


Welcome to today's Webinar

***Working with Multiple Sclerosis***

Your Presenter is Maria Nguyen  
Your Facilitator is Nicola Graham

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**Acknowledgement**



We acknowledge and pay respect to the traditional custodians past and present on whose lands we meet today.

We acknowledge the deep feelings of attachment and the relationship of Aboriginal people to country and respect the cultural authority of the elders in each community

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Introduction to Presenter 

Maria is an Occupational Therapist working in the Employment Support Service in Sydney.



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Webinar Plan 

- Managing your symptoms at work
- Ergonomic workstation set up
- Disclosure and understanding your rights
- Entitlements and benefits
- Working during COVID-19
- Where to seek advice

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## MS in the Workforce

- Over 24,000 people in Australia have MS and over 2 million worldwide.
- 87% are working age (20 – 40 years old) at the time of their diagnosis
- The symptoms most strongly influencing people’s ability to work effectively were found to be **fatigue and cognitive** symptoms, and **pain and sensory** symptoms.  
(Closing the gap: Longitudinal changes in employment for Australians with MS)


**Managing symptoms assists with managing Work**


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## Symptom Management

Consider the symptoms you experience and how they impact on working?



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**Poll** 

Which symptom causes the biggest barrier for you at work?


- A. Fatigue – I am unable to manage full time hours
- B. Cognition – I can't keep on track with tasks and forget easily
- C. Physical – I can't move around the environment safely
- D. Heat sensitivity- I can't manage in the heat so have difficulty commuting to and from work or working outdoors
- E. Sensory issues- I experience altered sensation (pins and needles, numbness or sensitivity to textures/temperatures)
- F. Pain- I experience nerve or muscular pain


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**Symptoms impacting work** 

- Fatigue
- Cognitive function including memory
- Mobility
- Visual Disturbance
- Bladder & Bowel Changes
- Heat Sensitivity
- Depression



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## Top tips for managing fatigue

- Review your routine before work, at work and after work
- Simplify tasks, work processes and environment
- Schedule and take short breaks throughout the day
  - Set a timer to remind you
  - Move away from you desk space regularly
  - Take a break before you get tired

**Small changes can make a difference!**

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## Top tips for managing cognitive issues

- Plan and prioritise
- Make use of post it notes, diaries and your calendar
- Complete higher cognitive demand tasks when you are least fatigued
- Complete one task at a time – break task into smaller components
- Move to a quieter space or take a break
- Give yourself extra time to complete demanding tasks
- Ask colleagues to email you reminders and log these into your calendar
- Ask colleagues to give information pieces one at a time so you can write them down or act on them

**Go easy on yourself when you forget things - we are all human!**

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**Job Requirements** 

Can you perform the inherent requirements of your role?

**Job Description**

Inherent requirements

- Physical requirements
- Cognitive requirements

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**Staying at Work** 

Do not alter your working conditions, hours or consider leaving work before you have reviewed all options.




**More information – Superannuation Lawyers Berrill and Watson:**  
**W:** <https://www.berrillwatson.com.au/>  
**P:** (03) 9448 8048  
**E:** [info@berrillwatson.com.au](mailto:info@berrillwatson.com.au)

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## Working from home?



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## Ergonomic setup




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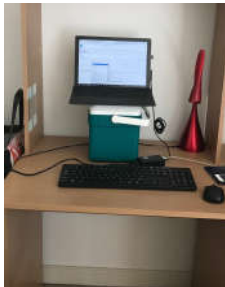
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## Ergonomic Equipment



- Chair with adjustable backrest
- Monitor or raised laptop
- External mouse and keyboard
- Footrest if your feet are not flat on the floor
- Headset for phone calls.
- Be creative!




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## How to not only survive but thrive!




