

Starting work

A guide for new graduates



What should I be paid?

The Modern Award to be used when employing a speech pathologist is the Health Professionals and Support Services (HPSS) Award (2010). This outlines your minimum pay rates and conditions of employment. You can find the Award on the [Fairwork](#) website. Some organisations have negotiated agreements that will pay wages that are above the minimum requirements of the Award.

What are my employer's other legal obligations?

In addition to wages and employment conditions employer responsibilities include the need to:

- contribute to your employees' superannuation at a prescribed minimum rate;
- have workers' compensation insurance in place;
- maintain wages records for each employee;
- meet tax obligations relating to group tax, payroll tax and fringe benefits tax;
- register with the Australian Tax Office to deduct tax from employees' wages;
- take steps to prevent discrimination against employees on a range of grounds;
- maintain the workplace in a healthy and safe condition and comply with occupational health and safety laws;
- terminate employment where it becomes necessary, in a manner that is consistent with legislation.

Employer's should also have developed a set of policies and procedures that should be shared with you. Areas these might include but are not limited to:

- privacy
- induction
- confidentiality
- occupational health and safety
- social media
- safety for mobile clinicians
- infections control
- equal opportunity and anti-bullying
- performance management
- assessment and reporting
- developing therapy plans.

See SPA's Private Speech Pathology Policy and Procedure Manual under [Private Practice Essentials](#)

For state specific information about your responsibilities See: [Australian Government's Business website: Awards and Agreements](#)

Where can I find out more about superannuation?

Employers have to pay a superannuation contribution of 9.5% of an employee's ordinary time earnings (amount of money an employee is paid for their ordinary hours of work). For advice and information about tax requirements and super guarantee contributions:

See: [Fairwork: Tax and Superannuation](#) or contact the [Australian Tax Office \(ATO\)](#)

Can I be employed as a contractor?

Some private practices do have contractors in their workplace and it is possible for early career speech pathologists to work as a contractor. However, it is important you know the difference between a contractor and an employee and understand the implications on your job situation.

See: [SPA's FAQ: Employees vs Contractors](#)

What should be in my contract?

SPA strongly recommends members to sign a written employment contract. The employment contract needs to include whether the employer is engaged on a full-time, part-time, casual or fixed term basis (see below), and detail all terms and conditions of employment. You should receive a copy of the contract. The contract should include:

- commencement date of employment;
- the employee's duties;
- how many hours they will work;
- the days they will work;
- where they will work;
- how much they will be paid;
- their employment status;
- their employment conditions, including leave and other entitlements; and
- whether an industrial award or collective agreement covers the employment.

You should also consider:

- the position and duties of the employee;
- the remuneration package (e.g. use of a vehicle);
- if a trial period or probationary period applies;
- measures to protect the employer's business, e.g. confidentiality, intellectual property;
- provision of supervision and performance appraisal (and the frequency of this);

- termination of employment (notice, summary dismissal and redundancy);
- the application of policies and procedures;
- requirement to complete pre-existing injury declaration;
- process for review of contracts and amendments to contracts;
- use of and return of property to the practice post-employment;
- exclusive service clause; and,
- restraint of trade clause post-employment.

SPA encourages members to get advice if they have any questions about what is written in their contract.


For more information see [SPA's FAQ Employer/Contractor Contracts](#) 

What information may my employer request from me?

Some of the details you could be expected to provide to your employer include:

- Signed contract
- Personal details
 - Next of Kin and contact details
 - Bank details
- Tax File Number
- Superannuation
 - Fund details
- SPA certification
- Professional Indemnity Insurance
- Working With Children Check (WWCC) documentation
- Medicare provider Number
- ABN (if any)

What do I need to know about getting a Medicare Provider Number?

In order to be eligible for Medicare and Private Health Fund Provider Number Status, or deliver supports under the NDIS you need to be a Certified Practising Member of Speech Pathology Australia. You must have your own Medicare Provider number that is linked to the location where you work. It is illegal to bill under another speech pathologist's provider number. For more information see the documents under the [Medicare](#)  section of the SPA website.

Can I open my own private practice?


The Association encourages graduate speech pathologists to gain at least three years of experience before they commence working as a sole practitioner.

This experience may be gained by working for another private practitioner or in the public or community sector. If limited work opportunities in the public sector restrict your ability to secure the necessary experience and you therefore commence work as a sole private practitioner, you are encouraged to seek support from an experienced clinician.

Where can I get additional support?

Read the many documents that are available on the Professional Resources section of the SPA website.

Join one of [SPA's Online Member Communities](#)  including the Early Career Member community.

SPA's Practice and Clinical Support Advisor is able to answer any questions related to professional practice. Call National office or email: advisor@speechpathology.org.au 


As a membership benefit, Speech Pathology Australia members also have access to advice from [WorkPlacePLUS \(www.workplaceplus.com.au\)](#). This organisation provides support in the areas of industrial relations, human resource management, and employment law across Australia. They can also provide advice around pay and awards. Contact Anna Pannuzzo on 0419 533 434 or anna.pannuzzo@workplaceplus.com.au 

Contact SPA's Professional Support Advisor on psa@speechpathologyaustralia.org.au  for information and support about supervision and mentoring programs.

