



Australian Government
Department of Social Services

Supported Wage System Handbook ***under the Supported Employment*** ***Services Award***

V1.2

Disclaimer

This version of the Handbook is written specifically for use of the Supported Wage System under the *Supported Employment Services Award*.

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Document Change History

Version	Effective Date	End Date	Change & Location
1.0	1 Jul 2018	21 May 2021	Original version
1.1	21 May 2021	30 June 2023	Update references to Supported Employment Services (SES) Award 2020
1.2	30 June 2023	1 November 2025	Updates to reflect the changes to the SES Award, commencing 30 June 2023
1.3	1 November 2025		Updated for new NPA Program 2025-2028

Section 1 Supported Wage System Overview

Introduction

The purpose of the Supported Wage System (SWS) is to provide a process for reliable and independent work productivity assessments to enable people whose work productivity is reduced as a result of their disability to obtain employment. Many people with disability obtain employment in the open labour force at full award wages but for some people, the nature of their disability can significantly affect their productive capacity. People in such circumstances may find employment in a supported employment service, which might be referred to as an Australian Disability Enterprise (ADE).

The SWS productivity assessment process provides a method to assess the productivity of the employee against performance standards of other employees working at the minimum level of performance that would be expected from an employee who is paid the full award rate of pay.

The SWS was introduced in 1994 and was developed in consultation with the relevant industrial authorities, trade unions, disability peak bodies, government departments and specialised employment agencies for people with disability.

This Handbook applies to the SWS used to determine productivity-based wages for employees with disability employed by an employer defined as a supported employment service under the *Supported Employment Service Award* (SES Award). The SES Award can be found [here](#). This Handbook should be read in conjunction with the '[Supported Wage Assessment Guidelines – Supported Employment Services Award](#)' when applying the SWS under the SES Award.

Transitional arrangements to the new Supported Employment Services Award

In December 2022, the Fair Work Commission handed down its decision following a review of the SES Award. Further information is available on the FWO website at "[Supported Employment Services Award pay rates - Fair Work Ombudsman](#)".

Changes to the Award commenced 30 June 2023 and included:

- adding two new wage classifications (Grades A and B) to the Award, sitting below the existing classifications of Grades 1-7, and
- removing all wage assessment tools available under the Award, with the exception of the SWS for the SES Award (i.e. the version of the SWS covered in this Handbook).

The decision also included the following modifications to the SWS:

- Where an employee performs more than one major task in their job, the SWS assessment must measure a representative sample of the tasks performed and weigh them appropriately
- The NPA assessor must independently determine that benchmarks to be used for the assessment are valid and appropriate
- Where an employer collects workplace data as to the employee's productivity levels, that data must be assigned a 50% weighting in the overall assessment, regardless of the degree of disparity with the result of the NPA assessor's assessment (which forms the other 50% weighting)

- The minimum wage under the SWS will be \$2.75 ¹per hour, replacing the previous minimum wage, which was 12.5% of the relevant classification
- After the initial SWS assessment, there will be an automatic review after 12 months². There are no further automatic reviews but the right to request a review because circumstances have changed remains.

The FWC decision provided a transition period of three years for all SWS assessments to be completed for existing employees. This means all SWS assessments are to be completed by 30 June 2026.

Key principles of the SWS

Industrial framework and conditions

The SWS must operate within federal and state workplace relations laws. People with disability who access the SWS retain the same employment conditions as their fellow employees under the relevant industrial instrument, for example a modern award or an enterprise agreement. The assessed percentage of productivity applies only to the wage rate.

The SWS was designed to use industrial instruments and principles of wage settings that apply to all other employees in the national and state workplace relations systems.

Limits of use

A SWS productivity or pro-rata wage is used only when it is clear that a person with disability is unable to work at full productive capacity compared to that of another employee without disability, who performs the job at the performance standard. The presence of disability itself does not justify a pro-rata award wage.

The SWS should not be used to reduce the wages of people with disability already in jobs, however, it may be used to assist people whose continued employment at full award wages is at risk, subject to conditions (see Assistance for People in a Job at Risk).

Only people eligible to participate in the SWS are able to use it and it is not applicable to other employees, particularly to other disadvantaged job seekers without disability. The SWS is intended to be simple and practical to use.

It is essential that employees are not pre-determined as capable of performing at a certain wage level and then placed in jobs.

A SWS productivity rate is determined by assessment of the performance of a particular individual in a particular job. The SWS is not intended for contractors, short-term or temporary jobs in which the core duties and tasks often change.

One person's SWS productivity assessment cannot be applied to other employees with disability performing similar duties, or to the same employee in another job.

Eligibility Criteria

Applications for SWS require the following conditions:

- the job under consideration is covered by the SES Award and is ongoing

¹ This amount was changed on 1 July 2023 as a result of the Annual Wage Review 2022-23 decision. The minimum wage payable to supported employees is the minimum hourly wage [as set out in the SES Award](#).

² Employees that start using the SWS in the transition period (30 June 2023 and 30 June 2026) will only require a single assessment in this period. Earlier assessments can be requested where an employee has changed jobs or the processes involved in the work undertaken by the employee have changed.

- the person is an Australian citizen or is a person resident in Australia whose continued presence is not subject to a time limit imposed by Australian law (e.g. a temporary visa)
- the person is at least 16 years of age
- the person has no outstanding workers' compensation claim against the current employer
- the person meets the impairment criteria for the Disability Support Pension (DSP) as determined by Centrelink

The SWS in Open Employment Handbook has an additional eligibility requirement that the job being offered is for a minimum of eight hours per week. Please note that this rule does not apply under the modified SWS in the SES Award.

The Department of Social Services' (the Department) Assessment Team approve applications for SWS. Applications are submitted online via [JobAccess](#). The employer is responsible for ensuring it is lawful to employ a person under SWS provisions for the particular job. The employer and the assessor must ensure the employee understand the SWS provisions.

Eligibility of people not in receipt of the DSP

A person with disability not receiving the DSP may choose:

- to claim the DSP, or
- not to claim a payment, but only to test whether they meet the medical impairment criteria for the DSP: this is referred to as a SWS Eligibility Test.

If the person with disability chooses to apply for the DSP, they should obtain information from Centrelink about the claim process. More information can be found on the [Services Australia](#) website.

For a person with disability not on the DSP, the Department's Assessment Team will arrange a SWS Eligibility Test by contacting Centrelink.

Management of the system

The Assessment Team performs day-to-day management of the SWS and its processes.

The key responsibilities of the Assessment Team is to:

- quality assure, confirm eligibility of participants and approve applications for SWS
- facilitate approval to enable payments for SWS assessments
- conduct audits of SWS applications and assessments performed by approved NPA assessors
- check for accuracy and timeliness of the wage assessment process and outcomes.

Employers should contact the Assessments Team at assessments@communitygrants.gov.au in the first instance to notify them of changes to SWS applications, i.e. if employment ceases, ABN changes, or employer changes.

Assistance for employers

Employment Assistance Fund (EAF)

The Employment Assistance Fund (EAF) is designed to help employers support employees with disability in the workplace. The EAF reimburses employers for the cost of equipment or adjustments needed to support an employee with disability in the workplace. Financial assistance for the provision of Auslan interpreters and disability awareness training is also available from the EAF. More information can be found at [JobAccess](#) or by phoning **1800 464 800**.

Assistance and information for employees with disability

JobAccess website

The JobAccess website is a national hub for workplace and employment information for people with disability, employers and service providers. More information about SWS and other disability services can be found at [JobAccess](#) or by phoning **1800 464 800**. 1800 calls are free from fixed lines; please note calls made from mobile phones may incur additional costs.

Assistance for an interpreter

If you need an interpreter, help is available through the Translating and Interpreter Service on telephone **13 14 50**.

If you are deaf or hard of hearing or have a speech impairment, you can get help through the Speech-to-Speech Relay through the National Relay Service on **13 36 77**. Both of these services are available 24 hours a day seven days a week and are the cost of a local call anywhere in Australia.

If you use Auslan to communicate, you can access the EAF to help with the costs of Auslan interpreting for SWS assessments.

Retention of Pensioner Concession Card

Recipients of DSP are entitled to the Pensioner Concession Card (PCC). PCC information can be found at the [Services Australia](#) website.

Workers' compensation and superannuation

Employers are required to provide workers' compensation insurance for all employees. This includes potential SWS recipients who are working in the Trial Period and those employed after the SWS productivity assessment. Superannuation must be paid as per clause 19 of the SES Award.

Employer payment of the productivity-based wage

The employer will pay the assessed wage and superannuation as required. Payment of the assessed wage is made to the employee in the same way as other employees who do not participate in SWS.

Hours of work

An employer is required to roster a part-time employee for a minimum of 3 consecutive hours on any shift, as per clause 10 of the SES Award.

