



Cancer, Work & You

A guide for people with cancer,
their families and friends

Practical
and support
information

Cancer Council Helpline

13 11 20

www.cancercouncil.com.au

Cancer, Work & You

A guide for people with cancer, their families and friends

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Note to reader

Always consult your doctor about matters that affect your health. This booklet is intended as a general introduction to the topic and should not be seen as a substitute for medical, legal or financial advice. You should obtain appropriate independent professional advice relevant to your specific situation and you may wish to discuss issues raised in this book with them.

All care is taken to ensure that the information in this booklet is accurate at the time of publication. Please note that information on cancer, including the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of cancer, is constantly being updated and revised by medical professionals and the research community. Cancer Council Australia and its members exclude all liability for any injury, loss or damage incurred by use of or reliance on the information provided in this booklet.

Cancer Council NSW

Cancer Council is the leading cancer charity in NSW. It plays a unique and important role in the fight against cancer through undertaking high-quality research, advocating on cancer issues, providing information and services to the public and people with cancer, and raising funds for cancer programs. This booklet is funded through the generosity of the people of NSW. To make a donation to help defeat cancer, visit Cancer Council's website at www.cancercouncil.com.au or phone 1300 780 113.



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Introduction

A cancer diagnosis has a significant impact on many aspects of a person's life. When you are diagnosed, you will have to make several decisions, such as what treatment to have and if you want to be treated publicly or privately.

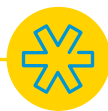
You'll also have to consider practical matters, such as how cancer will affect your working life and finances.

Cancer, Work & You is a practical resource for employees and self-employed people with cancer, and working carers. It contains information about how cancer can affect your ability to work, tips about working during treatment and recovery, and information about your rights and entitlements. There are also suggestions for people trying to balance employment and caring duties.

The way that cancer affects your work and finances will depend on your individual circumstances. Every person's situation is different – you may work on a casual, part-time or full-time basis. Others work at home or are self-employed.

Whatever the case, we hope this booklet helps you to find a working arrangement that suits your own situation.

If you're reading this booklet for someone who doesn't understand English, let them know that Cancer Council Helpline **13 11 20** can arrange telephone support in different languages.



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Key questions

Q: Will I be able to work?

A: Most employed people who are diagnosed with cancer wonder how it will affect their ability to work. Whether or not you are able to work during treatment will depend on:

- the type and stage of the cancer
- the type of treatment you have and its side effects
- the kind of work you do.

In many cases, cancer will impact an employee's work life. For example, you will probably have treatment appointments, some of which may be scheduled during working hours.

Deciding whether to continue working will depend on how you feel during treatment. Ask your medical team what you might expect depending on the treatment you are having. See pages 38–43 for more information on the side effects you may experience.

Your decision will also depend on the support and flexibility of your employer. Most people who want to continue working during treatment are able to do so in some capacity. Some people manage by adjusting their work hours for a while – they may miss a couple of days here and there or work part time. See page 10 for suggestions. Others choose to take a break or retire.

Each person's situation is different – not everyone with the same type of cancer will make the same decision about work. It's best to do what feels right for you.

Q: Should I tell my employer I have cancer?

A: Telling your employer that you have cancer is a personal decision. While there is no law that requires you to share the diagnosis with your employer, you do have some obligations. You should tell your employer if the cancer or treatment will affect your ability to do the essential requirements of your job or if your illness could reasonably cause a health and safety risk for yourself or other people.

Being open with your employer enables you to discuss what adjustments could be made to your work. You might be able to access some benefits, such as additional leave, and your employer may be more understanding when it comes to flexible working arrangements. Other reasons to consider for disclosing your illness:

- if your employer does not know about your diagnosis and your work is affected, it may be seen as poor work performance
- you can work with your employer to deal with any misunderstandings
- keeping it a secret causes unnecessary stress, and you may waste energy trying to cover it up.

If you are unsure of how your employer will react, it's good to know your rights and your employer's responsibilities. If you feel nervous about speaking with your manager or colleagues, you may feel more confident if you practise the conversation with your family and friends.

Q: What should I tell my employer?

A: What and how much to tell your employer will depend on your preferences, your workplace and the kind of relationship you have with your employer.

You do not need to share all the details about your diagnosis and treatment with your employer. You only need to let your employer know about anything that may impact upon your ability to work or cause a health and safety risk for yourself or others.

You may want to provide the following information:

- if and how long you will be able to continue working
- whether you will be able to perform all of your job duties
- if you want other people in your workplace to know
- if you need to take time off from work for treatment and when you are likely to return to work
- any work adjustments you may need.

You may need to talk with your health professionals before you can answer these questions, and you may not have some answers until you've started treatment.

“When I was diagnosed, I called my friend, who was the receptionist, and said what I had and that I would be in hospital a week. I returned to work during initial treatment and kept them informed of what was going on. I told them straight out, although I didn't tell them all the details.” Sue

tips

- Keep notes about how the conversation went and what was discussed.
- Be prepared for your employer to bring up your working arrangements. For example, your manager may ask if you want a modified work schedule. If you aren't sure what you want to do, say that you need time to consider your options.
- Reassure your manager of your commitment to your job.
- Refer your manager to **www.cancercouncil.com.au** to download the fact sheets for employers and workplaces, which include suggestions about talking to someone with cancer.

Q: Should I tell my colleagues?

A: There is no wrong or right answer, it is a personal decision. Sharing details about the diagnosis and treatment may make you feel uncomfortable or you may not want to answer questions. You may be concerned you'll be treated differently.

You can talk to your employer about whether or not you plan to tell your colleagues. Points to consider include:

- if it's a friendly and close-knit type of workplace or more formal and business-focused
- the types of relationships you have with other staff
- who you feel you can trust with personal matters
- if there has been a previous diagnosis of cancer in the workplace and how it was received.

If the cancer or treatment side effects mean you will be away from work for some time or if they have a visible impact on your behaviour or appearance, your colleagues may speculate about these changes. Some may even become resentful if they think that you aren't 'pulling your weight' and don't understand why. It can be difficult to hide your illness if you work in a close-knit team. Sharing with close colleagues will give them the opportunity to express their concern for your wellbeing and discuss ways they can help you.

tips

- You don't need to tell everyone, especially if you work in a large organisation. You may only want to talk to those closest to you.
- If you want to tell your colleagues but feel uncomfortable doing it yourself, ask your manager, a close colleague or your human resources manager to pass on the news for you.
- Find a comfortable and private place and time to talk.
- Think about how you will handle the reactions of other people. Some colleagues might react with understanding, while others may feel uncomfortable. Planning ahead will help you cope with the different responses.
- If you tell your colleagues, you may find that news about your diagnosis is spread through office conversations or gossip. People usually have good intentions, but they may not realise that this can make you uncomfortable. Talk to your colleagues if you are upset or ask your manager to get involved.