1. Stick to a schedule / maintain routine / mentally distancing
2. Give yourself space
3. Don't let your usual practices go
4. Build Boundaries
5. Stay Connected


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**Disclosure** 

**It is a very personal choice whether to disclose in the workplace or not**

**Consider Who, When & What** 


Pros

- e.g. enables changes in the workplace and role


Cons

- e.g. may lead to people focusing on your health rather than your abilities

**Resources:**  
[https://www.msaustralia.org.au/sites/default/files/MSA\\_GuideForEmployees.pdf](https://www.msaustralia.org.au/sites/default/files/MSA_GuideForEmployees.pdf)  
<https://www.ms.org.au/employment-support/faq-s.aspx>

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**Understand your Legal Rights** 

- Discrimination
- Privacy and confidentiality
  - <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/>
  - <https://www.fwc.gov.au/about-us>
  - <https://www.fairwork.gov.au/how-we-will-help/templates-and-guides/best-practice-guides/workplace-privacy>

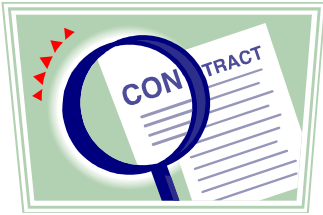
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## What are you entitled to?



- Reasonable Adjustments
- Leave
  - Sick leave
  - Annual leave
  - Unpaid leave
- Superannuation – Income Protection
- Union




**Resources:**  
<https://humanrights.gov.au/quick-guide/12084>  
<https://www.fairwork.gov.au/employee-entitlements>  
<https://www.fairwork.gov.au/employee-entitlements/industrial-action-and-union-membership/union-membership>

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## Other work-related assistance



- Job Access- Employee Assistance Fund
  - <https://www.jobaccess.gov.au/employment-assistance-fund-eaf>
- Employee Assistance Program (EAP)

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## Other Personal Entitlements/Benefits

**Centrelink Allowances and Payments include:**

- Mobility Allowance
- Disability Support Pension
- Essential Medical Equipment Payment
- Carer Allowance

**Government Entitlements**

- National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)
- GP Mental Health Care Plan
- Chronic Disease Management Plan
- Medical Cooling Concession
- Australian Disability Parking Scheme
- Taxi Subsidy Programs
- Car Tax Concessions and GST free cars

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## Poll

What is your current work arrangement?


- A. I alternate between working at the worksite and from home.
- B. I only work from home
- C. No changes due to COVID-19, my role does not allow me to work from home

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## What if my work changes during Covid-19?

- Your employer can ask you to do the following:
  - Reduce your working hours on a temporary basis
  - Work from home rather than attending an office
  - Work additional hours if reasonable
  - Work a mix of home hours and office hours alternating with colleagues in your team
  - Stand down from work if there is no work to be completed
  - Modify your work role within reason to enable you to continue working some hours
  - Workshare arrangements
  - Take leave if you are able to do so

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## What if I lose my job due to Covid – 19?

- Stimulus measures in place to support workers, landlords, business owners etc. Changes made regularly.
- Job Keeper payment available for eligible employers – new rates and new requirements for companies to meet
- Job Seeker Payment for those who unemployed and looking for work or doing approved activities to find a job. It's also for when you're sick or injured and can't do your usual work or study.  
Upcoming changes:  
<https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/individuals/subjects/payments-and-services-during-coronavirus-covid-19/if-you-get-payment/im-job-seeker>
- Go to Services Australia, My Gov and Treasury website:  
<https://treasury.gov.au/coronavirus>


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## Seeking advice

- MS Connect 1800 042 138
- Manager / Supervisor
- HR Department
- Union
- Fairwork Commission <https://www.fairwork.gov.au>
- Superannuation Fund Advisors
- Financial Advisors (Pro Bono Financial Advice Network (PFAN))
- Legal advice – contact lawyer (Contact MS Connect for contacts who can provide free legal advice for super and insurance for MS clients)



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## MS Employment Support Service

- Information, education, support to individuals
  - Currently employed with concerns
  - Job seekers
- Assessment (workplace, vocational, physical, cognitive)
- Recommendations and assistance on equipment, modifications and technology at work
- Advice and assistance on 'whole of life issues' impacting on employment
- Advocacy and links to other services
- Advice and support to liaise with managers and co-workers

(ESS is not an NDIS service and you can receive support from ESS and the NDIS at the same time)

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## Where is the MS ESS?