On each occasion a casual employee is required to attend work they are entitled to a minimum payment of 3 hours, as per clause 11 of the SES Award.

There is no minimum wage payable per week.

Nominee

An employee may choose to involve a nominee in any stage of the job placement or SWS productivity assessment process. Any person nominated by the employee may carry out a general advocacy role. It is important that any known nominees, and their contact details are included in the SWS Application.

Where a signature is required, such as on the wage assessment agreement, and the person with disability is unable to provide it, the person signing must be someone nominated in accordance with the relevant state or territory laws to sign documents on the person with disability's behalf.

Who conducts the SWS productivity assessment?

National Panel of Assessors (NPA) Providers perform assessments at no cost to the employer or employee. Assessors are required to have minimum qualifications and experience (see 'Approval of NPA assessors' below).

The role of the NPA assessor is to work cooperatively with the employer and employee and not seek to impose a primary decision-making or arbitration role.

The assessment process must be conducted in a manner that ensures the employer and the employee have a strong sense of ownership of the outcome. The assessment must ensure that the employer, employee, and assessor agree on the assessment process, performance standards and productivity outcome. In the event there is a dispute, the dispute mechanisms outlined in this handbook should be followed.

Approval of NPA assessors

NPA Providers are required to approve assessors to conduct SWS assessments. To be an approved NPA assessor requires prerequisite skills, training and experience. Assessors require a minimum of two years practical experience in the disability employment or related sectors, and an Australian education qualification (at a minimum of diploma level) in one of the following fields:

- rehabilitation counsellor
- occupational therapy
- physiotherapy
- nurse
- medical practitioner
- psychologist/psychiatrist
- orthoptics/optometry
- audiology
- exercise physiologist
- vocational training, or
- other diploma or higher-level qualification which the Provider considers is relevant to providing the required Assessments which is approved by the Department.

The Department reserves the right to request documentary evidence of relevant qualification/s and experience for each Assessor working for an NPA Provider.

NPA assessor accreditation

In addition to the requirements above, NPA assessors must complete the relevant accreditation and training process as directed by the Department before they are eligible to assess employees covered by SWS provisions.

A scenario of how people will enter the SWS

In this scenario, the applicant is an Supported Employment Services provider employing a person with disability who receives the DSP and will not be able to work at the full award wage rate. The potential job is covered by the Supported Employment Services Award.

Pre-employment steps

The applicant visits [JobAccess](#) to check the requirements of participating in SWS and confirms that they meet the key eligibility requirements.

The applicant completes the SWS application online at JobAccess.

On receipt of the application, the Assessment Team verifies that the person with disability is in receipt of DSP and checks that other eligibility criteria have been met. If a DSP eligibility test is required, the Assessments Team will send a request to Services Australia.

The Assessment Team notifies the applicant when their application is approved, or if they do not meet the necessary criteria, they are notified that their application has been declined.

Commencement of the Trial Period

A new employee begins work in the Trial Period once their SWS application has been approved and advises Centrelink of any change in circumstances: the rate of the DSP paid may need to be altered for this period to take account of the wages paid.

The assessor must ensure that the employer and the employee understand the implications of SWS and agree on a time for the assessment to be undertaken. If a pro-rata award wage is appropriate, and is accepted by those involved, the SWS wage assessment agreement is signed and a copy provided to the employer and employee. A copy of the SWS Agreement is sent to Fair Work Commission for filing.

Work after the wage assessment agreement begins

Payment of the pro-rata wage commences from the date the SWS wage assessment agreement is signed. The employee or their nominee advises Centrelink of the agreed wage.

The assessor provides a copy to all parties to the agreement and to the union, if requested. The employer sends a copy of the agreement to the Fair Work Commission.

The employee commences work at the agreed assessed wage. The wage assessment agreement takes effect immediately when the employer, employee and assessor sign it.

Section 2 SWS Administrative Procedures

The key steps in the wage assessment process are summarised later in this section.

Contacting the Department's Assessment Team

The employee, employer or employment service Provider can contact the Assessment Team by phone on **1800 065 123** or by email at assessments@communitygrants.gov.au.

Making the application

The online SWS application form is available on the [JobAccess](#) website. The employer or employment services provider completes and submits the application form online.

The Assessment Team:

- confirms the person with disability meets the DSP impairment criteria (Assessment Team may contact Centrelink to confirm this), or that they are in receipt of DSP
- checks all other eligibility criteria have been met
- approves or declines the application.

Variation in procedures for people with disability who are not receiving the DSP

A person with disability not in receipt of the DSP may choose to apply for the DSP.

They are not required to apply for DSP, however the Assessment Team may request Centrelink to test whether they meet the criteria for DSP to satisfy the SWS eligibility requirements at the SWS application approval stage.

If the person with disability chooses to apply for DSP, the relevant form(s) can be:

- downloaded from the [Services Australia](#) website
- collected by visiting a Centrelink Service Centre
- obtained by phoning the Centrelink Contact Centre on **13 27 17**.

It is advisable that the applicant or their nominee obtains information from Centrelink on the claim process.

The person with disability completes the claim for DSP and sends it to the local Centrelink office. Centrelink will contact the applicant about the claim.

If the person with disability meets the DSP criteria, the person with disability or nominee informs the Assessment Team, who then confirms the information with Centrelink, and processes the application.

If the person with disability is not in receipt of the DSP, the Assessment Team will send a request to Centrelink to determine the applicant's eligibility for the SWS. If required, Centrelink may send a request to the person with disability requesting documentation to determine their eligibility. If this occurs, the Assessment Team will notify the SWS applicant that a letter has been sent to the person with disability.

If the outcome of the test indicates eligibility for participation in the SWS, the Assessment Team then processes the application as previously outlined.

Advise of approval

The Assessment Team notifies the applicant of approval of the SWS application and the person with disability commences the SWS Trial Period.

An assessor is arranged

The Department's IT system generates and issues a Work Order to a contracted SWS Provider.

The Provider accepts the Work Order and arranges an approved NPA assessor for the initial assessment.

Work begins in a Trial Period

The workplace parties negotiate a trial wage. The employer pays a negotiated wage to the employee with disability during the Trial Period. The trial wage must be at least the SES Award minimum SWS hourly wage and should ideally reflect the expected productivity levels of the employee during the Trial Period.

Employees covered by the SES Award under the SWS must be paid a minimum hourly wage rate. This rate of pay is to be the higher of:

- the assessed productive capacity of the employee rounded to the nearest whole percentile, or
- the minimum hourly wage [as set out in the SES Award](#).

The minimum hourly rate changes on 1 July each year and is available from the Fair Work Ombudsman website.

The Trial Period must be at least 13 weeks but not longer than 26 weeks.

For employees transitioning to the SWS from another wage assessment tool, and doing the same role, there should be no need for a Trial Period or to pay a trial wage. In these cases, the person should stay on their existing wage until the SWS process has been completed, and a new SWS Wage Agreement is signed by all parties. If the SWS assessment results in a lower wage, the person stays on their existing wage.

Advising Centrelink of change in financial circumstances of a person in receipt of DSP

Centrelink requires advice about the employee with disability's wage during the Trial Period, and any subsequent wage adjustments. The employer should assist the employee in advising Centrelink, where required. Centrelink can be contacted by telephone on **13 27 17**, in writing or by visiting a Customer Service Centre. It is important to advise Centrelink within 14 days of a change of wages as the employees' earnings may affect the rate of DSP. More information is available at the [Services Australia](#) website.

The lead up to the assessment

Following receipt of a Work Order, the NPA assessor negotiates a suitable date and time with the employee, employer and nominee (if applicable) for the assessment to take place. The NPA assessor will meet with the employee, employer and the nominee if relevant, at a pre-assessment meeting on or before the day of the assessment to enable all parties to discuss the relevant details of the assessment and answer any queries that may arise.

SWS productivity assessment takes place, as outlined in Section 3.

After the assessment

The employer, or the assessor on the employer's behalf, sends the signed wage assessment agreement form to the FWC. The assessor also provides a copy to the employee's nominee and union representative if applicable.

If a union representative was not party to the wage agreement, the FWC will email a copy of the wage assessment agreement to the union's nominated email address if applicable.

If the union has not notified the FWC with an objection within 10 working days, the FWC will advise the employer or the assessor that the wage assessment agreement has been successfully filed.

The assessor always provides a copy of the signed wage assessment agreement to the agreement parties including to the employee and employer, union representative if party to the agreement, and the nominee (if relevant).

Operative date to pay the assessed wage

The operative date of the wage agreement is the date when the wage assessment agreement is signed by the employer, employee (or nominee) and a union representative (if requested by the employee) and the assessor. The employer will pay the agreed wage rate from this date and does not have to wait until receipt of notification from the FWC that the wage assessment agreement has been filed.

