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# Welcome to the Workforce:

A guide for new employees

# Welcome to the Workforce: A New Employees Guide

When you are new to the workforce, it is important to understand your rights, entitlements, and responsibilities. This guide is packed with essential information and tips to help you navigate the workforce and ensure that your rights are not infringed upon. For up-to-date information and details regarding your specific industry, visit <https://www.fairwork.gov.au>.



## Employment types

Employment across Australia is categorised into different types. Your employment classification can affect everything from your pay to your entitlements.

The different types of employment in Australia are:



### Full-time

Full-time workers typically work an average of 38 hours per week on a permanent or fixed term basis. Full-time workers are entitled to paid leave such as annual leave, sick leave, and carers' leave.



### Part-time

Part-time employees work less than 38 hours per week and typically have consistent work hours. They are usually employed on a permanent or fixed-term basis. Part-time employees are also entitled to annual, sick, and carers' leave, but these are pro-rated (proportional to their hours worked).



### Casual

Casual employees have an employment relationship with no firm commitment from the employer to provide ongoing work. Casual employees do not have the same entitlements as full or part-time employees, however, they are entitled to a casual loading or pay rate under an award or enterprise bargaining agreement. Casual employees can be flexible with what shifts they choose to take. Casual employees are entitled to some specific forms of leave such as carers, compassionate and family and domestic violence leave. These can be both unpaid and paid.



### Fixed-term contract

Fixed-term employees work on contracts with a fixed termination date. The contract the employee signs will determine the hours worked. Fixed-term employees are usually entitled to the same entitlements that permanent full/part time employees have; however specific terms may be included in the contracts.



### Shift workers

Shift workers receive additional compensation for working undesirable shift hours. Additional compensation is determined in the award, enterprise bargaining agreement, or other registered agreement.



### Daily & weekly hire

In the construction and plumbing industries, employees can sometimes be employed on a daily or weekly basis.



### Probation

Employers can hire an employee on a probationary basis to determine whether they wish to continue employment after a fixed time has passed. Employees on probation receive the same entitlements as full or part-time workers.



### Apprentices and trainees

Depending on the industry, employees can enter into a formal training arrangement with an employer, usually to study to receive a qualification in that industry. Apprentices and trainees can be full-time, part-time or casual and receive the same entitlements as employees on these types of arrangements.

## Employment conditions

Australian workplace law sets minimum standards for how, when and where you work. This section explains the key conditions every worker should know, from daily hours and rest breaks to flexible work options. Always check the award or enterprise agreement that covers your job for any extra or different provisions.

### Ordinary work hours

Ordinary hours are an employee's normal and regular hours of work, which do not attract overtime rates. Ordinary hours can be different for full-time, part-time and casual employees.

### Flexible working arrangements

Certain workers – such as parents of young children, carers, people with disability, those 55 +, or anyone experiencing family or domestic violence – can request changes to hours, patterns or location of work once they have 12 months' service. Employers must reply in writing within 21 days and can refuse only on reasonable business grounds (e.g. cost, impracticality).

### Rest and meal breaks

Rest and meal breaks are the two most common types of breaks for employees. The lengths and rules regarding payment for these breaks vary depending on your employment status and the industry you are employed in. To find tailored information on your specific entitlements, visit <https://www.fairwork.gov.au>.

Commonly, full-time employees working between 7 to 10 hours per day are entitled to 2 paid rest breaks of 10 minutes and 1 unpaid meal break of 30-60 minutes.

### Rosters and notice

If your job is covered by a modern award or enterprise agreement, your employer must give you your roster – or any changes to it – with at least seven days' notice. Shorter notice periods may only apply in exceptional circumstances, such as an emergency or staff illness. If you receive a last-minute change to your roster and it creates difficulties for you, you can raise the issue with your employer or seek further advice from the Fair Work Ombudsman.

### Right to disconnect

Employees have a legal right to disconnect. This means that outside of your normal work hours, you can refuse to monitor, read, or respond to work-related communications like emails, messages, or phone calls – unless it would be unreasonable to do so. What is “unreasonable” depends on factors like the urgency of the contact, your role, and any personal circumstances.



## Entitlements

When you start a new job one of the most important things to understand is your workplace entitlements. These are the minimum standards you are legally guaranteed as an employee. This section will explain your leave options, how wages work and what extra payments you may be entitled to.

### Leave types

Australia's National Employment Standards (NES) outline the minimum leave entitlements for most employees. These include paid and unpaid leave.

