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MANAGER PLAYBOOK / AUSTRALIA

The Hospitality Scheduling Playbook.

A practical Australian manager's guide to calmer rosters, fairer shifts and better coverage.

Forecast the week. Match skills to service. Make changes clearly. Learn from every shift.

Good scheduling balances service demand, people, employment conditions and recovery. This playbook gives managers a weekly method they can use in a single venue or across several locations. It is operational guidance, not a substitute for checking the current award, registered agreement, National Employment Standards or state and territory work health and safety requirements that apply to each worker.

The seven-step weekly loop

1. **Forecast the work.** Break the week into service periods and note reservations, events, deliveries, preparation and closing tasks.
2. **Define coverage.** List the roles and skills needed in each period before assigning names.
3. **Check people and conditions.** Review availability, approved leave, employment type and the applicable award or agreement.
4. **Design sustainable shifts.** Allow for breaks, handovers, recovery, supervision and fair rotation.
5. **Publish one clear plan.** Give people the date, venue, role, start and finish time, and a way to raise a question.
6. **Manage changes deliberately.** Identify the gap, check the rules, confirm the replacement and notify affected people.
7. **Review what happened.** Compare the planned week with actual work, service pressure and staff feedback.

Team Time fit: Weekly scheduling, staff availability and notifications help share the plan. Shift summaries record actual start and finish times; managers can review them and add comments. Discuss operational issues with staff directly. The manager remains responsible for classification, pay, breaks, consultation, record-keeping and safety decisions.

1. Set the rules for your venue

Before making the roster, identify the industrial instrument for each role. A business serving food may be covered by the Hospitality Industry (General), Restaurant or Fast Food award, depending on its operations and the employee's duties. A registered agreement may apply instead. Do not copy a break table or roster notice period from another venue without confirming coverage. The Fair Work Ombudsman's award finder and current award text are the starting points.

Keep a short rule card for each role or employment arrangement. Include ordinary hours and span, minimum engagement, breaks, time between shifts, overtime triggers, public holiday provisions, how a regular roster may change and whether written agreement is needed. Recheck when a worker's duties, contract, venue or applicable instrument changes. The Hospitality Industry (General) Award, for example, has specific roster posting, seven-day change notice or mutual agreement, and between-shift provisions for full-time and part-time employees. Those provisions must not be treated as a universal hospitality rule.

Employers must keep time and wage records for seven years under the Fair Work system. The published roster is a plan; record actual hours and relevant pay details accurately in the required record system. Check public holidays for where the worker is based, not simply the venue visited that day.

Manager prompt: Which instrument covers this person, and which clause answers the question I am about to decide?

2. Forecast demand as work, not just sales

Use recent trade, bookings, functions, weather-sensitive patterns, local events and known deliveries to estimate demand. Divide each day into meaningful blocks, such as preparation, opening, lunch, changeover, dinner and close. For each block, list the work and the minimum capable team: a floor lead, customer-facing staff, kitchen preparation, drinks, payments, cleaning and handover as relevant. Count opening and closing work even when the doors are closed.

Create an expected scenario and a busy scenario. The difference reveals the roles that need backup. A quiet scenario can also help you plan useful tasks if trade drops, while respecting contracted or guaranteed hours and the applicable change rules. Watch for a single point of failure: one qualified closer, one trained supervisor or one worker who knows a particular procedure.

Use a simple skills matrix: **role or task | primary person | trained backup | training needed**. Review it monthly and after staff changes. A person marked available is not necessarily trained, rested or able to accept extra work under their employment arrangement.

Team Time fit: Use the weekly schedule to see planned shifts and open gaps; use staff availability to start allocation. Team Time does not forecast demand or certify skills automatically.

3. Compose a team that can deliver the shift

Assign the essential skills first, then fill supporting roles. Mix experienced staff with people learning a task, with enough supervision for the work and the time of day. Cross-train during manageable services before relying on a new skill for a peak event. Confirm any licences or authorisations separately from your scheduling view.