Initial Assessments for existing employees new to SWS

Existing employees employed before 30 June 2023 that have not had a SWS assessment before 30 June 2023, must have an initial SWS assessment before 30 June 2026 (the end of the transition period).

Once an assessor is assigned, it is recommended that the employer have a discussion with the assessor to discuss appropriate benchmarks and performance standards and organise an assessment date with all parties.

Employees should receive notice of the assessment date in advance and nominees must be notified and invited to the meeting. The employer may collect workplace data on the employee's productive capacity, in the period leading up to the assessment.

Review

SWS review assessments

Where a new employee with disability is employed on a SWS productivity-based wage under the SES Award, the employee's productivity is reviewed 12 months after their initial assessment. This ensures that the wage rate reflects any changes in productivity over their first year of being in the job. No further automatic assessments are required after the first review assessment.

Where an existing employee had their initial assessment during the transition period (from 30 June 2023 to 30 June 2026) no further SWS assessments are required for a period of three years after the date of the initial assessment.

As per the SES Award, review assessments can be requested earlier if an employee has changed jobs or the processes involved in the work undertaken by the employee have changed. Review assessments can also be requested earlier if the employee's productivity has either significantly increased or declined, or if there has been a significant change in duties. In such cases, any party to the SWS Wage Assessment Agreement may request a review assessment by contacting the Assessment Team. Where there is no agreement about the need for an early review (between the employer and the employee and/or the employee's nominee), the dispute mechanisms available in the workplace or FWC may be used. Otherwise, the assessed productivity rate will stand until the next review.

Review assessments can be undertaken at the initiative of either the employee or the employer, once every six months and not more than four times every three years and the rate of pay adjusted accordingly.

The majority of SWS review assessments are allocated to assessors approximately nine weeks before the assessment is due.

Where a SWS review assessment is scheduled, the employer, employee, assessor and union representative (if required) will re-examine the work undertaken and the current level of productivity. The parties will reassess the percentage of the full award wage paid to the employee based on this review and agree to amend or retain the current assessed productivity rate.

If a review assessment is overdue (past the 1-year mark) the Assessment Team will contact the NPA provider or employer to ensure that an assessment is scheduled. Where an assessment cannot be negotiated between the employer and the employee following contact with the Department, the

employment contract under SWS provisions will lapse after 30 calendar days.

It is the responsibility of the employer to ensure that a copy of the new wage assessment agreement is sent to the FWC. The employer may request the assessor send the wage assessment agreement to the FWC on their behalf. The assessor must advise the Assessment Team of any significant changes because of the review when they submit their assessment report online.

Cost and content of reviews

The Australian Government pays the cost of SWS wage assessments for each employee. This includes initial assessments and review assessments.

Reviews will require examination of the main elements of the previous SWS productivity assessment, including the tasks and duties performed, the suitability of the performance standards and benchmarks and the productivity results of the employee against those standards.

Since the record of the previous productivity assessments and reviews will normally be available to assessors, later reviews may be simpler and shorter than those conducted earlier.

Disputes

SWS productivity disputes

If there is no agreement on the outcome of the initial SWS productivity assessment, the employer may choose not to offer the person employment under the provisions of the SWS. A disagreement between the employer and the assessor would not be subject to the industrial dispute mechanisms applying in the enterprise.

If one or more parties disagree with the SWS productivity rating, they need to try to discuss their different views in the post assessment meeting and seek to resolve them and reach agreement. If parties fail to reach agreement, they may submit a request for a review of the SWS assessment process, with the Assessment Team. The employer, employee, employee's nominee or a union representative can lodge a request for a review. The request must be in writing (email is acceptable) and must outline the specific parts of the SWS assessment process which they would like reviewed, making reference to the requirements for conducting SWS assessments outlined in this Handbook.

It is not sufficient to base a request for review on disagreement with the result alone. Grounds for requesting a review of the assessment must include evidence that the assessment was not conducted in accordance with the process outlined in this Handbook and that it would result in significant disadvantage to the employee and/or the employer.

The Department will respond to requests for review within 21 calendar days. The Department will not change the productivity rating but may request that an assessor conduct parts of the assessment again or in cases where there is clear evidence that the assessment was not properly conducted, may request a new assessment.

It is important to note that parties must not sign the SWS Wage Agreement until agreement is reached. Once an agreement is signed and submitted to Fair Work Commission, an early review of the employees' productivity may only be arranged where the employees' tasks or productivity significantly changes. All parties to the Assessment must agree to the early review.

If there is no agreement on the assessment outcome between the parties to the assessment, the employment contract under SWS provisions will lapse 30 calendar days after the date of the last assessment. It will be a matter for the parties involved as to whether they wish to enter a new contract based on the general industrial provisions, or whether they wish to use avenues generally available under the industrial relations system to resolve any areas of disagreement as to the operations of the industrial provisions for the SWS.

Disputes following engagement on SWS provisions

If the dispute remains unresolved after exhausting the process outlined above, an employee or employer may raise a dispute in relation to the assessment of the employee's assessed productive capacity in accordance with clause 30 of the SES Award – Dispute resolution. In those circumstances, the FWC may make a determination as to the employee's productive capacity, having regard to the reasonableness of the workplace data and the data collected by the NPA Assessor and the fairness between the parties in all of the circumstances.

Once the employee has been engaged on SWS provisions, the dispute resolution mechanisms available to other employees in the workplace apply. The FWC has jurisdiction over disputes that an employee with disability may have with an employer, and clause 30 of the SES Award sets out procedures to be followed if a dispute arises about a matter under it. A nominee for the employee with disability may be involved to ensure the interests of the employee are adequately represented.

Summary of SWS Process – Key Steps

1. Access the [JobAccess](#) website or phone the Assessment Team (**1800 065 123**) for information.
2. Complete and lodge the application form on the JobAccess website.
3. The Assessment Team checks the employee's eligibility.
4. If the employee is not in receipt of the DSP then the Assessment Team contacts Centrelink for a SWS Eligibility Test.
5. If the employee meets the DSP criteria, then the Assessment Team approves the application. A confirmation email is sent to the applicant. If the application does not meet the DSP criteria, or other eligibility requirements, the application is declined and a confirmation email will be sent to the applicant.
6. The employee commences the Trial Period from the date the application is approved.
7. The Department's IT System assigns the assessment to a SWS assessment Provider.
8. If the employee is on income support, the employee notifies Centrelink about the employment.
9. The SWS wage assessment is conducted and agreed, and lodged with the FWC
10. The Department's IT system automatically initiates a review assessment or the Assessment Team can arrange an earlier review if requested.

Section 3 The SWS Productivity Assessment Process

Introduction

The productivity-based wage requires a standard to be set of the productivity needed for the full rate of pay for the job, followed by an assessment of the employee with disability's achievement against that standard.

An employee with disability whose productivity is to be assessed may be receiving on-the-job support and in practice, the SWS assessment may draw upon work already done to support the worker in the workplace.

The key tasks of a job are often identified and recorded as part of on-the-job support and this often guides the training provided for the employee with disability. The usual job placement process often includes a discussion about the performance standards required for the key tasks. This information guides the employees' training strategy and gives each party a clear understanding of what is required for the placement to succeed.

A productivity assessment requires extra attention to any training-oriented description of duties and the subsequent assessment of the employee against those duties.

An important goal of the productivity assessment process is that it is reasonably easy to use and causes minimal disruption to the workplace.

The assessment must also guard against prejudice or bias (discussed later in this section) and ensure identification of a fair wage rate. The method of arriving at the assessment must be capable of review by an independent third party.

Workplaces are dynamic and each is unique; it is not possible to foresee every variation in job design or all employee requirements. Judgement is required in applying the assessment method in each particular environment.

Things to consider

Reasonable adjustment

Reasonable adjustments are alterations or modifications made to the workplace to assist an employee with disability to participate in employment on the same basis as others. Reasonable adjustments are given statutory force in the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)* and in other similar Acts at the state and territory levels.

Under the Act, a failure to make reasonable adjustments for an employee with disability can constitute unlawful discrimination. An adjustment is 'reasonable' under the Act if it does not impose unjustifiable hardship on the employer. In determining unjustifiable hardship, all relevant circumstances of the particular case must be considered, including the factors set out in section 11 of the Act.

Sometimes reasonable adjustments require more than modifications to the physical working environment. The manner in which reasonable adjustments are made will vary according to the needs of the employee with disability, the nature of the job, the physical setting, and the knowledge of people in the workplace. The provision of an appropriate modification to the workplace could mean the difference between a 60 per cent level of assessed productivity and an 80 per cent level.

An employer may make distinctions about the terms and conditions of employment where an employee is unable to perform the inherent requirements of the job even if reasonable adjustments are made: see section 21A of the Act.