#### Public holidays

You are entitled to be absent from work on public holidays. If you work on a public holiday, you may be entitled to penalty rates or an alternative day off, depending on your award or agreement. Public holidays vary by state and territory.

#### Annual leave

Also called holiday leave, this is paid time off that most full-time and part-time workers earn. You are entitled to 4 weeks of paid annual leave per year (based on your ordinary hours). Shift workers may get additional leave.

#### Sick & carers' leave

Also known as personal leave, this covers time off for when you are unwell or need to care for a family or household member. Full-time employees get 10 days of paid sick/carer's leave per year, with part-time employees getting it on a pro-rata basis. Casuals are not entitled to paid sick leave but can take unpaid carer's leave.

#### Compassionate & bereavement leave

You are entitled to 2 days of compassionate leave (paid for permanent staff, unpaid for casuals) per occasion when a family or household member dies or suffers a life-threatening illness or injury.

#### Parental leave

If you have worked with the same employer for 12 months, you may be eligible for unpaid parental leave (up to 12 months, with the option to request another 12). The government may also provide paid parental leave if you meet eligibility criteria.

#### Unpaid leave

There is no general entitlement to unpaid leave unless it is specified in your award or agreement. However, unpaid leave is sometimes granted for personal, cultural, or family reasons by agreement with your employer.



## Pay and wages

Understanding how you get paid and what you are entitled to is essential for making sure you are treated fairly at work. This includes knowing your minimum wage, how often you should be paid, what allowances or penalty rates apply, and how to check your pay slip for errors. For more detailed information about pay rates and workplace entitlements, visit <https://www.fairwork.gov.au>.

### Minimum wage

Australia has a national minimum wage, which is reviewed annually by the Fair Work Commission. As of 1 July 2025, the national minimum wage is \$24.95 per hour or \$948 per 38-hour week (before tax). Many jobs are covered by awards, which set out minimum pay rates for specific industries or roles – often higher than the national minimum.



### Pay period

Your pay period is the regular cycle in which your wages are calculated and paid. Most Australian employees are paid weekly, fortnightly, or monthly, depending on the employer. Your employer must clearly tell you how often you will be paid and provide you with a pay slip (usually within one working day of payment). This pay slip should show important information like:

- Your total hours worked
- Your hourly rate and gross pay (before tax)
- Any tax, superannuation, or deductions
- Any leave taken or balances
- Allowances or penalty rates (if applicable)

### Allowances

Allowances are extra payments made on top of your regular wage for things like extra responsibilities, working in tough conditions, or covering out-of-pocket costs required for the job. Whether you get allowances depends on your award, enterprise agreement, or employment contract. Common types of allowances include:

- **Travel allowances:** If you are required to travel for work and cover fuel or public transport.
- **Uniform or equipment allowance:** If you are expected to buy and maintain your own uniform, tools, or safety gear.
- **Meal allowance:** If you work overtime without prior notice and need to buy food.

### Penalty rates

Penalty rates are higher pay rates for working outside normal hours, like weekends, public holidays, or late nights. These vary by award but are common in retail, hospitality, and healthcare jobs.

### Superannuation contributions

Your employer must pay at least 12% of your ordinary time earnings into a superannuation fund. You can choose your own super fund, and you can usually see your super payments on your pay slip or through your myGov account linked to the ATO. Employers must pay superannuation for all casual, part-time, and full-time employees who are 18 or over. If you are under 18 and you work more than 30 hours per week, your employer also must pay superannuation for you.

## Checking your pay slip for errors

Your pay slip is an important document that shows how much you have been paid and what deductions or entitlements have been applied. It must be given to you either electronically or on paper within one working day of payday. Checking your pay slip regularly helps you make sure you are being paid correctly and receiving everything you are entitled to.

### Key details to check:

- Pay period and date of payment:** Check that the dates match the period you worked
- Hours worked:** Make sure the total number of hours (especially overtime or weekend shifts) match your records or roster
- Hourly rate or salary:** Confirm that you are being paid at least the minimum wage for your job and age group
- Gross pay vs net pay:** Gross pay is your full pay before deductions. Net pay is what you receive in your bank account after tax and other deductions
- Tax and superannuation:** Make sure tax is being withheld and that super contributions are being made
- Leave balances:** Some pay slips show how much annual or sick leave you have accrued
- Allowances or penalty rates:** If you have worked weekends, late nights, or public holidays, check that these extras are included

If something on your pay slip does not look right, it is important to speak up. Start by raising the issue with your employer, manager, or payroll officer, as it could be a simple mistake they can fix quickly. Keep your own records of hours worked, including dates and times, so you can compare them with your pay slip. If the issue is not resolved or you are unsure about your rights, you can contact the Fair Work Ombudsman.