- Melbourne Metropolitan
- Geelong and Surf Coast (Rural Victoria)
- Sydney Metropolitan
- Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast and Brisbane Metropolitan
- Hobart Metropolitan
- Launceston Metropolitan
- Perth Metropolitan

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## What we require to register you for assistance at work

- Confirmation of diagnosis of Multiple Sclerosis ( Letter from GP/ neurologist / report etc)
- Evidence of current employment (eg copy of a month's worth of recent payslips or contract)
- Confirmation of Australian citizenship – copy of birth certificate / passport, permanent residency cert etc
- Centrelink Customer Reference Number (CRN)- if you have ever received Family Tax Benefits or Youth Allowance etc, you will have one of these. *The program isn't means tested*
- You must be working a minimum of 8 hours per week above minimum wage to be eligible

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## Contacts for MS ESS

VIC/TAS and NSW/ACT

- MS Connect 1800 042 138

QLD

- To make an appointment with one of our employment consultants please phone the NeuroAssist InfoLine on [1800 177 591](tel:1800177591) Monday – Friday between 8:30am – 5:00pm or contact us on [hello@msqld.org.au](mailto:hello@msqld.org.au). You can also request a call back from our NeuroAssist team.

WA


- Contact Service Delivery Manager – Leigh McCaffrey directly M. 0408 938 607

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## Take Home Message

- Be Proactive and Plan Ahead
- Disclosure is your choice
- Make sure you are well informed before making decisions that impact on work
- Seek advice before making any permanent changes
- Be aware of what allowances and entitlements that you are eligible for



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**Questions**




MS Connect  
1800 042 138  
[msconnect@ms.org.au](mailto:msconnect@ms.org.au)

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**MS Connect**



**10 reasons to call us:**

1. Up-to-date, evidence based information about multiple sclerosis
2. Expert advice on managing symptoms
3. Information about minimising the impact of multiple sclerosis
4. Support for people who are newly diagnosed
5. Information about treatment options
6. Education programs
7. Connections to other people living with multiple sclerosis
8. Referrals to appropriate services in your area
9. Extra support for you and your family
10. Respite options to give families short-term breaks




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## Peer Support




- ❖ 1:1 Phone Support
- ❖ Face to Face groups - *(temporarily converted to Telegroups)*
  - 2 in the ACT
  - 11 in Tasmania
  - 17 in NSW
  - 42 in Vic
- ❖ Telegroups
  - Currently running 12 telegroups
- ❖ Facebook groups
  - 3 groups – for people living with MS
  - for carers
  - for young carers – up to 25 years of age

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## Get Your Act Together



- Online Tool – designed to help you better manage your multiple sclerosis symptoms
- Focuses on some of the common symptoms of MS – emotions, fatigue, continence, cognition, pain and heat sensitivity
- Designed for people living in the ACT but includes useful information for all people living with MS
- Complete the tool to receive a personalized report (listing services, resources, tips etc)

**Visit [www.ms.org.au](http://www.ms.org.au) and search Get Your Act Together**

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## Registered NDIS Provider

MS is a registered NDIS provider in NSW, ACT, Vic and Tas and is approved to provide:  
*(Pls note: Face to face services/programs have been either converted to online programs or postponed)*

- Assistance with 'Access Request Forms', Access rejections and pre-planning
- Support Coordination – assistance to help make your plan active
- Plan Management
- Short term accommodation (Vic)
- Group activities – yoga, dance for health, exercise (NSW)
- Exercise Physiology (NSW)
- Specialist Continence Assessment (Vic)
- Occupational Therapy (NSW and Vic)
- Physiotherapy (NSW)

Want to learn more?  
Please call  
MS Connect  
1800 042 138

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## Thank you

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[msconnect@ms.org.au](mailto:msconnect@ms.org.au)

Please stay on after this webinar to complete a short survey.

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