Look at the full sequence of work, not just the busiest hour. A well-staffed dinner may still fail if nobody can open, a handover is missing or the only closer is also expected to train someone. Add overlap where duties genuinely need two people. Decide who can step into each key role if a worker is absent.

Fairness is easier to discuss when it is visible. Over several roster cycles, compare late closes, early starts, weekends, public holidays, emergency cover and preferred shifts. Rotate demanding assignments where skills, preferences and employment terms allow. Explain exceptions to the team and make a training plan that broadens the backup pool.

Manager prompt: If one person cannot attend, which task stops, and who can safely take it on?

4. Design breaks, recovery and fatigue controls

Plan breaks into the coverage model. Identify who covers each station while its usual worker rests, and what to do if service delays a planned break. The applicable award or agreement determines break entitlements. Hospitality, Restaurant and Fast Food award break tables differ, and actual hours worked can change what is due. Check the current instrument and record what actually happened.

Scan the whole roster for close-to-open sequences, consecutive late nights, extended hours, split shifts, long travel after work and periods with too few people to take breaks. Safe Work Australia's model fatigue code identifies work hours, shift design, staffing and actual time worked as important risk factors. The model code's legal status depends on jurisdiction; check the adopted local requirements and manage risks in consultation with workers.

Availability is useful but does not establish fitness for work. Ask staff about constraints that affect a roster in practice, including transport and caring responsibilities. Have a clear route for someone to raise a fatigue concern before and during a shift. Adjust staffing or work, rather than relying on a tired worker to push through.

Team Time fit: Availability and upcoming-shift views help managers see a proposed sequence. Recorded shift times can show a late finish; ask staff directly about delayed breaks or pressure and use the required record system for break details. Team Time does not automatically verify award breaks or fatigue risk.

5. Publish, consult and change with care

Publish one approved version with names, venues, roles and start and finish times. Tell the team when the next roster normally appears and who owns corrections. Check the applicable award or agreement for posting, notice, agreement and consultation requirements before changing a roster. A proposed change to a regular roster or ordinary hours generally requires information to affected workers, an invitation to share its impact, including family or caring responsibilities, and consideration of their views. A specific consent requirement still applies where the instrument requires it.

For an unplanned absence, follow this sequence:

1. **Define the gap:** exact date, venue, role, skill and hours.
2. **Check the options:** availability, training, existing hours, break and recovery implications, and the applicable instrument.
3. **Ask and confirm:** distinguish a request from an approved change; do not show a tentative cover as final.
4. **Update and notify:** make the schedule the current version and tell the original worker, replacement and supervisor.
5. **Record the outcome:** capture actual hours, missed or moved breaks, and the reason for the change in the appropriate systems.

Public holidays deserve an earlier conversation. An employee has a right to be absent on a public holiday; an employer may make a reasonable request to work, and an employee may have reasonable grounds to refuse. Check the location of the worker's base, the applicable instrument and the individual circumstances. The right to disconnect also means an employee may refuse to monitor, read or respond to out-of-hours contact unless that refusal is unreasonable. Do not use a broadcast message as an assumption that everybody is on call.

Team Time fit: Weekly scheduling and notifications can share the confirmed change. They do not replace consultation, consent or accurate time records.

6. Build peak-period cover before the rush

Several weeks ahead of a known peak, map likely demand and public holidays. Request updated availability with a clear deadline, confirm leave decisions, and identify a trained backup for each critical role. Work through a busy scenario and a one-person-absent scenario. Cross-train before the event and identify who approves changes on each day.

During the peak, keep a short daily check: today's gaps, break cover, who worked late yesterday, the supervisor on duty and the backup contact route. After each service, note one thing that altered the planned staffing. Repeated emergency calls can mean the original forecast, skills mix or availability deadline needs changing.

Do not let a seasonal surge hide a long run of heavy shifts for the same workers. Review actual hours, recovery and the pattern of weekend or holiday allocation across the whole peak, not one roster at a time.