Trial Period

People with disability will learn their job tasks at varying rates. Some people may have a 'learning curve' that climbs steadily for many weeks, others may learn the basics more quickly and their performance may plateau earlier.

A period of specialised on-the-job training will usually be required for most people using the SWS before conducting an initial productivity assessment.

For this reason, and to enable consideration of the overall suitability of the job placement, a Trial Period is part of the SWS provisions. The Trial Period commences on approval of the SWS application.

The Trial Period for employees covered by the SES Award must be a minimum of 13 weeks, with a maximum period of 26 weeks. However, for employees transitioning to the SWS from another wage assessment tool, and doing the same role, there should be no need for a Trial Period or to pay a trial wage. In these cases, the employee with disability should stay on their existing wage until the SWS process has been completed. If the SWS assessment results in a lower wage, the employee with disability stays on their existing wage.

The extension of the Trial Period is only acceptable when it is for the benefit of the employee with disability, for example an absence from work because of illness or where it is expected that the employee with disability could further improve work performance in a short period.

The employer pays a negotiated wage to the employee during the Trial Period. The trial wage must be the minimum SWS hourly wage provided for in the SES Award and should ideally reflect the expected productivity levels for the Trial Period. The SWS minimum wage changes on 1 July each year and is available from the [Fair Work Ombudsman](#) website or by contacting the Fair Work Infoline on **13 13 94**.

Employees covered by the SES Award under SWS provisions must be paid a minimum hourly wage rate. This rate of pay is to be the higher of:

- the assessed productive capacity of the employee rounded to the nearest whole percentile, or
- the set minimum hourly wage [as set out in the SES Award](#).

There is no minimum wage payable per week.

An employer is required to roster a part-time employee with disability for a minimum of 3 consecutive hours on any shift, as per clause 10 of the SES Award.

On each occasion a casual employee with disability is required to attend work they are entitled to a minimum payment of 3 hours, as per clause 11 of the SES Award.

Depending on the anticipated productivity in the Trial Period, it is desirable that the trial wage is not substantially lower than the actual assessed wage. This is particularly relevant where the person has prior experience relevant to the job in question.

The wage in the Trial Period will apply until the productivity assessment is conducted and the workplace parties sign a wage assessment agreement. The employer, the employee and the assessor will agree upon the dates, on which the assessment will take place.

It is important that the employee with disability is not persuaded to undertake a SWS productivity assessment before they are ready, or to delay an assessment, with the employee with disability remaining on a training wage for longer than necessary.

The employee with disability should reach a reasonably stable level of job performance before a SWS productivity assessment. The employee should have already received specialist training where required to gain the skill and confidence to perform their tasks safely.

The specialised training in the Trial Period is in addition to any other standard training normally provided to employee with disability at the relevant workplace.

Many people will continue to receive specialised and general training after the SWS assessment is

complete, in accordance with the SES Award provisions.

Work trials should include induction or training as appropriate in the job being trialed.

Evidence that the employee would be unable to work at full award wage level

The parties should be satisfied that an award wage level of work performance has not been achieved so far on the job, and is unlikely in the short term.

The presence of disability or eligibility for DSP is not an indication of the need for a SWS productivity wage.

Many people with high levels of disability are able to work at full productivity and award wages. Take care in any discussion of current productivity to avoid prejudging the outcome of the later productivity assessment.

Pre-assessment checks

The assessor will need to ensure completion of the required pre-assessment checks have been carried out prior to the wage assessment.

An employment service Provider, where used, should check the items listed below, regardless of the anticipated use of full or pro-rata wages. The checks will occur before and during the job placement, as they are customary job-matching tasks for most people with significant disability.

Suitability of the employee and the job design

Is there an appropriate match between the individual and the job?

- Does the placement capitalise on the strengths and abilities of the employee, or does the placement place undue focus on areas of disability?
- The employee's freedom of choice and preferences should always be an integral part of this process.
- Are there any desirable changes to task allocation in the work team? Would changes improve overall productivity and help match the employer's requirements and the abilities of the employee?
- The EAF can provide reimbursement for the provision of necessary modifications to the workplace to assist with the employees' mobility or performance at work. More information is available on the [JobAccess](#) website.

Avoidance of bias

The SWS uses a specific assessment process to ensure wage rates are fair and to guard against bias or prejudice. A number of potential sources of bias may apply in the assessment of individual capabilities, particularly in the assessment of people with disability.

The following are some of the sources of bias:

- Expectancy bias; if you expect people to behave in a certain way, you will probably perceive them as behaving in that way. Someone who stereotypes people with disability as, for example, costly to employ, troublesome (i.e. having behaviour problems, being disruptive, etc.), and likely to be absent more often as a result of health problems, is more likely to see them as demonstrating those behaviours.
- The 'halo effect' in rating skills and performance; drawing an impression of an employee based on a single characteristic, such as intelligence or appearance. The halo may be either positive or negative; for example, a negative halo may be to assume that, simply because an employee has a speech impairment, they also have an intellectual disability.
- Failure to recognise the 'implicit' skills and attributes of the employee with disability, for example the ability to cooperate with others or to focus attention on a task.
- Gender factors; research suggests that gender discrimination in the general labour force interacts with discrimination against people with disability to severely disadvantage

women with disability, in terms of access to jobs, training, services and income.

- Discrimination on the basis of age needs also to be considered, particularly in view of the ageing of the population.

To avoid bias in the assessment system:

- Ensure that assessments are based on explicit criteria that are (as far as possible) capable of measurement or observation (i.e. performance standards and benchmarks) rather than unstructured subjective assessments.
- Include training for those undertaking assessments, using specific materials on recognising and preventing bias.

Summary of steps in the assessment

1. List the duties of the position and describe the major tasks of each duty
2. Agree on a performance standard for each task which must be validated by the NPA assessor
3. Compare the employee's achievement on the job with agreed performance standards for each task
4. Specify the time spent on each task
5. Validate the data
6. Calculate the appropriate wage level.

Explanation of each step in the assessment

Guidelines and training in the methods of gathering information are provided to NPA providers contracted to conduct SWS productivity assessments. The following is a description of the key points in productivity assessments.

Assessment Step 1: List the major duties of the job. Briefly describe the tasks of each duty.

Duties and tasks are key concepts related to a job. Tasks are usually part of a duty. Job requirements can include the knowledge, skills and abilities necessary for a job. Job tasks are specific actions in a duty required of someone in a given position. For example, someone may have a duty: package plumbing components. A task is a breakdown of the steps in each duty.

The tasks required under package plumbing components may be collect product and bags, fill bags with product, label bag. The product is washers and bolts and are placed into a plastic bag that is labelled with the contents.

The fundamentals that may be required for the job are the physical capability to collect the product and bags, the dexterity to label the bags, as well as the capacity to learn how to do these tasks. The employee's capability must be matched to the appropriate duties and tasks.

A person with disability may not be able to complete all the duties (or even all the tasks in a duty) in a job. However, they may be able to carry out one or more identified tasks as part of a duty.

Where identification of the duties and tasks within the workplace exists, checks are required for accuracy, given the possibility of job-redesign in the Trial Period. Existing job descriptions or competency standards specific to a particular workplace can also save time when defining the job. In some cases, there may be consideration of the appropriate classification of the position.

In some cases, information on the duties and tasks of the job will already be contained in:

- the specialised training plan for the employee
- existing job descriptions and personnel documents
- competency standards within competency-based training systems.

Duties and tasks may be identified or confirmed by observation and by talking to the supervisor, employee, the employment service Provider and other employees. Consider the outcomes or key results required by the job, and then identify the duties and tasks needed to achieve these outcomes. It is important that the task is observable, measurable, replicable and has a clear beginning and end.

The provisions in the SES Award determine the appropriate classification for the position.

Where an employee performs duties that span more than one classification, they must be paid at the higher grade if carrying out the duties of the higher grade for two or more hours in any shift. This does not apply while the employee is carrying out work in a higher grade for training purposes only.

It is important that the task is observable, measurable, replicable and has a clear beginning and end.

Assessment Step 2: Agree on a performance standard for each duty or task at the full rate of pay for the job.

A performance standard must be established before a SWS assessment can be undertaken, and before the employer can collect workplace data. Performance standards provide the employee with specific performance expectations for each duty and task. They are the observable behaviours and actions that explain how the job is to be done, plus the results that are expected for satisfactory job performance.

For example, they describe all task details required to successfully complete the task, including task breakdown, start and end points, how the task is completed, the quality and quantity required, details of any tools/machinery used, relevant environmental conditions (where the task is performed), and any conditions that need to be in place before or after the assessment.

In many cases, the most effective way to set a performance standard is by observing the performance of another employee performing the same duties in the workplace.

The SES Award sets out classifications with work descriptors within each grade, but does not specifically set out productivity standards.