Q: What are my rights regarding privacy and disclosure?

A: There is no law that requires you to tell your employer or colleagues that you have cancer. However, if you take paid personal leave because you are sick, your employer may require a medical certificate confirming that you're unwell. The certificate doesn't have to say you have cancer.

You'll need to let your employer know if you are taking medications that may cause side effects, which affect your work or safety at work.

Your employer needs your consent to tell others about your diagnosis unless it's a health risk, in which case they may be able to disclose this information without your consent.

If you believe your health information has been shared without your consent, talk to your manager. The person who shared the information may be disciplined. You can seek advice from the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner in your state or territory if you are still unhappy, see page 53 for contact details.

tip

Keep in mind that social media websites, such as Facebook and Twitter, are publicly accessible and any information there may be visible to your employer and colleagues.

Q: What support can my employer offer me?

A: If you cannot perform your usual work duties, your employer is obligated by the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 to make ‘reasonable adjustments’ unless it will result in ‘unjustifiable hardship’ to the organisation. These adjustments could be administrative, environmental or procedural, and they could be temporary or long-term.

You and your employer can discuss ideas for possible adjustments to your duties, work space and hours. Your health care team may also have useful suggestions.

Reasonable adjustments that can be made include:

- additional breaks because of pain or fatigue, or to attend medical appointments
- temporary duties as agreed with employee and employer
- reduction of hours, flexi-time, working from home, part-time work or a gradual return to work
- changes to the workplace such as access to chairs, desks and counters
- telephone typewriter (TTY) access, voice-activated software, telephone headsets, screen-reading software.

“ I approached my school principal with some strategies I had discussed with my doctor and we talked about going part-time and a gradual return. Through work I also received leave entitlements. ” *Annie*

Your employer can access advice, and financial and practical assistance to help support you at JobAccess. Call 1800 464 800 or go to www.jobaccess.gov.au.

They may also have employee support systems, such as rehabilitation and retraining programs, or an Employee Assistance Program that offers free counselling. Another option may be a buddy or mentoring system with someone else in your workplace who has had cancer. Your colleague can offer advice or help you liaise with management. The way that the system is arranged is up to you and your employer.

“ My employer has an assistance program with six free counselling sessions. I’d recommend that to anyone – just having someone to lean on and talk to is helpful. ” *Stephen*

Q: Am I entitled to compensation if my cancer is work-related?

A: About 5000 people are diagnosed with work-related cancer each year¹. Substances known to cause cancer include asbestos, coal tar pitch, wood dust and benzene. Radiation exposure can also cause cancer.

People who are diagnosed with a work-related cancer may be entitled to compensation. Contact an experienced solicitor or the Cancer Council’s Legal Referral Service. It is not available in all states and territories, call 13 11 20 to enquire.



Kristin's story

I've been employed with a Commonwealth Government Department since 1995.

In 2009, I was diagnosed with ovarian cancer. I told my boss I'd be taking extended time off and I wrapped up some work before taking six weeks of sick leave.

My employer connected me with a workplace rehabilitation consultant who helped create a return to work plan for me. The consultant spoke to my doctors and manager and determined my working hours and tasks.

Because I was having several months of chemotherapy, I started working from home for four hours once a week. Over a year, my hours increased and I worked at home and in the office. If I worked more time than planned, my employer would re-credit my sick leave.

Having a written plan was a safety net for me. Each month

I would forecast the amount of work I thought I could handle. When I felt I should be working more or was anxious about people's expectations, I knew I could stick to the approved plan and return at my own pace.

Being back to full-time work is a juggling act because I'm still fatigued and have a lot of appointments, including for my clinical trial. I also have work-related stress – I've lost some corporate knowledge because I was out of the loop for a year.

I'm enjoying being back at work. I know I'm very lucky to have a supportive employer.

I hope employees know that they can ask for support from their employer – especially a written return to work plan. The support from my employer helped me to keep engaged and get back to work when I was able.



Making decisions about working

When you are diagnosed with cancer and throughout treatment, you may feel overwhelmed by all the decisions you have to make. Weighing up whether to continue working, have a break or retire may be difficult.

This chapter discusses the factors you may consider when making a decision and the options you have. Try to avoid feeling rushed. Although things may seem to be happening quickly, there is usually time to make an informed decision.

If you are having trouble deciding what is important to you, make a list of reasons for and against. If you are overwhelmed, it may also help to talk to family, friends or a counsellor to clarify what you want.

Reasons to work

Some people need to keep working for financial reasons, but work can also:

- be enjoyable, stimulating and rewarding
- give you a chance to socialise
- help you maintain a sense of identity
- develop your skills, creativity and knowledge
- keep you in contact with friends and colleagues who can offer regular support
- keep you busy and get you out of the house
- provide a routine, which is important to some people.

What to consider when making a decision about working

Treatment	Financial
• What type of treatment will you have? • How often will you have treatment? • Does your treatment schedule suit your working hours or can it be adjusted? • What are the potential side effects and how might they affect your job? • Does your medical team have any advice about how other patients manage treatment and work?	• How much does your wage or salary contribute to your family's total income? • Do you have any personal leave, annual leave or long service leave that would allow you to take paid time off? • Is taking unpaid leave an option? • Do you have savings or insurance that you can access? • How will reducing your work hours or taking time off affect your income? • What additional expenses, such as travel for treatment or medication, can you anticipate? • How can you manage non-cancer-related debts or bills, such as mortgage and car repayments, during treatment and recovery?

Workplace	Personal
• Do you enjoy your job? • Are you pursuing specific career goals? • Have you discussed your situation with your manager or human resources department? • Is your manager supportive and is your workplace able to offer some flexible working practices such as working from home? • Are you physically and emotionally able to work? • Could your role be modified to make your job easier? • Would your workmates be a source of support?	• Are there any aspects of your personal life that you also have to consider, such as children or other financial dependents? • Will working give you a sense of normality or take your mind off cancer?

Employment options

Working during treatment

Cancer treatment will most likely affect your job performance in some way. This does not mean that you will be unable to do your job, but it does mean that you will probably need some flexibility to make work easier.

You and your employer should discuss if your current role needs to be modified or if flexible working arrangements will help to accommodate your treatment and side effects. See pages 38–43 for information and tips about working while coping with side effects from treatment. See also the *Returning to work* section on page 24.

Taking time off

Some people find working during treatment and recovery difficult and decide to take a break. They may make this decision straightaway or after returning to work and finding it physically and emotionally overwhelming.

Discuss your leave options with you employer. You can use paid leave entitlements or ask for unpaid time off. If you have disability insurance or income protection, you may be able to receive a portion of your income during the time you are unable to work.

“When I had the bone marrow transplant, my colleague stepped into my role. At times, I worked from hospital, but I took 2–3 months of sick leave and eased back into work.”