7. Review useful measures without reducing people to numbers

A weekly review should answer whether the roster helped the venue run well and what to adjust. Use a few measures with a clear definition:

Measure	Simple definition	What a change may suggest
Open-shift rate	Unfilled required shifts before publication / required shifts	Forecast or availability gap
Late-change count	Approved shift changes after publication	Unstable demand or cover process
Break exceptions	Shifts where a planned break was delayed or missed	Coverage or service-pressure issue
Hours variance	Actual hours minus rostered hours	Work running longer or inaccurate estimates
Skill coverage	Peak blocks with a primary and trained backup	Resilience or training gap

Look at trends, not a single bad night. Add worker feedback and service context before drawing conclusions. A low labour figure can coexist with rushed service and missed breaks. Do not treat a shift summary as a payroll record unless your record process actually captures the legally required detail. The Fair Work Ombudsman specifies the records employers must keep.

Team Time fit: Compare recorded shift times with the plan, and let managers add comments during summary review. Gather service observations from staff directly before adjusting the next schedule. The summary flow does not collect staff handover notes. Team Time does not claim built-in payroll analytics, legal compliance checks or automatic rostering optimisation.

Weekly manager checklist

- ☐ Confirm bookings, events, deliveries, leave and likely demand for each service period.
- ☐ List required roles and the skill or authorisation needed for each.
- ☐ Review staff availability and any written part-time arrangements.
- ☐ Check the correct award or agreement for hours, breaks, overtime, notice and public holidays.
- ☐ Add real break cover, handovers, opening and closing work.
- ☐ Scan for fatigue patterns and rotate demanding shifts where practicable.
- ☐ Confirm a trained backup for each critical task and an owner for change requests.
- ☐ Publish one clear roster and invite questions through an agreed channel.
- ☐ For changes, consult or obtain consent where required, then update and notify.
- ☐ Compare actual hours and operational feedback with the plan before next week's roster.

Copyable weekly planning template

Complete one row for each service block. Add your venue's own payroll and compliance checks alongside it.

Day / period	Demand signal	Required roles and skills	Assigned / backup	Break and handover plan	Rule or risk to check
Mon lunch	Bookings + typical trade	Floor lead, service, kitchen	Names + backup	Stagger meal breaks	Part-time availability
Fri dinner	Function + walk-ins	Lead, bar, floor, kitchen, closer	Names + backup	Add peak overlap	Finish-to-next-start
Public holiday	Reservations + event	Qualified lead and full service mix	Ask and confirm	Protect breaks	Reasonable request; rates

Five-minute handover: What changed from the plan? Was a break delayed? Did actual hours differ? Which skill was missing? What should the next roster do differently?

Put the method to work with Team Time

Team Time gives organisers a weekly scheduling view, lets team members share availability, communicates shift updates, and records submitted shift times for manager review. It gives the team a common place to see what is coming and compare planned and actual shift hours. Use this playbook and direct staff conversations to make the staffing and employment decisions around that shared view.

Ready to make the next week clearer? Return to the [Team Time landing page](#) to explore the product. Demo booking details are being prepared. Invited members can register with their invitation link. Bring a recent roster and one difficult service period when you speak with the team: they make the best starting point for a useful walkthrough.

Official sources and checking date

Links checked 19 October 2026. Awards, guidance and local work health and safety rules can change; verify the current instrument and jurisdiction before acting.

- [Fair Work Ombudsman: finding the right award](#)
- [Fair Work Ombudsman: hours of work, breaks and rosters](#)
- [Fair Work Ombudsman: rosters](#)
- [Fair Work Ombudsman: consultation and cooperation](#)
- [Fair Work Ombudsman: public holiday work requests](#)
- [Fair Work Ombudsman: public holidays by location](#)
- [Fair Work Ombudsman: right to disconnect](#)
- [Fair Work Ombudsman: record-keeping](#)
- [Hospitality Industry \(General\) Award 2020](#)
- [Restaurant Industry Award 2020](#)
- [Fast Food Industry Award 2020](#)
- [Safe Work Australia: Model Code of Practice, Managing the risk of fatigue at work](#)