Key points about the use of performance standards in the assessment system are:

- performance standards should always reflect the level of performance that would be expected from a competent employee performing the same duties or tasks as the employee with disability
- to adopt some higher or 'ideal' standard would unfairly disadvantage employees with disability, as the minimum pay of other employees is not determined by this higher standard
- performance standards need to be set only for those duties or tasks where the employee's disability has some bearing on performance.

Where there are duties or tasks unaffected by the disability, the assumption is that the employee meets the performance standard and no assessment is required. It would simply be a matter of recording that the employee met 100 per cent of the requirements for that duty or task.

Benchmarks

A benchmark is an agreed standard or point of reference used to compare an employee's work performance and productivity. It is a specific indicator used to calculate the time taken or task output in relation to agreed performance standards.

Setting an accurate benchmark is an integral step in the assessment process

Validation of all benchmarks must occur by comparison observation to ensure they are achievable in the assessment workplace. This ensures that when incorporating employer timings, the employer and assessor measure exactly the same thing for that employee. It is recommended that at least three timings are taken on three different occasions. More information on the number of timings required is set out in the Guidelines.

Once an approved assessor validates a benchmark in the workplace, that benchmark may be used for other employees undertaking the same task in the same location and/or for review assessments for the same employee.

Validation of benchmarks must still take place even if employer timings are not being included, as they

may provide useful information for comparing employees undertaking the same tasks.

Benchmarks must be based on at least 3 different timings, and the variance between timings should be less than 10 percentage points. Only benchmarks that achieve this standard are considered valid.

Assessment of quality

The benchmark should specify the performance standards that incorporate both quality and quantity components.

The performance standard used for quality will be that required by the employer for the duty or task in question

An example of such a benchmark may be 'produce x units per hour, with a rejection rate not exceeding y per cent'.

The benchmark is established by the performance of other employees performing the same or similar jobs in the workplace in question at the minimum level of performance that would be expected from an employee who is paid the full award rate of pay.

The performance of the employee with disability can be assessed against such a benchmark, with the number of 'rejects' in excess of those allowed under the standard, deducted from the score.

Another example may be where an employee with disability is required to mow a lawn. The standard may be to mow 50 square metres in 10 minutes within acceptable guidelines.

Methods of gathering information for performance standards

Quantifying an employee's achievement will often be the easiest and most reliable way of setting performance standards, and of assessing the employee's achievement against the standards – especially in assembly, manufacturing or process duties.

While the need for judgement is a necessary part of the productivity assessment, the greater the reliance on subjective judgement, the greater the scope for bias and inconsistency (see 'Avoidance of bias' earlier in this section). The use of reliable data is therefore the preferred method of setting standards and assessing the employee's achievement.

However, where duties and tasks are appropriately quantified, a qualitative standard will be used.

Each party to the assessment must agree to the performance standards and to the assessed levels of work achievement against those standards.

Information on other employees' performance should be used in setting performance standards. Sometimes, this information can be achieved without direct observation of other employees. Many workplaces gather reliable production statistics that can be a non-intrusive means of establishing performance information.

In cases where other employees cannot contribute to the setting of performance standards, such as where the position is new or there is no one else performing those duties, it may be useful for the assessor to perform the duty to develop reasonable expectations of performance.

If another employee is involved in a performance standard determination exercise, the person should be competent in the task and, preferably, have a similar length of experience on the job as the person who is the subject of assessment. The performance of employees who have been doing the same job for many years could be unusually high.

If other employees are being monitored to develop performance standards, they should be advised of this. It should be noted that the very fact of providing this information could improve that employee's achievement.

Assessment information gained over too short a period may overestimate sustainable performance over time.

Gather information to set standards under conditions closely approximating those normally applying to the workplace.

Make provision for rest breaks and personal time, consistent with the needs of the employee or the general operating standards of the workplace.

There can be a wide variation in the performance of an employee with disability, just as there can be in the performance of an employee without disability. Variations in performance reflect a wide range of workplace factors, not only the capabilities of the individual, for example supervision and work design.

Where the job involves considerable variation in duties on a day-to-day basis, it may be desirable to create a simulated work routine for the purpose of establishing performance standards and assessing achievement against these standards.

In this approach, base the performance standard and subsequent assessment of the employee's achievement on a representative sample of tasks drawn from the range of duties the employee would typically perform in the job.

Workplace data collection

Prior to the assessor undertaking the assessment, the employer may choose to collect workplace data for use in the calculation of the assessed employee's wages.

For the workplace data to be valid, employers should collect and document a minimum of three timings against the agreed benchmarks for each task relevant to the employee's usual work. When taking timings, the employee must be advised that their work is being timed for their upcoming SWS assessment. There is to be no covert timing of an employee's tasks.

The benefits of collecting workplace data for an ADE can be to assist with forecasting, tendering, workplace performance and planning. Another benefit can arise in a situation where no workplace data has been collected and there is a difference between an employee's productive capacity during assessment and when they are working normally, workplace data can make the situation less complicated to resolve.

Employers should speak to their NPA assessors early (i.e. as soon as they have been allocated to undertake an assessment), to confirm that their approach to collecting workplace data is appropriate.

Assessment Step 3: Compare the employee's achievement on the duty with an agreed performance standard for each task.

The assessment of the employee's achievement would almost always be made in the usual work setting. The employee with disability, or their representative (union or nominee) or the employer, will be entitled to seek an opportunity for the employee with disability to demonstrate their capabilities.

In the pre-discussion meeting, all parties should first discuss and reach agreement on duties and tasks to be assessed on the day, and benchmarks and performance standards to be used for each of the duties and tasks.

As noted above, there should be no assessment of any tasks where the disability clearly has no bearing on the employee with disability's performance. Such tasks should be listed and rated at 100 per cent achievement. The total percentage of time taken to perform such a task is recorded.

If the employee with disability achieves a greater than 100 per cent rating, for example 120 per cent, this is rated as 100 per cent achievement for that task.

The parties should agree on an appropriate rating for the employee for each task, against the performance standard. Express achievement as a percentage, with 100 per cent representing the agreed performance standard for the full relevant rate of pay for the task.

The following points apply to any demonstration of performance by the employee:

- the goal is to choose unobtrusive and reliable methods of gaining productivity information

- observation or monitoring the employee's achievement in the course of their normal work is clearly preferable to a separate and more formal demonstration exercise, although this may be desirable in some cases.

Observation or monitoring should:

- be conducted in as natural and sensitive a manner as possible, so the employee is comfortable and relaxed
- be done independently of any 'hands on' assistance from supervisors, other employees or placement agency staff
- ensure the employee receives the same level of support and supervision that would be reasonably available to other people who do not have disability, such as being able to ask questions or discuss problems
- ensure the employee is free to stop and repeat the process if they feel uncomfortable.

Assessment Step 4: Specify the time spent on each duty and calculate the productivity rate.

Check the employee's time spent on each duty

Each duty the employee performs is weighted according to the amount of time spent on that duty by adding up the times of each associated task, usually per week, but could be per day, per fortnight.

Calculate the productivity rate

Compare the employee with disability's achievement on each duty with the performance standard for that duty. The comparative performance is then multiplied by the percentage of time spent on each duty. This gives a percentage of the award to be paid for each duty. The final percentage of the rate of pay to be paid for each duty is added.

The time spent on each duty is used to adjust the employee performance rating for each duty. This ensures low (or high) performance on a task within the duty will not unfairly influence the overall productivity rate. Time is generally also a useful indicator of the importance of each duty.

Why use time to assess duty performance?

Duties may vary in importance according to how frequently they are performed, how critical they are to job performance and how difficult they are to learn.

The fairness of the time dimension is explained in the following example.

An employee in a plant nursery spends 60 per cent of their time on one duty at which they achieve 70 per cent of the expected performance for the relevant rate of pay. The employee spends 30 per cent of their time on a second duty in which they achieved 50 per cent of the expected performance for the relevant rate of pay. The remainder of the time is spent on a duty in which her performance is at 40 per cent of the standard.

Without a time weighting the employee's performance rating would be 53 per cent:

Duty 1	70%
Duty 2	50%
Duty 3	40%
Average	53%

With a time weighting, however, the performance rating is 61 per cent:

Duty 1	$70\% \times .60 = .42$
Duty 2	$50\% \times .30 = .15$
Duty 3	$40\% \times .10 = .04$
Total	.61 (by addition)

The proportion of time spent on a duty is the most reliable representative measure for the performance of a duty and is important for a fair wage outcome.

It should be noted that the amount of time spent on a duty could be per day, week, fortnight, or even month.

Performance rating may be adjusted for supervision in some exceptional cases, however, this is expected to be rare. All parties, including the employee and nominee should agree to the adjustment and outline the reasons for the adjustment in the completed report (in JobAccess). Noting that any rounding adjustment for supervision must remain within the allowed percentile band.