Nikki

If you are thinking of resigning from your job, check your insurance coverage first because leaving may affect your entitlements. If you decide to take extended leave, speak to your manager or human resources department. Let them know that you would like to return to work when your health improves.

tip

Read Cancer Council's *When cancer changes your financial plans* booklet for more detailed information about financial, insurance and superannuation issues. This is not available in all states and territories, call the Helpline on **13 11 20** to enquire.

Retirement

Some people give up work completely when they are diagnosed with cancer. This might be the right choice for you if you are already close to retirement or if the cancer is advanced.

It is natural to have mixed feelings about retirement. How you feel may depend on your age and your plans before the cancer diagnosis. Some people experience a sense of loss and others worry they'll be bored. Most people take time to adjust to retirement, and making plans for dealing with the impact on your sense of self, finances and relationships can make the transition easier.

You may find it helps to talk about these responses with the hospital social worker, your friends and family, spiritual leader, counsellor, or Cancer Council Helpline.



Key points

- After a cancer diagnosis it can be difficult to decide if you want to continue working, adjust your working hours, take a break or retire.
- Employment may not only be a source of income. A job can also provide opportunities for social interaction, creativity, learning and travel. Working may make you feel like you are contributing to society.
- You will have to weigh up several factors, including your treatment options, the flexibility of your workplace and personal matters (such as your finances).
- It may help to make a list of advantages and disadvantages about your different options or talk to someone you trust.
- You may be able to take time off or some extended leave.
- Some people decide to retire. It is normal to have mixed feelings about retirement, depending on your age and what your plans were before the cancer diagnosis.
- Avoid making a hasty decision. Talk to family or friends and seek professional financial advice before making a decision.



Working during treatment and recovery

If you decide to work during treatment or return to work after it's finished, there are several options to consider, such as flexible working arrangements and your leave entitlements. You may also want to talk to your employer about a return to work plan.

Flexible working arrangements

Under the National Employment Standards you have the right to ask for flexible working arrangements.

You may be able to make the following changes:

- work location (e.g. going to another office or work site, working from home)
- work patterns (e.g. job sharing, split shifts)
- work hours (e.g. different start/finish times, reducing hours).

You are eligible to apply if you have at least 12 months of continuous service. You need to ask in writing and give details of the change you want and the reasons for this requested change. Your employer needs to accept or refuse your request in writing within 21 days of receiving your request. They can only refuse your request on reasonable business grounds.

“ I met with the HR manager and it was agreed that I could work from home during chemotherapy. However, I didn't react well to chemo and at one point I was hospitalised and I couldn't work at all. My employer said to do what I could. ” *Rebecca*

You and your employer can determine the most practical arrangements. Your company isn't obliged to agree to all your requests – for example, if you ask to work from 8pm–10pm, three days per week, it may not suit the needs of the workplace.

After a few weeks of your new schedule, you can catch up with your manager or human resources department to discuss if the flexible arrangements are working for both of you. You might want to change the arrangement as you start to feel better.

tips

- If possible, take a few hours off instead of the whole day.
- If possible, schedule treatment sessions so you have more recovery time (e.g. late in the day or on Fridays, if you don't work on weekends).
- Explore working from home. Not having to get ready for work or commute may help you feel less tired.
- Ask your employer if your colleagues can help do some of your work during absences.
- If you feel overwhelmed, don't let your performance suffer too much before re-evaluating your work arrangements.
- If appropriate, organise job-sharing or reduce your hours.
- Write down the plan you and your employer have agreed on and share your notes with your employer.
- Let your colleagues know about any changes to your working schedule.

Leave entitlements

There are several types of leave options available to help you balance work and treatment. The National Employment Standards (NES) outline the rules for several types of paid and unpaid leave, which apply under most awards or enterprise agreements in Australia (see next page). To find out more about an NES entitlement see the relevant fact sheets at www.fairwork.gov.au.

Award or agreement based entitlements may be different from those provided by the NES but can't be less.

tips

- Ask your manager or human resources department if there is a waiting (qualifying) period for paid personal leave, if you are a new employee.
- Check if you can cash out your annual leave. This is only possible if your award or agreement says that cashing out is allowable. Talk to your employer about the conditions that apply.
- Give as much notice as possible before taking personal leave.
- Combine personal leave with annual leave and long service leave, if necessary.
- Ask your manager if you can take unpaid time off.
- Know your rights. You cannot be dismissed for taking up to three months off for illness each year.
- If you believe your employer isn't giving you the correct amount of personal or annual leave, check your entitlements. Contact the Fair Work Ombudsman on **13 13 94**.

Types of leave entitlements

Personal/carer's leave

- This can be taken when you are unwell or injured, or if you need to care for someone else. It used to be called sick leave.
- Full-time employees receive a minimum of 10 days of paid personal leave each year.
- Part-time employees receive a pro-rata (proportional) amount of personal days based on the number of hours they work.
- Paid personal leave is an entitlement for permanent employees only. Casual staff may be able to take unpaid leave.
- This type of leave is paid at the base rate of pay.
- Unused leave days accumulate from year to year.
- An employer can ask you to provide evidence that you need to take personal leave (e.g. a medical certificate).

Annual leave

- Permanent employees receive a minimum of four weeks of paid annual leave for each year of service with their employer. Part-time staff are paid on a pro-rata (proportional) basis. Some employees, such as shift workers, are entitled to an additional week.
- Annual leave is paid at the regular base rate or at an increased rate (leave loading).
- Unused annual leave accrues over time. Your employer can direct you to use annual leave.
- Annual leave continues to accrue when an employee takes a period of paid annual leave or paid personal/carer's leave. Leave doesn't accumulate during periods of unpaid leave.

Long service leave	Unpaid leave
• A period of leave if you've been working continuously for the same business for an extended period of time. • This paid leave may apply after 7–15 years. • Generally, long service leave is two months paid leave after 10 years of service and one month paid leave for each additional five years of service. • Conditions may vary depending on which state or territory you live in. • If you have worked at least five years with your employer and you resign due to illness, you may be entitled to a pro-rata long service leave payment. • It is paid at the employee's ordinary rate of pay. • Untaken long service leave is usually paid at termination.	• If you have used your paid personal leave or if you are a casual employee, your employer might grant you leave from work without pay. This is not an entitlement – it is up to your employer to allow it. • You may have to use your annual leave before your employer allows you to take unpaid leave.

Returning to work

It's natural to feel nervous if you're returning to work after you've been away for a while. You may be concerned about how your employer and colleagues will react and if there will be questions about your performance.

All employers are legally required to take reasonable steps to accommodate the effects of an employee's illness to comply with the Disability Discrimination Act 1992. This may mean, for example, that your employer allows you to return to work gradually, is flexible with start and finish times, gives you time off to attend medical appointments, or provides a supportive chair.

