

# Talking to your employer



## Should I disclose that I am a carer?

### *Should I tell my manager?*

This is a personal decision. You do not have to tell your employer about your caring role, but by disclosing it you may be able to discuss the support and work arrangements you need to help you balance work and care. Some people find it useful to 'test' the carer culture of their workplace first. To start with, find out if your employer has policies for supporting employees with caring responsibilities. You could also seek out colleagues with caring responsibilities and ask them whether they have found the workplace supportive.

### *Should I tell my colleagues?*

This is again a personal decision. Any flexible work arrangement agreed to with your manager will likely have an impact on your colleagues, so it is worth considering:

- whether the workplace culture is supportive
- how any previous disclosure of caring in the workplace was received
- who you feel you can trust with personal matters, and the possible impact if you tell some colleagues but not others
- whether your colleagues need to know what to do if you need to leave work suddenly.

## Negotiating flexible working arrangements.

Your employer may not immediately understand your needs as a carer, and it is important to present a good business case for flexible working arrangements.



### **KNOW YOUR RIGHTS**

Research your organisation's policies, as there may be workplace provisions you were unaware of. These policies may fall under titles such as leave, flexible work or reasonable adjustments. Check if you are considered to be a 'carer' according to the Carer Recognition Act in which case you may have a right to request flexible working arrangements after 12 months of continuous service. The Australian Government's Fair Work website provides detailed information (<https://www.fairwork.gov.au/>).



### **CONSIDER WHAT YOU ARE PREPARED TO DISCLOSE**

You are not obliged to disclose sensitive details to support your request. Find out your workplace's privacy policy around your confidential information.



### KNOW WHAT YOU NEED

Think about what arrangements may help you balance work with caring responsibilities (e.g. flexible start/finish times). You do not have to have the 'perfect' solution before talking with your manager – in fact, it can pay to be flexible and open to their ideas.



### PREPARE FOR OBJECTIONS

A positive outcome is more likely if you approach your manager with solutions rather than problems. Think about how changing your work patterns may impact the business, and how this could be addressed. Consider the benefits for your employer of retaining you.



### PREPARE TO COMPROMISE

Outlining your ideas in a proposal promotes mutual negotiation for working arrangements that can benefit both you and your employer.

### CONSIDER THE FOLLOWING WHEN PREPARING YOUR PROPOSAL:

- Impact on the business and your manager.
- Impact on colleagues and clients.
- Managing your role and associated tasks.
- Examples and solutions for potential workplace interruptions, such as:
  - emergency leave
  - managing medical appointments or care arrangements
  - communication protocols when you are in meetings etc
  - last minute working from home arrangements
  - impact of position or task sharing.



### PRACTISE

You may feel more confident if you practise the conversation with family or friends. It may also help to have key points written down.



### PLAN THE DISCUSSION

Request a meeting with your manager in a private place where you will not be interrupted. Allow plenty of time for your discussion. Consider bringing a support person, such as a trusted colleague.

For more information and letter templates visit FairWork Australia  
<https://www.fairwork.gov.au/employee-entitlements/flexibility-in-the-workplace/flexible-working-arrangements>

# Conversational guide

For requesting flexible working arrangements.



## 1. EXPLAIN your situation.

Outline your caring situation to your manager and its impact on your work commitments. Explain that you want to continue working while caring and are committed to your work. There is no need to apologise for being a carer or the responsibilities that you have.

## 2. OUTLINE your request.

Explain what arrangements might help you balance your work and caring responsibilities. If possible, give a time frame for your request, eg “My caring responsibilities will start in June and may last for three months” or “This is a long-term commitment but I will keep you informed of any changes”. Make it clear that you have considered the impact of your request on the business and your colleagues. Outline any suggestions you have to minimise the disruption and discuss how colleagues might support you (if you have discussed this with them).

## 3. DISCUSS and plan ahead.

Remember to listen actively, stay open to ideas, and be prepared to be flexible when you discuss how to make the arrangement work. For example, do you need particular equipment to work remotely? How could you and your manager keep up-to-date on work outcomes? How might you keep in contact and maintain relationships with your colleagues? Once you come to an agreement, it is best to formalise this in writing.

## 4. FOLLOW UP with your employer.

Set a time for a follow-up meeting to discuss outstanding issues, assess how things are going and decide whether further action is needed. Remember, you do not need to agree on everything in the first meeting. You may both need to get more information. If you and your manager agree on an arrangement and it is working well, it is still a good idea to formalise your arrangement in writing. This will protect you in case your line manager changes in the future.