Rounding

Under the SES Award, the result is rounded to the nearest whole percentile. The method of doing this will be a simple arithmetic rounding, for example 37.50 per cent is rounded up to 38 per cent, or 53.49 per cent is rounded down to 53 per cent.

Assessment Step 5: Validate the data.

Validation is the analysis of the productivity data to establish whether the data is representative and reflective of the employee's usual performance.

Validation evidence should be documented when the timings are being collected. The evidence should include information on the circumstances in which the timings were collected. For example, if the employee is performing outdoor work, it would be relevant to include in the evidence any adverse weather and the effect this had on the employee's performance.

At the conclusion of the data collection process, the employee, the assessor and the employer will undertake a collaborative validation process, where all available data is shared. The employee, employer and assessor will discuss the available data and agree if any of the timings will be excluded in calculating the overall assessment result or agree to undertake more timings.

Employer and assessment timing discrepancies

Where employer timings are taken and there is a disparity between the overall workplace data and the assessor data of greater than 20%, the employee, assessor and employer should closely examine the available data and attempt to determine the source of the disparity. Following this discussion, the parties may agree to exclude timings that were taken under unusual circumstances, and/or agree for the Assessor and/or the Employer to undertake additional timings. The parties may agree to collect additional data. The additional data should be collected as soon as practicable and added to the existing data. If the disparity remains and the employer or employee wishes to dispute this, then the dispute mechanisms outlined earlier in this Handbook apply.

Assessment Step 6: Calculate the appropriate wage level.

The usual process for wage calculation:

- The extent to which the employee achieves the performance standard for each task, expressed as a percentage, is multiplied against the time spent in that task. This step adjusts the rate of pay for each duty, so that a fluctuation in performance of a task will not excessively affect the overall wage rate.

- The result is the amount of the relevant rate of pay for that task. This is shown on the sample assessment sheet at the end of this section.
- The result from each task is added to give the percentage of the full relevant rate of pay for the job.

Where an employer has collected workplace data with respect to the employee with disability being assessed, the assessor will calculate the percentage of the full relevant rate of pay by giving a weighting of 50 per cent to the workplace data, and a weighting of 50 per cent to the data collected by the assessor.

This is done by averaging the two results. For example, if the employer collected productivity rate is 46 per cent, and the assessor collected productivity rate is 57 per cent, the average is 51.5 per cent, which is rounded to 52 per cent.

If workplace data is not available, the assessor calculates the employee's wage using only the assessor calculated data.

Minimum wage outcome

The minimum hourly rate provided in the SES Award applies even where productivity assessment indicates a lower rate of payment.

Payments above the rate of pay specified in the SES Award

Where payments are made above the relevant award rate of pay as determined under the SES Award, the pro-rata wage should be based on the actual rate of pay.

Employers pay their employees above the relevant rate of pay for a variety of reasons. In some cases, over award payments are applied to all employees in a particular classification and in others, they are applied only to particular employees in specific circumstances. Whether the assessed employee should receive a pro-rata wage based on a rate of pay above the award may depend on particular workplaces, having regard to the provisions of the Disability Discrimination Act.

The Act effectively provides that an assessed employee cannot be excluded from being paid above the rate of pay specified in the award on the grounds of disability. However, to qualify for a pro-rata amount which exceeds that prescribed in the award, the assessed employee would have to meet any specific criteria applicable for the payment in that particular workplace.

As a general rule, where the employer pays all employees in a particular classification, at a rate of pay above that specified in the award the pro-rata amount for the employee with disability would include the amount above the relevant rate of pay.

Productivity assessment in part-time jobs

Part-time jobs can be assessed under the SWS using the same procedure and calculations as for full-time jobs. This can be achieved by using the part-time hourly figures in the wage calculations.

Next steps after the assessment

This section covers the remaining steps in the assessment process.

Reaching agreement

The parties agree on the wage rate and date for review, and sign the wage assessment agreement. For the purposes of the wage assessment agreement, the employee's nominee (if nominated) is accepted as the signatory in accordance with relevant state or territory laws. This could occur in cases where the employee agrees with the outcome of assessment but is unable to sign the document. A copy of the signed wage assessment agreement is given to all parties.

If agreement on the outcome of the productivity assessment cannot be reached, then no employment contract can be made under the SWS provisions.

Commenting on the process

Any of the parties may record their comments on any aspect of the process. Each party is entitled to read the comments of the other parties before signing the wage assessment agreement.

Notifying the FWC

The employer, or the assessor on their behalf, must provide a copy of the completed and signed wage assessment agreement to the FWC. The FWC will notify the relevant union, if that union did not participate in the assessment process. The agreement will take effect, unless the union notifies the Registrar of its objection, within 10 working days.

Assessment Summary Sheet

The Duty list on the IT system displays the duties, and subdivides those duties into tasks that the employee performs in their job. The duties are populated from the SWS application. Assessors should add, delete or amend what was submitted if required.

The following is an example to clarify the process. Employees may choose to use the first table to obtain benchmarks to be used for validation.

Duty	Tasks	Observations								Average for each task in seconds	Benchmark
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8		
Package Product	1 Collect product & bags	420	150	260	180	165				235	45
	2 Fill bags with product	580	480	348	390	210	227	209	200	331	60
	3 Label bag	540	280	220	260	235	204	203	210	269	60

Each task is based on 10 bags, so task 1 is to collect 10 bags and 10 products. Task 2 is to fill 10 bags and task 3 is to label 10 bags.

The average for each task is calculated by adding all the seconds in each task and dividing by the number of observations, as demonstrated in the following table.

Task number	Title	Benchmark	Ave employee observation	Employee Productivity (%)
1	Collect product & bags	45	235	19.15
2	Fill bags with product	60	331	18.13
3	Label bag	60	269	22.30
Average productivity for this duty: $19.15 + 18.13 + 22.30 = 59.58 \div 3 = 19.86$				

The employee usually spends five hours out of a 15 hour working week performing duty one, four hours on duty two and six hours on duty three.

In this example the productivity rates for duty two is 18.76% and for duty three is 35.35%

Once the observations and averages have been calculated, time weighting is then applied. Time weighting is applied to each duty – not at the task level.

Duty 1: $19.86 \times 33\% = 6.55$

Duty 2: $18.76 \times 27\% = 5.07\%$

Duty 3: $35.35 \times 40\% = 14.14$

Total: 25.76

Therefore, overall productivity is rounded to 26%

Section 4 Industrial Relations

Lodging a SWS wage assessment agreement

All SWS wage assessment agreements under the SES Award, including the appropriate percentage of the relevant minimum wage to be paid to the employee, must be lodged by the employer with the FWC. The assessor may do this on the employer's behalf if requested. Contact details for the FWC are at Attachment B.

All SWS wage assessment agreements must be agreed and signed by the employee (or nominee where applicable) and employer parties to the assessment as well as the assessor.

Where a union has an interest in the award but is not involved in the wage assessment.

Where a union has an interest in the SES Award and is not party to the SWS assessment, the FWC sends the wage assessment agreement to the union by email to the union's nominated email address and the agreement will take effect, unless an objection is notified to the FWC, within 10 working days.

Attachment A—Schedule D - Supported Wage System Under the SES Award (at 30 June 2023)

D.1 This schedule defines the conditions which will apply to an employee who meets the eligibility criteria in clause D.3 and who is the subject of a wage assessment using the Supported Wage System under clause 15.4(a).

D.2 In this schedule:

approved assessor means a person accredited by the management unit established by the Commonwealth under the supported wage system to perform assessments of an individual's productive capacity within the supported wage system

assessment instrument means the tool provided for under the supported wage system that records the assessment of the productive capacity of the person to be employed under the supported wage system

relevant minimum wage means the minimum wage prescribed in this award for the class of work for which an employee is engaged

supported wage system (SWS) means the Commonwealth Government system to promote employment for people who cannot work at full award wages because of a disability, as documented in the Supported Wage System Handbook. The Handbook is available from the following website: www.jobaccess.gov.au

SWS wage assessment agreement means the document in the form required by the Department of Social Services that records the employee's productive capacity and agreed wage rate

workplace data means data collected by an employer with respect to an employee's productive capacity in accordance with the Supported Wage System Handbook

D.3 Eligibility criteria

D.3.1 This schedule applies to employees with a disability who are unable to perform at the required productive capacity for their classification because of the effects of a disability.

D.3.2 This schedule does not apply to any existing employee who has a claim against the employer which is subject to the provisions of workers compensation legislation or any provision of this award relating to the rehabilitation of employees who are injured in the course of their employment.

D.4 Supported wage rates

D.4.1 Employees to whom this schedule applies will be paid the higher of the following amounts:

- (a) a percentage of the relevant minimum hourly rate of pay equal to the assessed productive capacity of the employee determined in accordance with clause D.5 rounded to the nearest whole percentage; and
- (b) \$3.12 per hour (as at 1 July 2025). This changes yearly on 1 July.