The Senior Advisor, Ethics and Professional Issues can provide advice and support to members regarding the ethical and professional conduct of speech pathologists. Contact National office with any questions.

What are the supervision requirements?

Speech Pathology Australia recognises the importance of supervision of clinical practice and has developed resources for members to support supervision processes in their practice. The Association's position is that an employer should provide appropriate supervision for employees and recommended minimum supervision requirements. Early career speech pathologists are encouraged to ask about the provision of supervision in their workplace.

For more information about the Role and Value of Professional Support, Supervision Standards and SPA's FAQ document about Supervision please see [Supervision information on the SPA website](#). 

Mentoring

The Speech Pathology Australia Mentoring Program is a member benefit, free to all SPA members. The mentoring program aims to provide members with individualised, targeted professional development and professional support, and will be of particular relevance and benefit at different times in your career. For more information about mentoring and to watch the free mentoring webinar please see the information on the [SPA website about Mentoring](#) 

Where can I find information to inform my clinical practice?

Speech Pathology Australia produces a range of practice documents to provide current information or opinion on clinical and workplace issues. Practice documents include: Clinical Guidelines, Position Statements and Core Association documents.

What is a clinical guideline?

The SPA Clinical Guidelines provides a comprehensive outline on clinical and workplace issues in a specific area of practice. They

- reflect available evidence at a point in time
- are written for speech pathologists however may also be referenced by management or consumers
- maybe utilised to inform, guide and monitor speech pathology practice at an individual and organisational level.

A clinical guideline may be complemented by a position statement.

See: SPA's [Clinical guidelines](#) 

What is a position statement?

A position statement outlines the position of the Association on a particular topic and has an intended audience of external stakeholders, consumers, employers, other professional associations, funding bodies and policy makers and speech pathologists. All position statements are on the SPA website.

See: [Position statements](#) 

All clinical guidelines should be read in conjunction with the Association core documents. The core documents are as follows;


- Code of Ethics
- Scope of Practice
- Parameters of Practice; and
- Competency Based Occupational Standards Entry Level.

See: [SPA's core documents](#) 

What do I need to know about professional development?

Professional development allows speech pathologists to ensure their professional knowledge remains current, relevant and evidence-based, as well as to extend their practice skills as a speech pathologist. SPA members, including early career speech pathologists are obliged to maintain professional standards and abide by the Association's Code of Ethics. The Code of Ethics binds each member to, "continually update and extend our professional knowledge and skills through activities such as participating in professional development, and/or engaging the support of a mentor or supervisor".

What is SPA's professional self-regulation program?

Professional development is required for members to meet the requirements of SPA's Professional Self Regulation (PSR) program to earn the Certified Practicing Speech Pathologist (CPSP) status. Activities that can be counted as professional development as part of SPA's Professional Self-Regulation program must be relevant to professional practice as a speech pathologist. Individual SPA members take responsibility for the content, relevance and quality of their own continuing professional learning and development. Each member needs to determine the professional areas he/she wishes to address in the continuing professional education he/she will undertake using professional development plans. For more details see SPA's information on the [Professional Self Regulation](#) 

Will my workplace cover my professional development requirements?

Funding and hours for professional development will vary depending on the early career speech pathologist's workplace/employer and can take many forms e.g. payment, certain number of hours of professional development per year, leave to attend professional development activities etc.

Employers are technically not obligated to provide professional development, unless this has been negotiated with a potential employer. Some employers may have policies stipulating the amount of professional development days/funding that an employee may receive. Employer may also pay for and provide time off for professional development if they would like to provide the employee with a specific skill.

If you are a contractor or casual employees, there is no obligation for employers to provide professional development;

the responsibility is on the contractor and casual employee to maintain professional development.

SPA members can advise their employers that in joining and/or renewing with SPA, the member agrees to abide by the Association's Code of Ethics (Speech Pathology Australia, 2010) that binds each member to commit to ongoing professional learning to ensure the speech pathologist's knowledge remains current, relevant and evidence based. Additionally, to be eligible for SPA Certified Practising membership and CPSP status (full and provisional), members must undertake professional development activities and meet the requirements of the Professional Self Regulation (PSR) program.

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Early Career Reference Group

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[ECRG webpage](#) 



For more information...



Quick links

Fairwork

Fairwork: Tax and Superannuation or contact the Australian Tax Office (ATO)

Mentoring

Medicare

Private Practice Essentials

Professional Self Regulation

SPA's core documents

SPA's Position statements

SPA's Clinical guidelines

SPA's FAQ Employer/Contractor Contracts

SPA's FAQ: Employees vs Contractors

Supervision

WorkPlacePLUS

SPA contacts



SPA's Professional Support Advisor

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