## Ending Employment

It is important to know your rights and responsibilities when your employment ends. This includes understanding how much notice needs to be given, what happens in a redundancy, and what should be included in your final pay.

### Notice periods, resignation and termination

A notice period is the amount of time that either you or your employer must give before ending your employment. The required length of notice depends on how long you have been employed and what is stated in your employment contract, award, or enterprise agreement. If you are resigning, you generally need to give written notice, and your employer must pay you for any hours worked during the notice period. If your employer ends your employment, they must usually give you notice in writing or pay you in lieu of notice (meaning you stop working straight away but are paid for the notice period).

### Redundancy

Redundancy happens when your job is no longer needed – usually because of business changes, downsizing, or restructuring. Redundancy is different from being fired for performance or misconduct. If you are made redundant, you may be entitled to:

- Notice or pay in lieu of notice
- Redundancy pay (if you have been with the business for at least 12 months and the business has 15 or more employees)
- A statement of service or reference

Your employer should follow a proper process and provide you with details in writing. If you are unsure whether your redundancy is genuine or fair, you can seek advice from the Fair Work Ombudsman or a legal support service.

### Final pay

When your job ends, you are entitled to receive your final pay. This should include:

- Any wages owed up to your last day
- Unused annual leave (paid out in full)
- Redundancy pay, if applicable
- Any other entitlements under your award, contract or enterprise agreement

There is no set time for when your final pay must be made unless it is written into a contract or agreement, but most employers pay it on the next usual payday. If your final pay is delayed or you believe it is incorrect, contact your employer first. If it is not resolved, you can contact the Fair Work Ombudsman for help.

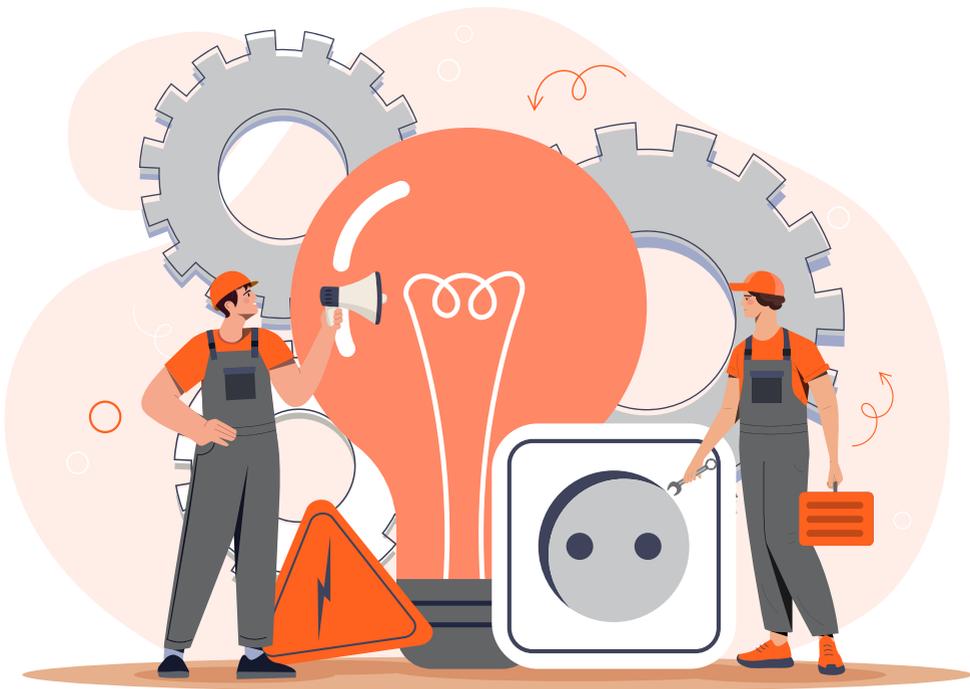


## Safety in the Workplace

By law, your employer is responsible for making sure that you have a safe work environment that is free from discrimination, bullying, and physical and environmental hazards. There should also be a clear process for reporting any unsafe working conditions or any breaches of health and safety.

