



# 15. Reasonable adjustments

The Australian Human Rights Commission defines reasonable adjustments as ‘changes to a job, which can be made to enable a worker to perform their duties more effectively in the workplace’. These adjustments should respond to the particular needs or issues of a worker and can include:

- offering flexible working arrangements (for example, job rotation, variable start and finish times)
- changing some aspects of the job or work tasks (for example, exchanging a single demanding project for a job consisting of a number of smaller tasks)
- changing the workplace or work area (for example, moving a worker to a quieter work area)
- purchasing or modifying equipment.

The Commission provides detailed guidance and practical ways to accommodate workers with a mental illness, whether or not they are peer workers:

1. Identify the ‘inherent’ (or ‘core’) requirements of the employee’s job.
2. Assess the employee’s skills and abilities.
3. Identify reasonable adjustments with the employee.
4. Check that the employee can meet the inherent or core requirements of the job when reasonable adjustments are made.

Further detailed examples of reasonable accommodations to address the effects of a worker’s mental illness in the workplace from the Australian Human Rights Commission can be found in its [Practical Guide for Managers](#). These include flexible working options and strategies to address:

- difficulties with thinking processes (for example, memory and concentration)
- difficulties with organisation and planning
- difficulties with social interaction
- physical symptoms and functioning
- absence from work
- emotional responses

Workplace adjustments are not about changing the roles and responsibilities of the position. Rather they are about changing aspects of the work environment to help the individual perform their role more effectively. It is sensible to discuss any adjustments at the outset of employment and review them on a regular basis.

Reasonable adjustments apply to all areas of employment, including recruitment, selection and appointment, current work, career development, training, promotion and transfers, or any other employment benefit.

RichmondPRA provides examples of reasonable accommodation:

- adjust start and finish times owing to effects from medication
- adjust location of desk or office to a quiet area, to a room with a window, to a desk near the door and so on, if the person becomes claustrophobic in confined areas
- registered Pets as Therapy Dogs allowed to attend the workplace
- removing the requirement for a lived experience staff member to have a driver's license in a city where public transport is readily available and the duties can be carried out via these modes of transport
- not requiring a person to do shift work if this can be reasonably and fairly sorted out amongst the remaining staff.

The publication, [Mad Workplaces: a commonsense guide for workplaces](#) about working alongside people with mental illness provides another helpful checklist of reasonable accommodations.

Family/carer peer workers will also, from time to time, require the support of their employer and workplace to balance their work and unpaid caring responsibilities. The Australian Human Rights Commission provides a toolkit for workplaces ([Supporting Carers in the Workplace: A toolkit](#) 2013). The toolkit provides practical suggestions and examples of different kinds of workplace mechanisms to support family/carers in organisations and workplaces of all sizes and types. These examples have been drawn from current practice in 24 countries including Australia. Some of the suggested workplace mechanisms will suit small organisations, while others will be more suitable for large organisations.

## Resources for reasonable adjustment

The HTML Managers' Guide: Disability in the Workplace from the [Australian Network on Disability](#) provides comprehensive information for managers on the employment of people with disabilities including the recruitment processes, OHS, disclosure of disability and employee performance and development. Other sources of information are:

- [Individual plan AHRC](#)
- [Personal Situation Plan Richmond PRA](#)
- [Contacting absent employees template](#)
- [Managing the possibility of relapse template](#)
- [Return to work template](#)

The ReturntoWork website also provides helpful examples of how employees have been assisted to remain and/or return to work when experiencing ill mental health.

### Remember to Update your Plan!

*This resource in the Employer's guide to implementing a peer workforce is supported by the Mental Health Commission of New South Wales*



**Mental Health Commission**  
of New South Wales