An employer may not have to accommodate the effects of an employee's illness, especially if these changes impose a significant burden on the business.

If you are unable to carry out your previous role, your employer may offer a rehabilitation scheme to train you for another role. Your employer is only required to offer you a different role if the cancer is work-related.

“ We just had one of the truck drivers diagnosed with malignant melanoma. The boss was fine. When he was able to return to work, the job was there for him even though we are all casual workers. The company had employed others while he was getting treatment, but his job was still there for him when he returned. ” Jason

Return to work plan

A return to work plan is a helpful document prepared by you and your employer (or a rehabilitation professional) outlining your approach to returning to work. The plan is tailored to your specific situation and needs. The following may be included in your written return to work plan:

- approximate date of return to work
- time period of the plan
- a summary of duties
- start and finish times and break times
- any specific restrictions or recommendations as stated by your health care team
- any short-term changes to your terms and conditions of employment (e.g. leave, remuneration) as a result of your rehabilitation
- any potential triggers within your role that could create additional stress, harm or prevent your recovery
- details of the supervisors or managers responsible for monitoring progress of the return to work plan
- dates of regular meetings to discuss progress and adjustments to the plan if needed.

To find out more, see the Australian Government's JobAccess website, www.jobaccess.gov.au. Your state or territory WorkCover or WorkSafe website also has more information.

ACT: www.worksafe.act.gov.au NT: www.worksafe.nt.gov.au
NSW: www.workcover.nsw.gov.au QLD: www.workcoverqld.com.au
SA: www.workcover.com TAS: www.workcover.tas.gov.au
VIC: www.worksafe.vic.gov.au WA: www.workcover.wa.gov.au

Discrimination, harassment & bullying

While many employers and colleagues are caring and supportive, discrimination in the workplace can occur. Knowing your rights and responsibilities may help you feel reassured that you are not being unfairly treated due to your illness or treatment.

Discrimination in employment is covered by the Fair Work Act 2009 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1992, and the relevant state and territory legislation.

It may occur in different ways:

- **Direct discrimination** – This means you are treated less favourably because of your disease. For example, an employer denied you a promotion on the basis of the cancer.
- **Indirect discrimination** – This is when a policy, rule or practice that seems fair actually disadvantages you because you have a disability. For example, a requirement for staff to stand while serving customers might indirectly discriminate against you if the cancer prevents you from standing comfortably. It might be possible for the employer to adjust this rule.

You also have the right not to be harassed or bullied by managers, staff or clients. This could include offensive or humiliating remarks, intimidation or exclusion. People often have different ideas about what is offensive or unacceptable behaviour, and sometimes you might feel harassed from behaviour which was not intended to offend or harm you.



tip

For a guide to disability discrimination and harassment see www.humanrights.gov.au/brief-guide-disability-discrimination-act. All state and territory discrimination agencies cover disability discrimination issues but there are some differences in the detail of these laws.

Workplaces generally have guidelines in place regarding how to deal with harassment and bullying. Talk to your manager or human resources department if you find someone's behaviour unacceptable, and they may help you resolve it. If you reasonably believe that you have been bullied, you can apply to the Fair Work Commission for an order to stop the bullying.

Unfair dismissal

If you think your employment has been terminated unfairly, it may be a case of unfair dismissal. This means your dismissal is considered harsh, unjust or unreasonable.

You can lodge a complaint with the Fair Work Commission. Keep in mind that you must lodge an unfair dismissal claim within 21 days of being dismissed. You must also meet certain conditions, such as length of service. See page 53 for contact details.



Key points

- You might find it useful to talk to your medical team about balancing work and cancer. Doctors or nurses can give you information about treatment and side effects.
- Talk to your employer about flexible working arrangements. You may be able to adjust your work location or hours.
- If you want to change your work hours or role, discuss the arrangements with human resources staff or your manager. As your health improves, you may want to ease back into your previous routine.
- Permanent employees may take personal leave when they can't come to work due to illness or injury. This is sometimes called sick leave.
- Eligible employees can also use annual leave, long service leave and unpaid leave.
- Employers must take reasonable steps to accommodate the effects of an employee's illness.
- If you can't return to your previous role, you may be able to have retraining if the cancer is work-related.
- All employees have the right not to be discriminated against, harassed or bullied. Talk to your human resources department or manager if you have a problem, or contact the discrimination agency in your state or territory.
- If you think you have been dismissed unfairly, you can lodge a complaint with the Fair Work Commission.
- Cancer Council offers a legal referral service for workplace issues. This is not available in all states and territories – call the Helpline to enquire.



Changing jobs

A cancer diagnosis may mean some people reconsider their career goals and work values, and they may decide changing jobs is an opportunity for a fresh start. For some people, returning to the same job may not be possible due to changes in ability or length of time away. The desire to reduce work-related stress or seek more meaningful work may be a motivating factor to change jobs.

Finding a new job

Before looking for a new position you may want to consider the following:

- Does my illness mean I need to look for a new line of work?
- Can I use my skills and experience in a different way?
- Will I need to update my skills or education?
- Is there a market for people with my experience in my new chosen field?
- Would I be happy with a lower-level position or fewer hours?
- How would I manage the stress of a change in employment?
- Does my confidence need a boost?

You may also want to consider different ways of working, i.e. job sharing, volunteering, self-employment, part-time or agency work.

You may find it valuable to discuss your options with colleagues and referees who are familiar with your work and can be honest about your skills. A career counsellor can help guide you through these decisions. You could talk to Cancer Council's Small Business Advisory Service (not available in all states). People with a disability can find an advisory service at www.jobaccess.gov.au.

Telling a potential employer

New employers do not need to know about your diagnosis or treatment unless it may impact on your ability to do the job.

There will probably be a gap in your resume (CV) if you did not work during cancer treatment. It's common for people to have breaks in their employment history because of travel, having children or other personal reasons, so the employer may not ask about it.

Your employer does not need to know details about your personal life unless it is relevant to the job.

tips

- Think about what you may say if asked about the gap in your resume.
- Keep explanations about a gap in your employment general and straightforward – don't make up a longwinded story. Some people write 'career break' on their CV. You might want to say that you had a health issue that is now resolved. If you don't want to say this, you may wish to say you took some time off for personal reasons.
- If you don't get the job and you believe you are being discriminated against, you can complain to the employer, the discrimination agency in your state or territory, the Australian Human Rights Commission or the Fair Work Ombudsman (see pages 52–53 for contact details). However, claims are often unsuccessful because it's hard to prove why the prospective employer didn't hire you.

A prospective employer can ask you about your ability to perform tasks that are an essential part of the job, e.g. if you can lift heavy boxes. These are called the inherent requirements of the job. If this is a problem for you because of the cancer or treatment, you need to mention it at the interview.

