



Policy

Workplace Adjustment Policy

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1. Purpose and Authority

The Parliamentary Workplace Support Service (PWSS) is committed to supporting accessible and inclusive work environments that enable people with disability, illness or injury to participate fully in all aspects of employment. This commitment is consistent with the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (DDA).

Under the *Work Health and Safety Act 2011* (WHS Act) and the *Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011* parliamentarians, the Department of Finance and the PWSS share the duties of a Persons Conducting a Business or Undertaking (PCBU) to ensure, as far as reasonably practicable, the health and safety of those in the workplace.

In keeping with the requirements of the DDA and the *Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988*, the PWSS supports parliamentarians to apply the principles of workplace adjustment for all staff employed under the *Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984* (MOP(S) Act). This aims to remove any barriers so that a person can perform the requirements of the job and have equal opportunity in employment while:

- living with disability
- experiencing illness or injury
- managing a chronic illness
- undertaking carer responsibilities
- accessing family and domestic violence support.

This policy outlines what workplace adjustments are, when they may be sought, and the process employees should follow when requesting adjustments in the workplace.

2. Key Principles

- Workplace adjustments are aimed at removing barriers to participation in the workplace, but do not alter the essential requirements of the role.
- Adjustments must be reasonable to implement.
- The PWSS will assist parliamentarians and employees to consider and implement workplace adjustments.

3. Expectations and Responsibilities

3.1 Mutual

- Take reasonable care to manage the health and safety of themselves and others.
- Clarify and understand the essential requirements of the role early in the employment lifecycle.
- Take reasonable care to ensure their behaviour does not affect their own health and safety, or that of other persons.
- Report early warning signs of physical or psychological illness or injury of themselves and others, by notifying their parliamentarian and submitting an incident report to the PWSS.
- Be familiar with this policy and related guidance material.

3.2 Employee

- Notify their parliamentarian if they require workplace adjustments in writing and provide evidence if requested.
- Engage in discussions with their parliamentarian about any proposed workplace adjustments.

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- Follow advice from their medical practitioner or other treating health practitioner in relation to implementing and monitoring their workplace adjustments.
- Comply, so far as practicable, with any reasonable work health and safety (WHS) instruction given by their parliamentarian to support their workplace adjustments and ensure their health and safety in the workplace.

3.3 Parliamentarians and authorised officers

- Exercise due diligence to ensure the workplace meets its WHS duties to protect workers and other persons against harm to health and safety. This includes proactively discussing workplace adjustments with all employees early in the employment lifecycle.
- Engage in discussions with the employee about any workplace adjustments they have requested, referring to this policy or seeking assistance from the PWSS.
- Respond to requests for workplace adjustments in writing. The *Fair Work Act 2009* requires requests for flexible work to be responded to within 21 days.

3.4 PWSS

- Provide advice, training and guidance on matters relating to workplace adjustments, including identifying potential solutions, the provision of special equipment and funding sources.

4. Workplace adjustment

A workplace adjustment is a change to a work process, practice, procedure or environment that enables people with disability, illness or injury to participate fully in all aspects of employment. This commitment is consistent with the DDA.

A disability, illness or injury can be sensory, intellectual, physical or psychosocial. Some people with disability, illness or injury may face difficulties at work that can be relieved with a workplace adjustment. The requirement for the workplace adjustment may be short-term, intermittent, or ongoing. Workplace adjustments do not include changing the essential requirements of the job or creation of an entirely new job, unless in the context of training or rehabilitation. An employer is not required to make adjustments to their workplace that would impose unjustifiable hardship.

Please see [Attachment A](#) for examples of workplace adjustments.

4.1 Flexible working arrangements

The Commonwealth supports, in principle, employees making use of flexible working arrangements where appropriate and practical, as set out in section 18 of the *Commonwealth Members of Parliament Staff Enterprise Agreement 2024-27*. However, it is also acknowledged that the unique requirements of MOP(S) Act employment, the needs of parliamentarians and the requirements of a parliamentary workplace mean that for many roles working from home is not possible and/or the opportunities for flexible working arrangements are limited.

Refer to the Department of Finance [Working from Home Guideline](#) for further information.

5. Requesting adjustments

Employees should discuss their circumstances with their parliamentarian or manager in the first instance. Simple adjustments such as flexible work arrangements or use of existing equipment can be agreed in this way.

For more complex requests that may require changes to the workplace, the PWSS WHS team can provide advice to employees on the appropriate level of information to provide in making a request. The PWSS

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Wellbeing Support team can act as a support person during the conversation or to debrief after. If necessary, an initial needs assessment can be arranged and conducted by a contracted Rehabilitation Services Provider and may also be supported by the government-funded initiative JobAccess (see section 6: Employee Assistance Fund).

Parliamentarians are encouraged to engage in open discussions regarding workplace adjustments with all employees early in the employment lifecycle. However, there is never a wrong time to have these discussions as an employee's conditions and circumstances may fluctuate or vary over time.

