



PDA at Work — Reasonable Adjustments and Disclosure

Your rights and options in the Australian workplace

The standard workplace is designed for neurotypical employees — fixed hours, ongoing demands from multiple directions, hierarchical authority, and performance expectations that assume a consistent output capacity. For a PDA nervous system, this design creates significant difficulty. But you have rights, and there are practical strategies that help.

Your Legal Rights

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)

The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA) makes it unlawful for employers to discriminate against employees with disability — which includes autism and PDA. Employers are required to make reasonable adjustments to enable you to perform the inherent requirements of your role.

What "Reasonable Adjustment" Means

- An adjustment is reasonable if it does not impose unjustifiable hardship on the employer
- Adjustments can include: flexible hours, working from home, modified task structure, adjusted communication expectations
- Employers cannot require you to disclose your diagnosis as a condition of employment
- If an employer refuses reasonable adjustments, you can make a complaint to the Australian Human Rights Commission

Disclosure: Should You Tell Your Employer?

Disclosure is a personal decision. There is no legal obligation to disclose autism or PDA to an employer. However, disclosure is generally required to formally request adjustments under the DDA framework.

Reasons to Disclose

- To formally request specific workplace adjustments
- To protect yourself legally if performance concerns arise
- To access employee assistance or occupational health support
- If your workplace culture is genuinely inclusive and you want to be yourself at work

Reasons You May Choose Not to Disclose

- Workplace culture is not genuinely inclusive despite policy
- Your adjustments can be obtained without formal disclosure (e.g. flexible work arrangements available to all)
- You are managing well with your existing strategies and the demand of disclosure outweighs the benefit
- Your employment situation is precarious



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Reasonable Adjustments to Consider Requesting

Schedule and Location

- Flexible start/finish times to avoid peak demand periods
- Work from home for some or all days — removes commute demand and environmental load
- Compressed hours — fewer longer days may suit some PDA profiles better than five standard days
- Protected focus time — blocks where meetings cannot be scheduled

Task and Communication

- Written briefs rather than verbal demands — allows processing on your own terms
- Advance notice of significant requests or changes
- Single point of direction — reduced number of people who can assign tasks to you
- Project-based structure rather than task-by-task instruction

Environment

- Quiet workspace or private office during focus work
- Permission to use headphones
- Reduced meeting load — attendance at essential meetings only
- Alternative to open-plan seating if sensory environment is impacting performance

Disclosure Scripts

In Writing to HR (Formal)

"I have a disability (autism spectrum condition) that affects how I work most effectively. Under the Disability Discrimination Act 1992, I would like to request the following reasonable workplace adjustments to enable me to perform my role: [list your specific requests]. I am happy to discuss these further and provide supporting documentation if required."

In Conversation with a Manager (Informal)

"I want to let you know that I'm autistic, and some aspects of how I work best are a bit different. I've found I'm most effective when [describe your needs briefly]. I'd love to talk about whether we can structure things in a way that plays to my strengths."

NDIS and Employment Support

If you have NDIS funding, it can include support for employment — including a support coordinator to help navigate workplace adjustments, therapy to support employment capacity, and assistive technology. Disability



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Employment Services (DES) are government-funded and free — they can support you in finding and maintaining employment regardless of NDIS status.

Key Takeaways

1. The DDA 1992 protects your right to reasonable workplace adjustments
2. Disclosure is a personal choice — it is not legally required
3. Many effective adjustments can be negotiated informally without formal disclosure
4. NDIS and Disability Employment Services can support your employment
5. Workplaces built for neurotypical employees can be redesigned to work for PDA — one conversation at a time

Helpful Tip

Australian Human Rights Commission: humanrights.gov.au

Disability Employment Services: jobaccess.gov.au

More resources at pdaaustralia.com.au/adults