

# TEAM TALK

## Good Work Design: Addressing work demands



Australian Government

Comcare



This team talk is part of a series created to help you discuss good work design with your team. Read the team talk to your team and use the questions to start a discussion.

### Introduction

Work demands are an important part of our work and help to give people meaning, purpose and a sense of achievement.

All jobs are demanding from time to time, but work that is too demanding—or not demanding enough—can cause chronic stress and burnout when it is prolonged.

Matching demands of the work to the capability and capacity of each team member is a key part of good work design.

Comcare's [Addressing work demands](#) video and [better practice guidance](#) outlines how great managers provide flexible work for their team. Let's watch the video—which is designed for managers but has messages that are relevant for all of us.

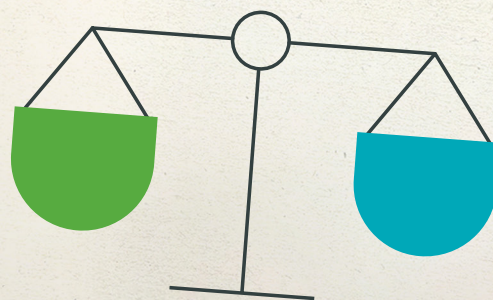
Use the [SMART Work Design model](#) in one-on-one conversations to help you consider all relevant aspects of each person's role.

### Types of work demands

- Time, for example, unrealistic timeframes.
- Cognitive, for example, sustained concentration.
- Emotional, for example, sustained emotional effort while interacting with clients or colleagues.
- Physical, for example, physically tiring tasks.
- Environmental, for example, lighting, temperature and noise.
- Cultural, for example, [cultural load](#) borne by indigenous staff.
- Demands stemming from organisational change.
- Demands caused by a lack of organisational justice or sense of fairness.



# Designing good work is about finding the right balance



## How to manage work demands

### Identify when demands aren't right:

- Recognise and respond to early warning signs, including changes in behaviour. Pay even more attention when people are working remotely. Speak up early if you have concerns about your own work demands or those of others.
- Regularly talk about workloads and demands as a team so people feel comfortable to speak up when demands aren't right.

### Address unacceptable demands:

- Talk as a team about autonomy and control and whether people feel in control of their work and workload, including choices about how, when and where they do their work.
- Try using job crafting to help better align work with your strengths, values and interests.
- Focus on goal setting and outcomes.
- Give and ask for regular feedback.
- Regularly discuss available resources and seek more support when required.
- Seek support following emotionally demanding work and engage in relevant training.
- Work reasonable hours and take breaks when needed. Encourage others to take breaks too.
- Use task variety to provide a change of pace.
- Report harmful work demands and make practical suggestions for control measures.

### Monitor and review work demands to ensure they remain sustainable:

- Remember that work demands often fluctuate over time and change at work can worsen demands.



## Discussion

Was there anything that stood out for you from the video?

What are some of the work demands we have in our team?

How would you rate your own work demands in the last 2-4 weeks? Too little/about right/too much?

Are there any demands that you feel are impacting safety and wellbeing now, or in the past?

How can we work together to better manage demands that are problematic?

## Notes

This section can be used to record agreed actions arising from your discussion and/or attendance.