5.1 Making a request

A Workplace Adjustment Passport is a useful tool for an employee to use to minimise the need to disclose sensitive information multiple times. A template for a Workplace Adjustment Passport can be found at Attachment B. In making a request for an adjustment, employees should outline:

- the adjustment(s) they propose
- the reason for the adjustment(s)
- how the adjustment(s) will improve their productivity.

The employee is to provide their request in writing, noting that providing evidence, such as a letter from a medical practitioner, can be useful to support a request. Evidence should state that the employee is impacted by a condition and outline the adjustments that would be appropriate, it does not need to disclose the condition noting the employee does not need to disclose the condition to their employer or the PWSS.

5.2 Consideration of a request

Parliamentarians should be supportive of removing barriers for employees in the workplace, where reasonable.

When considering whether the request is reasonable, the following factors should be considered:

- the benefit of the adjustment to the employee
- any detriments to any other affected employees
- the costs associated with making the adjustments to remove the barriers to the employee.

The PWSS WHS team can provide advice to parliamentarians when considering a request for workplace adjustments, and where appropriate, work to identify potential alternative solutions and funding sources.

Some conditions such as chronic illnesses, may fluctuate in intensity and require reasonable adjustments which can be accessed by the employee as they require them. This will require pre-approval by the parliamentarian.

When supporting an employee affected by family and domestic violence, arrangements that are intermittent or irregular may be considered.

In consultation with the employee and the PWSS WHS team, the parliamentarian will consider a request and make a decision. Each request will be reviewed and considered on a case-by-case basis.

5.3 Making a decision

Where the request for workplace adjustments is approved in total or in part, the decision should be recorded in writing to form the employee's Workplace Adjustment Passport (please see Attachment B for a template).

If the parliamentarian denies the request, their reason/s for denying should be in writing and include information such as:

- details of the reasons for refusal
- alternative proposals for the request that would accommodate the employee's circumstances.

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Where it is not possible for reasonable adjustments to be made, consideration should be given to suitable alternative roles which may be available within the workplace. If no suitable roles are available, please contact the [HR Advice team](#) to discuss.

5.4 Implementation

Workplace adjustments will be actioned as quickly as is reasonably practicable to ensure the safety of all employees in the workplace. Implementation will depend on the adjustments required, for instance if a new chair is required the PWSS WHS team will organise an ergonomic assessment to ensure the correct chair is ordered, whereas some adjustments may be actioned more rapidly.

6. Employment Assistance Fund

Employees with disability may be eligible to access the [Employment Assistance Fund](#) under the JobAccess program run by the Department of Social Services. This program covers workplace modifications, work equipment, Auslan services, workplace assistance and support services.

Any modifications or equipment purchased under this fund remain with the employee to assist with their general participation in employment and do not remain with the employer if the employee ceases employment.

7. Support

Parliamentary Workplace Support Service (PWSS)

The PWSS is available to provide a range of human resource and work health and safety support and guidance to parliamentarians and employees. We also provide wellbeing support, conflict resolution and early intervention to all employees.

The PWSS can also be contacted via phone 24/7 on **1800 747 977**, by SMS on 0487 112 755, email at support@PWSS.gov.au, or in person at M2.105 in APH from 8.30am-8pm sitting days or 8.30am-5pm all other business days. Visit <https://pwss.gov.au> for more information.

For advice relating to this policy, call 1800 747 977 (option 3) or email whs@pwss.gov.au.

Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

Parliamentarians, employees and their families can access the [Employee Assistance Program](#).

Australian Parliament House (APH) supports

Nurses' Centre	The Nurses' Centre provides confidential support to building occupants at APH, and remotely to other staff. The friendly nurses can provide mental health support and link staff and building occupants with allied health services.	02 6277 5314 or 0428 472 673
Visitor Engagement	Wheelchairs can be hired by contacting staff in the Visitor Engagement Team ahead of time. There are a number of sensory-friendly areas at Parliament House for both staff and visitors. These include quiet zones, enclosed courtyards, lounges, breakout areas, and semi-private spaces for staff on the mezzanine level. Hearing loops are available in the public areas of the building, in chamber galleries, and in meeting rooms. Hearing	Visitor.Services@aph.gov.au

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	augmentation in the chambers for parliamentarians is available.	
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8. Definitions

Term	Definition
Authorised persons	A person who has been authorised by a parliamentarian to exercise duties on their behalf.
Disability	The <i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i> defines disability as: - a total or partial loss of a person's body or their mental or bodily function - the presence in the body of organisms causing or capable of causing illness or disease - the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of part of the body - a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently than others - a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or adjustment, or results in disturbed behaviour.
Disability Discrimination Act 1992	Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992, employers have obligations to make adjustments to accommodate an individual's disability, unless that adjustment would result in unjustifiable hardship. Unjustifiable hardship could be in the form of: - financial cost - an amendment to the physical building that is not possible due to council or other restrictions - an adjustment that would disadvantage other employees.
EAP	Employee Assistance Program
Employee	Employees are staff employed under the <i>Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984 (Cth)</i> . Employees are employed by Parliamentarians on behalf of the Commonwealth.
Essential requirements	Essential requirements, otherwise known as inherent requirements, are the core activities and tasks that must be carried out in order to effectively perform a role. Essential requirements relate to results or what must be accomplished, rather than means or how it is accomplished. Essential requirements do not refer to all parts of a role, for example non-essential tasks or tasks that may be negotiable and flexible.
Parliamentarian	This term refers collectively to Members of the House of Representatives and Senators.
PWSS	Parliamentary Workplace Support Service
Workplace adjustments	Workplace adjustments should address the individual needs of a person to:

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Term	Definition
	• experience equitable terms and conditions of employment • perform the inherent or essential requirements of their job safely in the workplace • have equal opportunity in recruitment processes, promotion and ongoing development • maximise productivity.

