoint or Microsoft Teams i.e.: text to voice/read aloud, real time subtitling, immersive reader, office lens.

Software ideas that might be suitable:

- Screen reader, dictation and voice to text software.
  - Subtitle software for people with hearing loss.
  - Video links for online calls to support lip readers.
  - [Mindview - mind mapping software](#), to help visually organise work tasks.
  - Microsoft OneNote to organise reference material.
  - Advanced grammar and spell checkers.
  - Increasing font size (minimum 14).
  - Using clear fonts (Arial and Verdana)
  - Changing background colour to reduce visual stress
  - Using Read and Write Gold for people with dyslexia.
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- Attitudes of fellow volunteers/colleagues: creating an inclusive work environment culture; providing training and awareness raising regarding unconscious biases; leading by example. Providing information on how reasonable adjustments benefit work productivity; hence benefit an entire team to achieve work related goals.

## **What Is Reasonable When Making Adjustments?**

What is considered reasonable depends on individual facts and circumstances.

When considering if an adjustment is reasonable, you should take into account:

- How effective the adjustment will be in helping the person achieve job tasks.
- How practical it is to make the adjustment/s and any disruption it may cause, particularly any health or safety impacts on all persons.

- The financial costs, if any, of the adjustment/s and the capacity to meet these costs ie: can the costs be met through government funding such as the [Job Access Employment Assistance Fund](#), or a person's individual NDIS package.

Resource	Link
<p><u>Australian Government Job Access – driving disability employment</u></p> <p>Provides disability types and suggested adjustment options.</p>	<p><a href="#">Disability and Adjustment   Job Access</a></p>
<p><u>Australian Network on Disability</u></p> <p>Provides accessible and inclusive workplace information in three areas:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>- Accessibility action planning</li> <li>- Workplace adjustments</li> <li>- Building disability confident teams</li> </ul>	<p><a href="#">Provide an accessible and inclusive workplace - Australian Network on Disability</a></p>

<p><u>Australian Human Rights Commission – IncludeAbility</u></p> <p>Provides information specific to four main components:</p> <ol style="list-style-type: none"> <li>1. An Employer Network of executive leaders from some of Australia’s largest organisations and businesses.</li> <li>2. An Ambassador Advisory Group, comprised of people with lived experience of disability.</li> <li>3. A web portal hosting a range of employment and workplace resources to support employers and employees.</li> <li>4. The opportunity for Employer Network members to participate in innovative pilot employment programs.</li> </ol> <p>All guides and information are available in Easy Read format and developed in consultation with people with lived experience of disability, including case studies from IncludeAbility Ambassadors.</p>	<p><a href="#">About IncludeAbility   IncludeAbility</a></p>
<p>Content and Communications Accessibility Toolkit provides information about creating written and visual materials in accessible formats.</p>	<p><a href="#">Content and communications   Online Accessibility Toolkit</a></p>

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## Frequently Asked Questions

Q. Should I explain the reason for reasonable adjustments for a person to other members of the team?

Not without the express permission of the person with disability; due to legal privacy rights. Managers should discuss and agree with the disabled person what, if anything, should be disclosed, and how it should be shared.

Q. How long can adjustments be made for?

Change can be temporary or permanent and should be in place for as long as a person needs. However, any changes should be reviewed regularly, and any end date should be agreed with the person with disability.

Q. When should I review it?

This depends on individual circumstances – it could initially be in a fortnight or month if a person is 'new' to their disability or the work environment/tasks so finding their way, then once every three or six months, depending on the persons individual situation.

Q. The adjustments result in more work to deliver whilst we still have the same capacity in the team. How should I manage this?

This situation may suggest that the adjustment/s is not reasonable, and HR or a disability specialist may need to be consulted for guidance.

## CASE STUDY EXAMPLES & ACTIVITIES:

### Case Study 1

Martin has dyslexia and has applied for a role as a line manager.