Concerns about discrimination

You cannot be refused a job on the basis of cancer or treatment. This right is protected by law. Anyone who has had cancer is protected by the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992 and the Fair Work Act 2009, and their own state or territory human rights or equal opportunity laws.

These laws apply to the selection and appointment process for a new job. They also prevent employers from directly or indirectly discriminating against people with disabilities in the workplace.



Self-employment and cancer

Many Australians run their own business or work as a freelancer, contractor, farmer or entrepreneur. They may be a sole trader or employ other people.

Making a decision about working

A major concern when you are diagnosed with cancer may be how, and if, you can keep your business running.

Many self-employed people with cancer find ways to have cancer treatment while keeping their business on track. Depending on the nature of your business, self-employment can give you more control over your work schedule and allow you to manage the time needed for treatment or recovery.

The decisions you make will depend on your individual circumstances. It will help to get as much information as you can about the cancer and the possible side effects, so you know how it may affect what you can do. If you rely on your income or if your business has been a major focus of your life, taking time off or not work permanently may be a major concern. Reading *Coping with side effects*, pages 38–43, may help you make a decision.

If you are uncertain about what to do, discuss your options with family or friends. You could also seek professional financial advice. Your options might include:

- checking existing insurance policies for entitlements
- claiming early entitlements from your superannuation fund
- talking to Centrelink about government benefits.



Carol's story

I'm a sole trader with an at-home business. I was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2005 at age 43.

After diagnosis, I had several procedures, including a lumpectomy, sentinel node biopsy and mastectomy. My recovery from surgery was around Christmas, so I only did limited billing and I mailed holiday cards to clients. I also renegotiated some deadlines so I could complete projects later than originally planned.

I had a couple months of chemotherapy after surgery. It was a horrendous experience. I was only able to do limited amounts of work between treatment sessions. When chemotherapy was over, I started working more regularly while my hair was growing back.

My income was basically halved for the two years after my cancer diagnosis. My treatment went on for 18 months and I worked as much as I could,

but I couldn't function at my usual level. I was lucky because my husband works full-time and I received an insurance payout – we weren't dependent on my income. It would have been a much bigger financial burden if that hadn't been the case.

In fact, I think if you're going to choose any type of work to suit a cancer diagnosis, self-employment is it. You can tailor your schedule around treatment. I was used to managing my own time and I continued to do it when I was unwell.

Ultimately, the diagnosis has caused me to be open to different ways of thinking, and I've developed kindness and compassion. I'm more intuitive and I now know how important emotional wellbeing is, no matter what your job.

I wouldn't wish it on anyone, but my cancer experience changed the way that I work for the better.

Managing your business

To keep your business running, you may need a plan to manage the changes caused by treatment. Talk to your health care team about what to expect from treatment as this might help you decide what you can handle.

These suggestions may help you:

- Be realistic about how much work you can continue to do.
- Decide what has to be done now and what can be left until later.
- Use your energy to do the tasks that you enjoy the most or that you must do yourself.
- Consider subcontracting, hiring temporary staff or asking friends in the same trade or profession to lend a hand.
- Ask for or accept any offers of help from family and friends.
- Consider working from home or changing your role.
- Let any staff you have know what changes you are making to keep the business running.
- Aim to finish any high-priority work before you start treatment.
- Think about other ways to do your job. Could you work from home instead of travelling? Would it be practical to use technologies such as smartphones and the internet instead of meeting face-to-face? If you ship merchandise, could a fulfilment house handle this temporarily?
- Check any existing insurance policies for entitlements and let your insurance company know about changes to your work situation.
- Contact the Cancer Council's Small Business Advisory program for more information. Call the Helpline on 13 11 20 to check if this service is available in your state or territory.

Telling clients about the cancer

You do not have to disclose the cancer to your clients. Your instinct might be to hide the news of your diagnosis, but if you want to talk about it, you should decide who to tell, what to say and how your business will continue to meet ongoing commitments. Some people choose to tell only established clients.

tips

- Be direct and talk about what you know. For example, confirm your working hours.
- Communicate your abilities and emphasise your strengths with statements such as, “My hours may change, but the project will be under control and completed on time.”
- Try to maintain a professional relationship with your client. You may not want to share your fears and insecurities.
- If you have physical side effects such as hair loss, you may want to postpone meetings in person. Use technology, such as email or conference calling, to stay in touch. If you have told the client about the cancer, you may feel comfortable wearing a head scarf to meetings.
- Be prepared for a range of reactions if you tell the client about your health. Some people will be compassionate; others may be more aloof. A client may choose to employ someone else.
- Think about alternative or flexible ways of working that could suit both your needs.
- Consider hiring a subcontractor or refer the client to someone else in your field, if you can't meet the client's needs.

Financial issues

For self-employed people who do not have paid personal or annual leave, taking time off for cancer treatment may mean being without income for several weeks or months, which can be difficult.

Consult a financial or business advisor – This professional can help you assess your financial position and come up with strategies about how to manage your situation. They can also give you suggestions about dealing with debts and help you if you need money urgently. For information about financial counselling and to find a counsellor, see www.financialcounsellingaustralia.org.au.

Look into claiming on other insurance policies – You may hold relevant policies, such as income protection, trauma insurance or key person insurance.

Check your superannuation fund – Although self-employed people are not required by law to contribute to a superannuation fund, many people have retirement savings. Check if you have any insurance policies linked to the fund, such as disability benefits. Even if you have not contributed regularly to the fund, you may be able to claim on insurance policies.

Contact Centrelink – You may be eligible for benefits or pensions. There are different types of income support payments for people in financial hardship, including benefits for farmers. Call 13 27 17 or visit www.humanservices.gov.au.



Key points

- Loss of income can be a major concern for self-employed people with cancer.
- Creating a plan may help you manage your business. Consider the possible impact of your treatment and side effects; the nature of your job; and how much support you may receive from friends, family and subcontractors. Try to be realistic about your health and what you will be able to do.
- If your usual working patterns change, you may wish to advise clients that you are dealing with a family or health issue.
- Setting priorities about essential work, hiring temporary staff and changing your usual ways of working can help keep your business running.
- You don't have to tell clients about the cancer. If you decide to share news of your diagnosis, emphasis how you will continue to meet your business commitments.
- For many self-employed people, it is difficult to take unpaid time off. Consult a financial or business advisor, check your superannuation fund, claim on insurance policies, and contact Centrelink to get financial support and advice.



Coping with side effects

The main treatments for cancer include surgery, chemotherapy and radiotherapy. You may experience some side effects from these treatments that make it challenging to do your job.

However, most side effects can be managed or controlled, and making adjustments to your work schedule and environment may make things easier.

If your side effects are severe and they stop you from working, your doctor may be able to change your treatment or prescribe some medication to make you feel better.