D.4.2 For the avoidance of doubt, there is no minimum amount payable to an employee per week.

D.5 Assessment of capacity

D.5.1 For the purpose of establishing the percentage of the relevant minimum wage, the productive capacity of the employee will be assessed in accordance with the Supported Wage System by an approved assessor, having consulted the employer and employee and, if the employee so desires, a person identified in clause 31.3.

D.5.2 The productivity benchmark(s) used for the conduct of a SWS assessment must:

- (a) consider the major task(s) performed by the employee; and
- (b) be independently verified by a NPA assessor as being valid and appropriate.

D.5.3 All assessments made under Schedule D – Supported Wage System must be documented in a SWS wage assessment agreement and retained by the employer as a time and wages record in accordance with the Act.

D.5.4 The approved assessor will assess the productive capacity of the employee having regard to:

- (a) where an employer has collected workplace data with respect to an employee:
 - (i) the workplace data—50% weighting; and
 - (ii) the data collected by the approved assessor in accordance with the Supported Wage System—50% weighting;
- (b) otherwise—the data collected by the approved assessor in accordance with the Supported Wage System.

D.5.5 Where, in undertaking an assessment in accordance with clause D.5.4(a), there is a disparity of greater than 20% between the overall productivity percentage calculated from the workplace data and the overall productivity percentage calculated from the data collected by the approved assessor, the employee, employer and approved assessor may agree to collect additional data. The additional data should be collected as soon as practicable and added to the existing data with respect to the employee for the purpose of undertaking the assessment in clause D.5.4(a).

D.5.6 In addition to an employee's general right to access clause 30 Dispute resolution in relation to the process or outcome of a wage assessment, an employee or an employer may:

- (a) raise a dispute in accordance with the dispute processes outlined in the Supported Wage System Handbook; and
- (b) after exhausting the process provided in clause D.5.6(a), raise a dispute in relation to the assessment of the employee's assessed productive capacity in accordance with clause 30 – Dispute resolution. In those circumstances, the Commission may, in exercising its powers under clause 30.6, make a determination as to the employee's productive capacity, having regard to the reasonableness of the workplace data and the data collected by the approved assessor and fairness between the parties in all of the circumstances.

D.6 Lodgement of SWS wage assessment agreement

D.6.1 All SWS wage assessment agreements under the conditions of Schedule D – Supported Wage System, including the appropriate percentage of the relevant minimum wage to be paid to the employee, must be lodged by the employer with the Fair Work Commission.

D.6.2 All SWS wage assessment agreements must be agreed and signed by the employee and employer parties to the assessment. Where a union which has an interest in the award is not a party to the assessment, the assessment will be referred by the Fair Work Commission to the union by email to the union's nominated email address and the agreement will take effect unless an objection is notified to the Fair Work Commission within 10 working days.

D.7 Review of assessment

For the purpose of clause 15.4(a)

D.7.1 The wage assessment agreement of each for new employees will be reviewed after 12 months' service with the employer since the initial assessment, and the rate of pay adjusted accordingly.

D.7.2 A wage assessment may be reviewed at the initiative of either the employee or the employer, once every six months and not more than four times every three years, and the rate of pay adjusted accordingly. Such a review may only be initiated in circumstances where an employee has changed jobs or the processes involved in the work undertaken by the employee have changed.

D.8 Other terms and conditions of employment

Where an assessment has been made, the applicable percentage will apply to the relevant minimum wage only. Employees covered by the provisions of Schedule D – Supported Wage System will be entitled to the same terms and conditions of employment as other workers covered by this award on a pro rata basis.

D.9 Workplace adjustment

An employer wishing to employ a person under the provisions of Schedule D Supported Wage System must take reasonable steps to make changes in the workplace to enhance the employee's capacity to do the job. Changes may involve re-design of job duties, working time arrangements and work organisation in consultation with other workers in the area.

D.10 Trial period

D.10.1 In order for an adequate assessment of the employee's capacity to be made, an employer will employ a person under the provisions of Schedule D – Supported Wage System for a trial period of at least 13 weeks, but no longer than 26 weeks.

D.10.2 During that trial period the assessment of capacity will be undertaken and the percentage of the relevant minimum hourly rate of pay for a continuing employment relationship will be determined in accordance with clause D.4 and clause D.5.

D.10.3 The employee must be paid at least \$3.12 (as at 1 July 2025) per hour for each hour worked during the trial period. This changes yearly on 1 July.

D.10.4 Once an assessment of capacity has been undertaken pursuant to clause D.5 and the employee's rate of pay is determined in accordance with clause D.4, the employer will apply any higher rate of pay determined in accordance with clause D.4.1 with effect from thirteen weeks after the commencement of the trial period.

D.10.5 Work trials should include induction or training as appropriate to the job being trialled.

Schedule H – Transitional Arrangements

H.1 No reduction in hourly wage rate

An employer shall not reduce the hourly wage of any employee employed as at 1 January 2023 by reason of their:

H.1.1 classification into Grade A or B; or

H.1.2. initial SWS assessment in the period from 30 June 2023 to 30 June 2026.

H.2 Initial SWS assessment during the transition period

H.2.1 This clause applies to any employee as at 30 June 2023 (to whom Schedule D – Supported Wage System applied) who has not been the subject of a SWS assessment prior to 30 June 2023.

H.2.2 The employee must be subject to an initial SWS wage assessment before 30 June 2026. Despite clause D.7.1, once this is done no further SWS wage assessment is required for a period of three years following this unless clause D.7.2 applies.

H.2.3 Until a SWS wage assessment occurs, despite clause 15.2 an employee shall remain on their current wage rate provided that the rate is adjusted by the same percentage amount and at the same time as any adjustment to the Grade 2 rate in this award as a result of any Annual Wage Review.

H.2.4 Any new employee must be subject to a SWS wage assessment in accordance with clause D.10.

Attachment B – Fair Work Commission – contact details

You can contact the Fair Work Commission between 9.00 am and 5.00 pm on ordinary working days.

If you need help to communicate with the Fair Work Commission, you can use the Translating and Interpreter Service on telephone **13 14 50**. If you have a hearing, sight or speech impairment, you can use the Speech-to-Speech Relay through the National Relay Service on **13 36 77**.

You can contact the Fair Work Commission through the following:

- Email: Inquiries can be emailed to enquiries@fwc.gov.au
- Telephone: The national Fair Work Commission Help Line number **1300 799 675**.
- In person: Visit the Fair Work Commission office in your capital city.

Contact details for the Fair Work Commission offices in your capital city are available on the [Fair Work Commission](#) worksite

Attachment D – SWS Wage Assessment Agreement

Supported Wage System Initial Wage Assessment Agreement

When completed this form must be sent by the employer to the Industrial Registrar at the following address:

Name	Address
Fax/email	

The undersigned parties agree: to recommend a wage of: the name of the award or agreement which relates to the position is: the classification of the position within the award: the review date of the above wage rate		of the appropriate award or agreement rate for the relevant classification of work.
	/ /	

Enter details of all parties involved at the workplace in arriving at this assessment.

Employer

Name:

Australian Business Number (ABN):

Physical address:

Postal address (if different to physical address):

Telephone:

Contact:

Fax/e-mail:

Comments (optional):

I verify the job is covered by an award or legal industrial agreement which contains SWS Provisions.
If you are unsure go to www.fwc.gov.au or contact the Fair Work Infoline on 13 13 94.

Employer representative to print name and sign:

Date:

Employee

Family name:

Given names:

Date of birth:

Postal address:

Telephone:

Comments (optional):

Name of Nominee, if applicable:

Signature of employee (or nominee):

Date:

Employers: Please file your copy of this agreement appropriately for future reference. Page 1 of 2 on 16/02/2018 10:30:33 AM

Supported Wage System
Initial Wage Assessment Agreement

Union

Union name:

Postal address:

Telephone:

Fax/e-mail:

Name of union representative:

Comments (optional):

Signature of union representative:

Date:

 / /

Assessor

Name:

Organisation name:

Postal address:

Telephone:

Fax/e-mail:

Comments (optional):

Signature of Assessor:

Date:

 / /

Information for the Industrial Registrar - To be completed by employer

Assessment
productivity %
(from page 1)

Minimum hourly
award or enterprise
agreement rate for
this position

Hours
Employee will
work per week

Employee's gross
earnings per week
at expected hours

Actual agreed
Amount

A	B	C	D	E
	x		x	
=				

To which Industrial Registrar will this form be sent?
(e.g. Australian Industrial Registrar, Sydney):

It is the responsibility of the employer to ensure the calculated rate of pay is correct, and that it is paid in line with any annual wage increases. Please ensure a copy of the agreement is forwarded to HR/Payroll for processing.