9. Useful Resources

Legislation	Additional guidance
• <u><i>Disability Discrimination Act 1992</i></u> • <u><i>Equal Employment Opportunity (Commonwealth Authorities) Act 1987</i></u> • <u><i>Fair Work Act 2009</i></u> • <u><i>Privacy Act 1988</i></u> • <u><i>Safety, Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988</i></u> • <u><i>Work Health and Safety Act 2011</i></u> • <u><i>Work Health and Safety Regulations 2011</i></u>	• <u>Australian Human Rights Commission</u> • <u>Australian Privacy Principles</u> • <u>Behaviour Code for Australian Parliamentarians</u> • <u>Behaviour Code for staff employed under the Members of Parliament (Staff) Act 1984</u> • <u>Behaviour Standards for Commonwealth Parliamentary Workplaces</u> • <u>Commonwealth Members of Parliament (Staff) Enterprise Agreement 2024-27</u> • <u>Independent Parliamentary Standards Commission</u> • <u>JobAccess Employment Assistance Fund</u> • <u>National Disability Insurance Scheme</u>

10. Document Control

This document will be reviewed every two years or earlier when a business requirement is identified.

Version Control	
Approving authority	Chief Executive Officer of the PWSS
Date approved	
Current version	V1.0
Internal stakeholder/s	
Record ID	
Notes	

Attachment A: Workplace Adjustment Examples

This list provided below highlights examples that are consistent with many applications for workplace adjustment. Please note that this list is not exhaustive:

Type of workplace adjustment	Examples
Accessible workplace	Accessibility to the office such as ramps, lifts, access ways to be accessible and accessible bathrooms.
Assistive technology and equipment	Inclusive technology options may include colour filters for screens, noise cancelling headphones, assistive technology, task management apps, fidget devices e.g. speech recognition software for someone with vision impairment, an amplified phone for a person who is hard of hearing, or a digital recorder for someone who finds it difficult to take written notes.
Auslan interpretation / captioning	Provide written summaries of meetings or allowing for recording/videos that are captioned. Providing an Auslan interpreter or captioning.
Communication	Options for ensuring inclusive communication may include: - considering the forms or formats in which work-related communication or information is available - provisions of interpreters, readers, attendants or other work-related assistance Consider communication style options that assist employee's learning and comprehension for example, role play or demonstrate the instructions, utilise visual aids such as the use of whiteboards. Give the employee opportunity to practice while providing with appropriate feedback.
Ergonomic equipment	Provision of special equipment such as ergonomic mouse and keyboard, footrest, non-slip rugs.
Flexible working hours	Flexible working can include adjustable start/finish times, work hours and/or locations, scheduled breaks, uninterrupted work time, adapting work location to energy levels.
Job design	Consider the employee's preferences in how their work is carried out. For example, the employee might prefer a variety of tasks running concurrently or they may prefer to allocate their focus to one task at a time. Redistributing or redesigning minor duties (i.e. not inherent requirements of a job).
Supervision / additional support	Establish a buddy program with a co-worker to provide extra support and encouragement to keep on task. Schedule regular performance feedback meetings. Providing additional training, mentoring, and supervision.

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Type of workplace adjustment	Examples
Workstation accommodation	Work environment adjustment may include a quieter space, adjustable lighting, consideration around proximity to facilities. Providing height-adjustable work stations.

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Attachment B: Workplace Adjustment Passport Template

Personal Details

Name of employee	
Employee email address	
Name of parliamentarian	
Nominated work base	

Adjustment Details

Workplace impacts

(Example – difficulty standing on feet for prolonged periods)

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Workplace adjustment requirements

(Example – take regular breaks to sit as needed)

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A disability or medical condition that needs no action, but needs to be brought to the attention of parliamentarian

(Example – epilepsy)

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Emergency arrangements

(Example – arrangement with Emergency Officer to access elevator during evacuation drills)

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Do you require a Personal Emergency Evacuation Plan? If so, please provide relevant information.

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Other support

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Recommended adjustments

(Identify what has been recommended by a legal qualified medical practitioner or workplace assessment)

Detail adjustments	Existing / New	Action required	Comments

Signatures

Employee	Parliamentarian/Authorised Officer

Review date

Date of next review	
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Workplace adjustments that require action e.g. the provision of special equipment, should be requested via whs@pwss.gov.au.

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