Medication and complementary therapies

For common side effects such as pain, medications can help manage how you feel. Always consult your doctor if you are taking medication and be familiar with the possible side effects caused by the medication. Some drugs can cause drowsiness and make it hard to think clearly.

Complementary therapies, including meditation, tai chi, yoga, massage, relaxation or acupuncture, may also improve the side effects of treatment and enhance quality of life. Cancer Council's *Understanding Complementary Therapies* booklet has detailed information about these therapies.

The *Understanding Chemotherapy*, *Understanding Radiotherapy* and *Overcoming Cancer Pain* booklets have more information and tips about coping with specific side effects. Call Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20 for free copies.

Fatigue and tiredness

Cancer treatment and associated stress can cause you to feel tired and weary. Factors such as job stress, shiftwork or sitting down for long periods may make you feel worse.

tips

- Adjust your working hours so you can arrive late or leave early, if you have trouble getting started in the morning or if you feel tired in the afternoon.
- Ask for permission to take breaks when you need to. Bring a pillow to work and find a quiet place where you can rest. If this isn't possible, get some fresh air or take a short walk.
- Work from home if you can and rest when you need to.
- Ask your employer if it's possible to arrange a nearby parking space. Find out if you are eligible for a disability parking permit.
- Schedule meetings for the time of day when you tend to have more energy.
- Organise your workspace, if you sit at a desk, so you don't have to search for things or get up every time you need something.
- Ask your colleagues to help you do physical tasks (e.g. lifting, driving).
- Bring your lunch or ask a colleague to pick food up for you so you don't have to leave the office.
- Try to save your physical and mental energy for work, e.g. ask for help around the house or get your groceries delivered.
- Eat well and take care of your body so you feel as well as possible. Doing regular exercise can help improve your mood or make you feel more energetic.

Concentration and memory

Your job might require you to interact with others, solve problems and concentrate for long periods of time. If you've had chemotherapy, it can be difficult to keep your attention focused. You may feel like you are in a fog. This is sometimes called chemo brain. Talk to your oncologist for more information.

tips

- Let calls go to voicemail and return them when you can concentrate.
- Set aside time each day to read and respond to emails.
- Keep a diary or use the calendar or alarm function on your email or mobile phone to remind you about appointments.
- Write to-do lists to help keep track of what you need to do.
- Refer to meeting minutes, outlines, site maps, project plans and other documents to jog your memory.
- Talk to your manager about moving to a quiet location, if you work in a noisy area.
- Ask your colleagues or IT department for assistance, if you have difficulty using computers or other electronic equipment. Take notes to help remember the steps needed.
- Find a private room if you work in an open plan environment.
- Put your personal items (e.g. handbag, wallet, keys) in a dedicated place at home and at work so you don't misplace them.

Nausea and vomiting

Nausea is best treated early. If you feel sick, talk to your doctor. You will probably be given anti-nausea medication that you can take regularly to relieve symptoms. If you have trouble swallowing medications, talk to your doctor as there may be other ways of taking the medications.

tips

- Take anti-nausea medication before your treatment session, if you know you are likely to feel nauseated after chemotherapy.
- Take deep breaths or go outside to get some fresh air.
- Sip on fluids throughout the day. If you don't like water, drink flavoured water or tea. Peppermint, ginger or weak black tea can be soothing. You can also try sparkling water, lemonade or ginger ale.
- Avoid strong odours. Keep your distance from colleagues eating strong-smelling food.
- If you work in the food or construction industry and are affected by strong smells, seek tasks in other areas.
- Chew gum or suck on ice cubes throughout the day.
- Eat something before going to bed or soon after getting up in the morning, and eat small meals and snacks regularly. An empty stomach can make your nausea worse. Try nibbling on bland crackers.
- Try eating food with ginger, which can ease nausea.
- Keep a rubbish bin close to you or sit near the bathroom so you can get there quickly if necessary.
- Work from home or take leave, if you feel too nauseated.

Increased risk of infections

If your immune system is weak due to cancer treatment such as chemotherapy, you need to take precautions against getting an infection. Colds and flu are often passed around in organisations or between people who work closely together. This happens frequently during winter.

tips

- Let your colleagues know that you are more susceptible to infections.
- Move to an office or an isolated desk during treatment and recovery, if you work in an open plan environment.
- Work in a well-ventilated space, if possible.
- Keep your workspace clean, especially if you share a desk. Wipe down your phone, keyboard, desk and mouse regularly. If you use a company car, clean the steering wheel, handles and radio console.
- Arrange to have video or teleconferences instead of face-to-face meetings.
- If possible, take time off if you work in health care, child-care or hospitality. Stay away from others when your immune system is weak (e.g. low white blood count). Your employer can remind staff to stay at home when they are sick.
- Wash your hands before eating and drinking, after taking public transport and using the bathroom.
- Clean and cover any wounds or injuries that occur at work to prevent infection. Report the incident to your human resources department for occupational health and safety reasons.

Changes in your appearance

Side effects from surgery, chemotherapy or radiotherapy may cause you to look different. It is normal to feel self-conscious when you return to work.

tips

- Talk about the changes. If you don't openly acknowledge that you look different, people may avoid you because they don't know what to say.
- Consider asking your manager to raise the issue of your appearance if you feel uncomfortable talking about it.
- Be prepared for your workmates to ask questions.
- Try not to get angry or flustered by questions that make you feel uncomfortable.
- Answer questions directly or say that you would prefer not to discuss it.
- Wear a wig, turban or scarf if you've lost your hair and feel uncomfortable being bald at work. Some state and territory Cancer Councils offer a free wig service, call **13 11 20** for more details.
- Contact Look Good...Feel Better, a free program to help with changes in appearance. Call **1800 650 960** or go to **www.lgfb.org.au**.

“ I was bald and had a head scarf, but it wasn't a big deal to me. If I ran into people I hadn't seen in a while, I was open with them. I would say, 'Excuse the scarf; I've just had a little chemotherapy.' ” *Bruna*



Information for working carers

Many people who care for someone with cancer are also employed. Your caring duties and your job may be an important or necessary part of your life, but sometimes people find it difficult to balance the needs of both roles.

Who is a working carer?

A working carer is a person who helps and supports someone through an illness or disability and also has paid employment.

There are many different types of caring situations:

- You may be a partner, relative, friend or neighbour.
- The person whom you are caring for may also be employed, or you may be looking after someone who isn't in the workforce (e.g. elderly parent, child).
- Care can be part-time or full-time, over a short period of time or long term.
- The support can be practical (e.g. preparing meals, shopping and managing medications), emotional or spiritual.

Will I be able to work?

You will need to weigh up your ability to handle both your caring commitments and your responsibilities at work. Caring can impact on your job in various ways. It may affect your working hours, what you can achieve at work, how much time off you take, and your emotional and physical stress. If the person with cancer does not work and is dependent on you, there may be financial pressure on you to continue earning an income.