Date this form sent to Industrial Registrar:

 / /

Signature of employer:

Date:

 / /

Form completion: If required by the Award or Agreement, original to be sent by the employer to the relevant Industrial Authority. Copies are provided to all signatories to the Wage Assessment Agreement, and the employee's employment service provider if requested.

What to do if circumstances change?

- | | |
|--|--|
| <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Significant changes to work tasks or productivity New Employer entity | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Employment has ended Employment Award/Agreement no longer contains SWS provisions |
|--|--|

If any of the above changes occur then please inform the Department's Assessment Team by
Phone on 1800 065 123

Employers: Please file your copy of this agreement appropriately for future reference. Page 2 of 2 on 16/02/2018 10:30:33 AM

Attachment E - Glossary

Approved NPA assessor is a person who has been approved by the Department of Social Services to conduct SWS assessments.

Applicant is a person who submits an application for the Supported Wage System. This is usually an ADE or an employer who is eligible to use the SES Award.—

Award is an instrument that prescribes the terms and conditions under which a particular category of employee is employed.

Award Wage is the minimum wage, fixed by an award, certified agreement or enterprise agreement, to be paid to employees for performing specified work under conditions of full productivity.

Benchmark the minimum level of performance that would be expected from an employee who is paid the full award rate of pay. A standard or point of reference that will be used to compare an employee's work performance and productivity. A specific indicator used to calculate the time taken or task output in relation to agreed performance standards.

Bias is a tendency to arrive at a decision that has been influenced by views or beliefs held by the assessor and not based on fact.

Centrelink is an Australian Government agency that delivers a range of government services to the Australian community. These services are designed to help people to become self-sufficient and to support those in need. Centrelink is responsible for the delivery of all income support payments.

Conflict of interest a situation where a Provider engages in an activity or obtains any interest or benefit that may interfere with or restrict the Provider in performing their role fairly and independently.

The Department is the Australian Government Department of Social Services and is responsible for the administration of the Supported Wage System assessments.

Disability has the same meaning as defined under section 4 of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*.

Disability Support Pension (DSP) is an income support payment and may be payable in respect to a person if they have an illness, injury or disability and are:

- aged 16 or over and under Age Pension age, or
- assessed as having a physical, intellectual, or psychiatric impairment and
 - unable to work, or to be retained for work, for 15 hours or more per week at or above the relevant minimum wage within the next 2 years because of the impairment, and
 - have actively participated in, or completed a Program of Support if required
- meet the residency requirements
- meet the income and assets test for your situation, or
- permanently blind.

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) is Commonwealth legislation that makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person on the basis of their disability in prescribed areas of public life, including employment and access to premises.

Duties are the work outcomes expected by an employer from an employee in a particular job. A duty can comprise one or a number of separate, identifiable measurable tasks. For example, a duty for a room attendant in a motel may be 'to clean the room' while the tasks that make up this duty include 'making the bed', 'dusting the furniture' and 'vacuuming the floor'.

Employment Services Providers are a national network of community and private organisations dedicated to placing people into employment.

Fair Work Commission is the national workplace relations tribunal. It is an independent body with power to carry out a range of functions relating to the safety net of minimum wages and employment conditions, enterprise bargaining, industrial action, dispute resolution, termination of employment and other workplace matters.

Impairment Rating measures how much a particular impairment affects a person and their ability to work. The Social Security Act contains provisions that enable the Minister, by legislative instrument, to determine tables relating to the assessment of work-related impairment for DSP and to determine rules that are to be complied with in applying the impairment tables. The current instrument is the *Social Security (Tables for the Assessment of Work-related Impairment for Disability Support Pension) Determination 2011*. The tables describe functional activities, abilities, symptoms and limitations and assign ratings to determine the level of functional impact of impairment on a person's ability to work. To qualify for DSP, a person's impairment must be of 20 points or more under the Impairment Tables.

Inclusive Employment Australia is a mix of large, medium and small for profit and not for profit organisations that are experienced in supporting people with disability to find employment as well as assisting employers to put in place practices that support the employee in the workplace.

Industrial Agreement is a legal document that sets out the employees' rights and conditions at work.

Industrial Instrument is an award (including a modern award), an enterprise agreement, a public sector industrial agreement, a former industrial agreement, a contract determination or a contract agreement.

JobAccess is the national hub for workplace and employment information for people with disability, employers and service Providers.

Job Analysis is a systematic procedure for describing a job in terms of duties and tasks performed and the knowledge, skills and abilities required to perform the tasks successfully.

Job at Risk is where the continued employment or job placement of an employee at full award wages is threatened, usually as a result of the effects of a physical, intellectual or psychiatric disability.

Job Design is the way in which a job is structured in relation to tasks, duties and the skills required to perform them.

Job Match is the degree of fit between a job and the nature of the employee's disability, their personal preferences and skills.

Nominee is a person nominated by the employee to assist in the employment process and to ensure the best possible outcomes are achieved for that person or, for the purposes of signing the forms, a person whom the employee nominates in accordance with relevant state or territory laws to sign documents on their behalf.

Open employment refers to employment where the jobs are open to all people, with or without disability. People with disability who wish to receive assistance to find employment in open employment can register with an Inclusive Employment Australia Provider.

Performance Standards provide the employee with specific performance expectations for each duty and task. They are the observable behaviors and actions that explain how the job is to be done, plus the results that are expected for satisfactory job performance. For example, they describe all task details required for benchmarking, including task breakdown, start and end points, how the task is completed, the quality and quantity required, details of any tools/machinery used, relevant environmental conditions (where the task is performed), and any conditions that need to be in place before or after the assessment.

Pre-Assessment Check is an investigation and judgement about the appropriateness of the job

placement, including ensuring the person has had adequate training and that all necessary reasonable adjustments to lessen the impact of the disability have been made. The checks are made by those involved in the placement process before a wage assessment proceeds.

Productivity or Productive Capacity is the work output of an individual employee over a predetermined time period. This is obtained by assessing a co-worker (where available) performing the same task to obtain the performance standard. Quality of output is taken into consideration, as the output is not just about the number of items produced (for example) but also the number produced that meet the agreed performance standards.

Pro-Rata Award Wage is the assessed percentage of the award wage. It is paid by the employer to the work on completion of the SWS wage assessment.

Reasonable Adjustment is an alteration or modification made to the workplace to assist an employee with disability to participate in employment on the same basis as others. An adjustment is reasonable under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)* if it does not impose an unjustifiable hardship on the employer.

Review Date is the date when an employee who is employed under Supported Wage System is due to have a SWS assessment to review their productivity.

Superannuation Guarantee is a specially established employer-supported superannuation contribution.

Supported Employment Services are generally not for profit organisations providing supported employment opportunities to people with disability. Supported Employment provides a wide range of employment opportunities and operate within a commercial context.

SWS Schedule is a schedule included in most modern awards that is one method of providing the legal basis for payment of a pro-rata wage. The SWS Schedule sets out the terms and conditions for the payments of a supported wage to an employee who is unable to work at the award wage because of the effects of a disability.

SWS Wage Assessment Agreement is an agreement which is entered into where the wage assessment results in a supported wage. All parties involved in the SWS assessment are to agree on the wage amount and date for review prior to signing the Wage Assessment Agreement.

Tasks are the steps required to achieve specific outcomes or results in a job. Often a number of tasks will combine to form a 'duty'. Tasks should be considered separately within a duty when, because of a significant time weighing and productivity difference between them, a distortion of the wage would result if the tasks were combined into one duty.

Trial Period is a provision that has been made in the SWS Schedule for the employee to undertake a trial period before the wage assessment. The Trial Period usually includes specialised on-the-job-training in addition to any other standard training provided by the employer. The Trial Period is a minimum of 13 weeks and a maximum of 26 weeks.

Unjustifiable Hardship has the same meaning as defined under section 11 of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*. In determining whether an unjustifiable hardship would be imposed on the employer, all relevant circumstances of the particular case must be considered (including the factors set out in section 11 of the Act).

Validation is the analysis of the assessor data and the Workplace Data to establish if the data is representative and reflective of the employee's usual performance.

Wage Assessment is a process for determining an appropriate productivity-based wage for people with disability whose work productivity is reduced as a result of disability. Assessment is based on productivity in a specific job. Assessments are not transferrable between jobs.

Work Order is a contract for SWS Providers to conduct a supported wage assessment.

Workers Compensation is provided by employers for all employees. This also covers the SWS Trial Period.

Workplace Assessment is where the NPA assessor visits the workplace and conducts pre-assessment checks and an assessment of work productivity.

Workplace Data is collected by the employer and is the productivity data and information related to the employee's duties and tasks, including at least three timings of each task. The employer may collect workplace Data prior to the SWS assessment.