



**Australian Government**

**Comcare**

## REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS

The concept of reasonable adjustments reflects the understanding that a worker with an injury, ill health or disability can often perform tasks if adjustments are made to accommodate the effects of their injury, ill health or disability.<sup>1</sup>

The aim of any reasonable adjustment is to minimise the impact of the injury, health problem or disability to enable the worker to fully take part in work-related programs and effectively undertake the inherent requirements of their job.

Workers face many obstacles to participating in a life in work. Reasonable adjustments that support someone's ability to work can be effective in:

- > preventing deterioration of health and allowing employees with health problems to stay at work
- > enabling employees to stay at work or return to work after injury
- > assisting people with a disability to enter and stay in the workplace.

### WHAT ARE REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS?

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

In order to make reasonable adjustments for a worker, the inherent requirements of the job need to be understood. The inherent requirements of a job relate to what needs to be accomplished in the job rather than how the job is accomplished.<sup>2</sup> The focus should be on how the person's injury, illness or disability affects their ability to undertake their work and what adjustments can be made to overcome this.

Reasonable adjustments are personalised and should be tailored to meet individual requirements and circumstances. The worker 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. They need to be reviewed regularly to make sure they remain relevant and effective for the worker, as well as manageable within the workplace.

<sup>1</sup> Australian Public Service Commission, *Ability at work: Tapping the talent of people with disability*. Australian Public Service Commission, Canberra, 2007, viewed 16 August 2013, <<http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications-and-media/current-publications/ability-at-work-tapping-the-talent-of-people-with-disability>>.

<sup>2</sup> Australian Network on Disability, Sydney, 2012, viewed 16 August 2013, <<http://www.and.org.au/>>.



## WHAT IS CONSIDERED IN MAKING REASONABLE ADJUSTMENTS?

- > **Physical adjustments.** Modifying the worksite/workstation to make it accessible, changing the workspace, providing additional equipment or tools.
- > **Work arrangements.** Adjustments to work hours or duties such as part-time work, starting and finishing later, working from home and access to work remotely, assistance in managing work load.
- > **Adjustments to a job.** Modifying duties, adjusting work methods, providing additional training, modifying work patterns.
- > **Technological assistance.** Providing new or modifying existing equipment and tools, for example, speech-recognition software.
- > **Attitudes of colleagues.** Influencing the attitudes of colleagues so they understand the reasons for providing adjustments and are able to support them. Providing information on how reasonable adjustments can support everyone within a workplace to be healthy, safe and productive at work.

## WHAT IS REASONABLE WHEN MAKING ADJUSTMENTS?

What is considered reasonable depends on the facts and circumstances of each case. When considering if an adjustment is reasonable, you should take into account:

- > how effective the adjustment will be in helping the worker stay at or return to work
- > how practical it is to make the adjustment and any disruption it will cause, particularly any health or safety impacts on other workers
- > the financial costs of the adjustment and the capacity of the organisation to meet these costs.

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'.

## MORE INFORMATION

Resource	Link
Information regarding reasonable adjustments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>&gt; Ability at work: Tapping the talent of people with disability, Australian Public Service Commission <a href="http://www.apsc.gov.au/publications-and-media/current-publications/ability-at-work-tapping-the-talent-of-people-with-disability/part-1-information">www.apsc.gov.au/publications-and-media/current-publications/ability-at-work-tapping-the-talent-of-people-with-disability/part-1-information</a></li><li>&gt; Australian Network on Disability: Reasonable Adjustments <a href="http://www.and.org.au/pages/reasonable-adjustments-information.html">http://www.and.org.au/pages/reasonable-adjustments-information.html</a></li><li>&gt; JobAccess Workplace Adjustment tools <a href="http://www.jobaccess.gov.au">www.jobaccess.gov.au</a></li></ul>
Information regarding reasonable adjustments and rehabilitation	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>&gt; Comcare publication: Suitable employment—A guide for Rehabilitation case managers <a href="http://www.comcare.gov.au">http://www.comcare.gov.au</a></li></ul>
Financial assistance for reasonable adjustments	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>&gt; Section 39, <i>Safety Rehabilitation and Compensation Act 1988</i></li><li>&gt; Job Access Employment Assistance Fund <a href="http://www.jobaccess.gov.au">www.jobaccess.gov.au</a></li></ul>