Your decision will probably depend on:

- how sick the person with cancer is
- what your caring and work duties involve
- the amount of help or respite care available
- your finances
- what will give you peace of mind.

Before deciding, talk over your thoughts with your employer, family and friends. You can also ask the Carers Association in your state or territory for support and counselling. Visit www.carersaustralia.com.au or call 1800 242 636.

Talking to your employer

You aren't required to tell your employer that you are a carer. However, talking to your employer about your caring duties may help them be more understanding and flexible.

You might discuss:

- the impact of caring responsibilities on your work commitments
- taking time off or setting up flexible working arrangements
- ways your employer may be able to support you
- who should know about your situation, and whether you want to share information with your colleagues.

If you tell your colleagues about your caring role, they may be a source of support. Some of your colleagues may also be working carers. However, if you prefer to keep your caring role confidential, your employer needs to respect your wishes.

Taking time off work

You may need time off work or stop working for some time to look after the person with cancer. If you need to take a day off to care for a member of your family or household, you can use personal leave. This used to be called sick leave, and is the same type of leave you take when you are sick or injured.

National Employment Standards outline the rules for personal leave, including allocating 10 days of personal leave each year to full-time employees. Some employers may have rules about taking personal leave. For more information, see the table on pages 22–23.

Unpaid leave

If you've used all of your paid personal leave, you are entitled to two days unpaid carer's leave. These days are reserved for caring duties. Both casual and permanent employees are entitled to this leave. You can take the leave all at once (e.g. two consecutive working days) or in separate periods as agreed by your employer (e.g. four consecutive half-days).

If you need more time off and you have used your personal leave and unpaid carer's leave, you can apply for leave without pay. Keep in mind that your employer doesn't have to approve this request.



If you ask for personal or unpaid carer's leave, your employer can request basic facts about why you need time off. This allows your manager to approve the leave and make sure it's recorded correctly.

Other types of leave

Permanent full-time employees are entitled to a minimum of four weeks of paid annual leave for each year of service with their employer. Part-time workers receive leave on a pro-rata basis.

Employees who have been working for the same employer for at least 5–7 years may also have accumulated paid long service leave.

If you're considering using these types of leave, you may want to talk to your employer about your situation. You might be able to arrange flexible working arrangements or unpaid leave so you don't have to use all of your paid entitlements.

Flexible working arrangements

- Carers have the right to request adjustments to their work hours, location of work or patterns of work.
- Your employer should take reasonable steps to accommodate your caring responsibilities.
- They can only refuse your request if it will cause unjustifiable hardship on the business.
- Talk to your manager or human resources department to see if you can arrange some flexible work practices.
- Most employers are aware of the challenges faced by working carers. Your manager may try to be flexible.

Discrimination, harassment and unfair dismissal

It is against the law for your employer to treat you unfairly or less favourably because of your caring responsibilities. It is also illegal to deny you opportunities, harass you or terminate your employment because you are a carer.

The Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Acts and each of the state and territory anti-discrimination laws apply to carers looking after an in-law, child, grandchild, parent, grandparent, partner, ex-partner or sibling across the country, except in the Northern Territory. Unrelated carers may be covered by the Disability Discrimination Act as associates.

Carers also have the right to work in a safe, harassment-free environment. Talk to your manager or human resources staff if you think you are being harassed or bullied. You can also apply to the Fair Work Commission for an order to stop the bullying.

An employer also can't pressure you to resign or dismiss you because you are a carer. It may be a case of unfair dismissal if your dismissal is considered harsh, unjust or unreasonable.

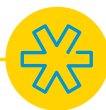
If you feel you have been treated unfairly or harassed because of your caring role, you should first try talking to your employer. You can also complain in writing to the discrimination agency in your state or territory or the Australian Human Rights Commission. Visit www.antidiscrimination.gov.au for a guide to Commonwealth, state and territory discrimination laws.

Financial help for carers

Working carers often depend on their income to support their family and the person who is unwell. Centrelink provides benefits to reduce financial pressure. For example, the Carer Allowance is a tax-free fortnightly payment for people who are not paid caregivers. Employment doesn't affect eligibility, as the allowance is not income or assets tested. Contact Centrelink on 13 27 17 or go to www.humanservices.gov.au.

You may be able to get early access to your superannuation fund if you are caring for a dependent, such as a child. Contact your fund for more details.

Call Cancer Council Helpline **13 11 20** for information about free or subsidised counselling and financial planning.



Support for carers

Carers sometimes need assistance to keep caring for the person who needs their help. Examples of support include counselling, nursing and home help, and services that give you a break from caring (respite care).

Start by contacting Carers Australia, the national body representing carers in Australia. It works with the Carers Associations in each of the states and territories. Call 1800 242 636 or visit www.carersaustralia.com.au for more information and resources.

You can contact the Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre to find out about community care services available in your local area. Call 1800 052 222 or visit www.commcarelink.health.gov.au.

Cancer Council offers specific support for carers through an online forum, www.cancerconnections.com.au. You can also call the Helpline on 13 11 20 to talk about other support services.

Taking care of yourself

Being a carer can be a demanding, tiring and stressful job. Employed carers sometimes say they feel guilty about working. It is important to look after yourself so you don't burn out.

tips

- If you feel guilty, focus on the rewarding things about caring and your job.
- Talk to your employer about flexible working arrangements, job-sharing or reducing your working hours.
- Share your feelings with family, friends or a counsellor.
- Try to take some time out for yourself each day.
- Look after your health and wellbeing by eating well, seeing your doctor when you need to and trying to get enough sleep.
- Shop online to save time and energy.
- Try some complementary therapies, such as massage, relaxation or meditation. Call Helpline for free information and audio CDs.
- Access respite care so you can have a break.



Key points

- A working carer is someone who supports someone through an illness or disability and also has paid employment.
- Your decision to work may depend on many factors, such as how sick the person with cancer is, your caring duties and your finances.
- You don't have to tell your employer that you are a carer, but sharing this may give others an opportunity to provide support.
- Personal leave can be used if you need to take time off work to care for someone in your family or household. You may also be able to take other types of leave.
- Carers can request flexible working arrangements, such as part-time hours. Employers are legally obligated to consider all reasonable requests.
- It is illegal for an employer to treat you unfairly or less favourably because you are a carer. It is also against the law to deny you opportunities, harass you or dismiss you because you are a carer.
- Carers can get financial support from organisations such as Centrelink. It may also help to seek advice from a financial professional.
- Take steps to prevent stress and burnout. Practical help such as counselling and respite care are provided by Carers Australia and the Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre.



Getting help and support

Support is available from a wide range of organisations and health professionals. Get in touch with Cancer Council and other relevant organisations, and talk to your GP and oncology doctors, nurses, social workers and other health carers.