The recruitment team has been advised that Martin has requested adjustments to the interview selection process due to his disability. Martin has agreed to the following reasonable adjustments:

- Tell Martin what to expect in advance of the interview meeting i.e. presentation, written exercise, interview format.
- Offer Martin 25% more time to complete a knowledge assessment.
- Ensure any assessments are designed to be inclusive i.e. specifically designed to not disadvantage anyone.
- Enable Martin to complete assessments using a laptop/computer.
- Ensure any adaptations required are accommodated i.e. screen reader for a laptop.
- Provide interview questions in writing during the interview.

Martin is offered the role and his manager agrees to the following adjustments:

- Flexible working hours
  - Where feasible Martin will work from home
  - Allow 10 minute breaks, every two hours
- Equipment
  - Use of phone, laptop, tablet/iPad to make notes, avoid heavy use of these due to their impact on posture.
- Work practices
  - Provide all hard copy resources on coloured paper (find out which is the best colour for Martin).
  - Highlight key points in documents.

- Allow plenty of time to read in advance.
- Use different formats to convey information e.g. audio or video, drawings, diagrams and flowcharts.
- Don't ask Martin to scribe minutes at meetings.
- Alternate computer work with other tasks, where possible.
- Communicate instructions slowly and clearly and minimise distractions, and check understanding.
- Support important communications by supplying the information in more than one format e.g. verbally and using hard copy resources.
- Back up multiple instructions in writing or with diagrams.
- Calendars, planners and alerts are standard on most computers and phones. Ask Martin if physical calendars and/or wall planners would be useful.
- Use mnemonic devices (association, chunking, using songs or rhymes to remember, forming sentences out of the first letter of words in order), and acronyms.
- Give verbal as well as written instructions.
- Provide glossary of key terms to explain terms.
- Offer extra time for preparation, checking and completion of tasks, as appropriate and reasonable.
- Be patient and avoid using ambiguous language, which could be interpreted in different ways.
- Give concise instructions in the same order as they are meant to be carried out.



- Be aware of information overload and break down long, complicated instructions into smaller, manageable steps.
  - Make background 'light beige' instead of white.
  - Use left justified with ragged right edge.
  - Avoid narrow columns (as used in newspapers).
  - Aim for lines of approximately 60 to 70 characters.
  - Space out paragraphs and break up long paragraphs.
  - Use a line spacing equivalent to 1.5.
  - Use bullet points and numbering rather than continuous prose.
- Working environment
- Consider acoustic shielding around noisy equipment such as photocopiers.
  - Reduce distractions for focused tasks (opportunity to sit away from doors, noisy machinery).
  - Allocate a private or 'closed' workspace if possible.
  - Ensure work areas are organised, neat and tidy.
  - Ensure the team returns important items to the same place each time.
  - Ensure work areas are well lit.
- Software
- Change background colour of screen to suit Martin's preference.
  - Consider assistive technology i.e. screen reader, scanning pen, text to speech or mind mapping software.

- Use apps/calendars as reminders.

## Case study 2

Donna has been diagnosed with cancer and would like to discuss her proposed treatment with her manager. After preparing for and meeting with Donna, her line manager agrees to the following reasonable adjustments:

- Working hours
  - Discuss Donna's treatment plan to understand and the impact of this on work - different treatments have different impacts.
  - Flexible working hours around medical appointments.
- Work practices
  - supportive of more frequent rest breaks to counter fatigue.
  - Where operationally possible, be supportive of home working to 'wrap around' appointments.

## References

Australian Government, Comcare, Reasonable Adjustments: [Reasonable Adjustments information sheet \(comcare.gov.au\)](#)

Disability Support Guide, Employment and Volunteering options: [Employment and volunteering options | Disability Support Guide](#)

University of Nottingham (UK, China, Malaysia). Toolkit for Supporting Disabled Staff. Case studies for reasonable adjustment.

A guide for staff and managers on the types of adjustments that can be agreed to support disabled and neurodivergent staff.