### Health and safety

Each state and territory are responsible for overseeing and enforcing Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) laws in their jurisdiction. WHS laws seek to protect the health, safety and welfare of employees and other people at work. WHS laws are similar in each jurisdiction through a set of uniform laws by Safe Work Australia called the Model WHS laws. For more information on WHS laws in your state, visit <https://www.safeworkaustralia.gov.au/>.



## Reporting unsafe work conditions

Unsafe work conditions are hazards or practices that put you or others in mental or physical danger. You can report hazards to your supervisor, manager, health or safety representative. If you are having issues reporting a problem at work, you can contact the regulator in your state. By reporting unsafe conditions in the workplace, you can help to protect yourself and others from harm. Some examples of unsafe work conditions include:

### Improper training

Employers must provide training for tasks that are relevant to your role. This training must be provided to new employees with regular refresher courses. Training should be up to date and industry specific.

### Inadequate personal protective equipment (PPE)

PPE is clothing or equipment designed to protect you from the risk of injury or illness. If PPE is required, your employer must provide it to you, free of charge. PPE must be maintained to ensure it provides the necessary level of protection. You should also be provided with training and instruction on when and how to use PPE.

### Physical & environmental hazards

Anything that can cause you bodily harm is classified as a physical hazard, including environmental dangers. Common examples of physical hazards include slippery floors, exposure to harmful substances, electricity, noise,

### Mental health hazards

Mental health hazards are classified as anything that could cause psychological harm in the workplace. Common examples include bullying, harassment, traumatic events or material, job demands, poor support, and remote or isolated work.

## Discrimination in the workplace

Discrimination happens when someone is treated unfairly or less favourably than others because of a protected attribute such as their age, race, sex, disability, religion, sexual orientation, gender identity, or pregnancy. In Australia, it is against the law to discriminate against someone in the workplace at any stage of employment – including during hiring, training, rostering, promotion, or dismissal.

Examples of discrimination may include:

- Refusing to hire someone because they wear religious clothing
- Denying a promotion to someone because they are pregnant
- Reducing someone's hours after they disclose a mental health condition

If you believe you have been discriminated against, you can:

- Raise the issue with your manager, HR department, or health and safety representative (HSR)
- Make a formal complaint through your workplace's grievance or complaints process
- Get external help by contacting your union, the Fair Work Ombudsman, the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC), or your state/territory anti-discrimination body

Employers must take steps to prevent discrimination by promoting a respectful workplace, educating staff, and responding appropriately to complaints.

## Bullying in the workplace

Workplace bullying is repeated, unreasonable behaviour directed at a worker or group of workers that creates a risk to health and safety. It can be verbal, physical, social, or psychological, and may come from managers, co-workers, or even clients or customers.

Examples of bullying include:

- Repeated yelling, name-calling, or swearing
- Intentionally excluding someone from team activities or communication
- Spreading rumours or false information
- Unjustified criticism or deliberately giving someone impossible tasks

It is important to note that reasonable management action (like performance feedback or discipline for misconduct) is not considered bullying if it is done fairly.

If you experience or witness bullying:

- Keep a record of what happened – include dates, times, and details
- Report it early to your manager, HSR, or HR department
- If the issue continues or is not handled properly, you can contact Safe Work, the Fair Work Commission, or a community legal centre for support

Bullying is a health and safety issue, and employers have a legal duty to provide a workplace free from bullying. Taking action early can help prevent harm to yourself and others.

## What to do if you are injured at work

If you are injured at work or if you experience a work-related injury, including psychological injuries, there are certain steps you should take to ensure that your rights are protected.

- Speak to your GP or go to the hospital for initial treatment
- Get a work capacity certificate from your treating doctor
- Inform your employer of your injury and provide your work capacity certificate
- Make a claim with WorkCover



## Superannuation benefits

Disability insurance cover is attached to your superannuation account and includes cover for Total and Permanent Disablement (“TPD”), income protection, and life insurance. Dependent on the specific insurance policy terms and condition, if you experience a medical condition, such as an injury or illness that limits your ability to work, you may be able to make a claim on these benefits.

## Shine Lawyers is here to help

If you have sustained a work-related injury or illness, Shine Lawyers is here to help you navigate the claims process. Our team will help you receive appropriate compensation through superannuation or insurance policies and ensure your entitlements to cover expenses such as medical, loss of income, and rehabilitation costs.

With our expertise, we stand by your side, providing the support you need to move forward.





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