Organisation	Contact details
Australian Human Rights Commission Receives complaints about bullying and discrimination in the workplace and promotes fairness	1300 656 419 www.humanrights.gov.au
Cancer and Careers An American website for employed people with cancer	www.cancerandcareers.org
Cancer Council Legal Referral Service Supports people affected by cancer needing legal advice; available in some states and territories	13 11 20
Carers Australia Provides information, advice and support for carers	1800 242 636 www.carersaustralia.com.au
Centrelink Financially supports people in need	13 27 17 www.humanservices.gov.au

Organisation	Contact details
Commonwealth Respite and Carelink Centre Offers community care services to carers	1800 052 222 www.commcarelink.health.gov.au
Fair Work Commission The national workplace tribunal. Can also hear workplace bullying claims	1300 799 675 www.fwc.gov.au See your local state or territory commission office
Fair Work Ombudsman Information on pay, National Employment Standards, leave, termination/dismissal and complaints	13 13 94 www.fairwork.gov.au
National Anti-Discrimination Information Gateway Information about the state and territory discrimination laws	www.antidiscrimination.gov.au
Office of the Australian Information Commissioner National body investigating privacy infringements	www.oaic.gov.au
Working Carers Gateway A website to help people juggling working and caring	www.workingcarers.org.au



Glossary

annual leave

Paid time off work. Full-time employees are entitled to four weeks of paid annual leave. Part-time staff receive it on a pro-rate basis.

base rate of pay

The minimum rate payable to an employee for their ordinary hours of work.

bullying

Repeated and unreasonable behaviour that causes a risk to health and safety.

casual employee

An employee who is paid on an hourly or daily basis, and who is not entitled to paid personal leave or annual leave. Termination notice periods do not apply to casual staff.

chemotherapy

The use of cytotoxic drugs to treat cancer by killing cancer cells or slowing their growth.

complementary therapies

Supportive treatments that are used in conjunction with conventional treatment. They may improve general health, wellbeing and quality of life, and help people cope with side effects of cancer.

direct discrimination

When someone is treated less favourably because of a disability, such as cancer.

disability discrimination

When someone is treated less favourably or harassed on the basis

of their disability. Under law, cancer is considered a disability.

flexible working arrangements

Work practices that allow an employee the ability to change hours of work, change patterns of work and change the place or work.

harassment

Any form of behaviour that is uncalled for; offensive, humiliating or intimidating; and creates a hostile environment.

human resources (HR)

The department of an organisation that manages the recruitment, administration and training of staff. Some organisations use terms such as 'people, learning and culture', 'human capital' or 'personnel'.

indirect discrimination

When a policy, rule or practice that seems fair actually disadvantages a person with a disability, such as cancer.

inherent requirement

A task that is an essential part of a job.

insurance

A contract between a company and an individual that guarantees a payment in the case of covered loss, accidents or death.

long service leave

A type of leave that's generally available to employees after they've spent a long period of time with a single employer.

National Employment Standards (NES)

The minimum standards of employment that apply to national system employees from 1 January 2010. These are set out in the Fair Work Act 2009.

permanent employee

An individual who works for an employer and receives entitlements, such as paid personal leave and annual leave.

personal/carer's leave

Leave that can be taken when an employee can't attend work because they are sick or injured. Carer's leave is also taken when you need to provide care or support to a member of your immediate family due to an illness, injury or unexpected emergency.

radiotherapy

The use of radiation, usually x-rays or gamma rays, to kill cancer cells or injure them so they cannot grow and multiply.

reasonable adjustments

Any accommodations, modifications or provisions made in the workplace to allow a person to work effectively. Other terms include workplace modifications or reasonable accommodations.

rehabilitation professional

A professional who works with an employee to help them return to work.

rehabilitation scheme

A process that aims to return an employee to their previous level of work.

self-employment

Working for oneself rather than for another person or company.

side effect

Unintended effect of a drug or treatment.

superannuation

A long-term investment fund operated for the purpose of providing a person with retirement income.

unfair dismissal

This occurs when the employee's dismissal is considered to be harsh, unjust or unreasonable.

unlawful termination

When an employee's termination is ended by his/her employer for a number of reasons, including a reason that is discriminatory, or absence from work because of illness.

working carer

A full time or part time employed person who provides physical, practical and/or emotional support to someone who is will or disabled.

Can't find what you're looking for?

For more cancer-related words, visit www.cancercouncil.com.au/words or www.cancervic.org.au/glossary.



How you can help

At Cancer Council we're dedicated to improving cancer control. As well as funding millions of dollars in cancer research every year, we advocate for the highest quality care for cancer patients and their families. We create cancer-smart communities by educating people about cancer, its prevention and early detection. We offer a range of practical and support services for people and families affected by cancer. All these programs would not be possible without community support, great and small.

Join a Cancer Council event: Join one of our community fundraising events such as Daffodil Day, Australia's Biggest Morning Tea, Relay For Life, Girls Night In and Pink Ribbon Day, or hold your own fundraiser or become a volunteer.

Make a donation: Any gift, large or small, makes a meaningful contribution to our work in supporting people with cancer and their families now and in the future.

Buy Cancer Council sun protection products: Every purchase helps you prevent cancer and contribute financially to our goals.

Help us speak out for a cancer-smart community: We are a leading advocate for cancer prevention and improved patient services. You can help us speak out on important cancer issues and help us improve cancer awareness by living and promoting a cancer-smart lifestyle.

Join a research study: Cancer Council funds and carries out research investigating the causes, management, outcomes and impacts of different cancers. You may be able to join a study.

To find out more about how you, your family and friends can help, please call your local Cancer Council.



Cancer Council Helpline 13 11 20

Cancer Council Helpline is a telephone information service provided by Cancer Council NSW for people affected by cancer.

For the cost of a local call (except from mobiles), you can talk confidentially about any concerns with oncology health professionals. Helpline consultants can send you information and put you in touch with services in your area. If you need information in a language other than English, an interpreting service is available.

You can call the Helpline, Monday to Friday, 9am to 5pm.

If you have difficulty communicating over the phone, contact the National Relay Service (www.relayservice.com.au) to help you communicate with a Cancer Council Helpline consultant.

For more information, go to www.cancercouncil.com.au.

Regional offices

Central and Southern Sydney

Woolloomooloo
02 9334 1900

Hunter and Central Coast

Charlestown
02 4923 0700

North Sydney

Crows Nest
02 9334 1600

Northern

Byron Bay
02 6639 1300

Southern

North Wollongong
02 4223 0200

Western

Wagga Wagga
02 6937 2600

Western Sydney

Parramatta
02 9354 2000

For support and information on cancer and cancer-related issues, call Cancer Council Helpline. This is a confidential service.

For further information and details please visit our website: www.cancercouncil.com.au



Cancer Council
Helpline

13 11 20