

Dog and Cat Management Board

Accreditation of Assistance Dogs Policy



Government of South Australia
Dog and Cat Management Board

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Policy

1. Legislative Context

Assistance dogs are trained to assist a person living with disability, and when accompanied by that person, are entitled to access public places where a dog would not ordinarily be allowed e.g. public transport, supermarkets, restaurants, national parks etc.

Section 21(1) of the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995* (the Act) allows the Dog and Cat Management Board (the Board) to accredit an 'assistance dog'.

2. Purpose

The purpose of this policy is to:

- (a) Set out the requirements that a dog and handler must meet for a dog to be accredited as an 'assistance dog' by the Board; and
- (b) Ensure that dogs the Board accredits as 'assistance dogs' have a standard of hygiene and behaviour suitable for access to public places where dogs are not ordinarily allowed.
- (c) Encourage the use of force free trainers

3. Definitions

Approved Assessor	A person approved by the Board to conduct the Public Access Test
DCM Unit Staff	Department of Environment and Water staff supporting the Board
Disability	Refer to the definition in the <i>Equal Opportunity Act 1984</i>
Force Free Training	No force or positive punishment is used to train a dog.
Dog	Canis Lupus Familiaris
Negative Punishment	Removing something to decrease the likelihood of a behaviour occurring (e.g. no longer giving food when begging)
Negative Reinforcement	Removing something to increase the likelihood of a behaviour occurring (e.g. removing pressure from a collar when a dog stops pulling). This method usually requires something aversive to be taken away and should not be used for assistance dogs.
Positive Punishment	Adding something to decrease the likelihood of a behaviour occurring (e.g. shouting, hitting). This method of training should not be used for assistance dogs.
Positive Reinforcement	Adding something to increase the likelihood of a behaviour occurring (e.g. food, praise)
Public Place	A place accessible to the general public
Public Transport	A vehicle accessible to the general public
The Act	<i>The Dog and Cat Management Act 1995</i>
The Board	The Dog and Cat Management Board
The Handler	The registered owner of the dog
The Regulations	<i>The Dog and Cat Management Regulations 2017</i>

Terms are defined as per the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995* unless otherwise stated.

4. Scope

This policy applies to a handler applying to the Board for accreditation of an assistance dog under the Act.

This policy does not apply to the accreditation of dogs by any Prescribed Accreditation Bodies other than the Board.

Accreditation of an assistance dog under section 21A of the Act relates specifically to the state of South Australia.

Policy Implementation

Prior to application, handlers are encouraged to familiarise themselves with the Act and Regulations, this policy, the Board's position statement on force free training, relevant forms and information available on the Board's [website](#).

5. Suitability of the handler

A handler seeking to have their dog accredited must be able to prove the need for an assistance animal by completing the Medical Report included in Part B of the Accreditation of Assistance Dog Application, or providing equivalent evidence from a registered medical practitioner stating that the applicant has a disability and needs an assistance dog to alleviate the effects of that disability.

The handler must be able to competently manage their dog in public places and, with their dog, be able to pass all elements of the Board's Public Access Test.

The handler must be 16 years of age or older.

If the handler is not the registered owner of the dog, DCM Unit Staff will manage the administration of this on a case-by-case basis.

6. Suitability of the dog

The dog must be:

- Compliant with the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995* (i.e. desexed, microchipped, and registered);
- Examined by a veterinarian to certify the fitness of the dog;
- Not a prescribed breed under the Act;
- Not be subject to a Control Order under Section 50 of the Act.
- Not less than two years of age.

The dog must have undertaken training to be able to alleviate the effects of the handler's disability, and have standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for an animal in a public place.

A person with qualifications, experience and knowledge in dog training must verify the following:

- The dog has been trained to perform tasks that alleviate the effects of the handler's disability;

- The dog is reliable and has standards of behaviour and hygiene that are appropriate for an animal in a public place;
- The dog is trained to a level where it can pass all elements of the Public Access Test;
- The trainer and handler use force-free dog training and positive reinforcement methods;
- The handler can competently manage their dog in public places and is able to work with the dog through all elements of the Public Access Test.

The Board's position on dog training is that a commitment to positive reinforcement training is an aspect of being a responsible dog owner. The Board does not condone training methods that cause a dog to feel pain, fear, aggression or anxiety.

7. Approved Assessor(s)

The Dog and Cat Management Board may appoint Approved Assessors to carry out Public Access Tests on its behalf.

On arrival at the Public Access Test, the Approved Assessor will:

- Identify themselves to the handler with a Board-issued identification card;
- Identify the handler and the dog as specified on the application;
- Explain each task in the Public Access Test;
- Decide when, where and how the testing will be carried out, accounting for the handler's disability; and,
- Ensure that the testing process and grounds for termination are understood by the handler.

The Approved Assessor has the right to terminate, cancel or suspend the Public Access Test at any time.

Following the Public Access Test, the Approved Assessor will provide the Board with the copy of the Public Access Test. The handler will not receive a copy of the Public Access Test, however, the Approved Assessor may provide verbal feedback to the handler.

8. Application Process

Applications should be made on the Board's 'Assistance Dog Accreditation Application Form'.

Applicants should note:

- Only completed applications will be considered;
- Applicants may be asked to provide additional or supporting evidence;
- Evidence from the medical professional, vet, and trainer will be verified;
- Dogs and Cats Online will be reviewed as part of the application process to verify details and ensure compliance with the Act.

Where an application is compliant with this policy, the applicant will be offered the opportunity to undertake the Public Access Test. Information about the Public Access Test can be found within the sample document on the Board's [website](#).

Booking arrangements for the Public Access Test will be facilitated by DCM Unit Staff and the Approved Assessor(s).

9. Approval process

The Board will review the result of the Public Access Test and any report and recommendations provided by the Approved Assessor. If satisfied, the Board will accredit the dog and handler by issuing a DCMB identification card and updating the animal's Dog and Cats Online record to 'accredited'.

Undertaking the Public Access Test is not a guarantee that the Board will accredit an assistance dog. The Board reserves the right to decline to accredit any dog, and to place conditions on any dog it does accredit.

If a dog and handler fail any element of the Public Access Test, the Board's conditions for reassessment are:

- A minimum wait period of one (1) month from the original test date prior to undertaking another Public Access Test; and,
- A maximum period of six (6) months from the original test date. If this period expires without undertaking a further Public Access Test, the handler will be required to submit a new application.
- Evidence of additional training should be provided to the Board prior to arranging a further Public Access Test; and,
- It is at the Board's discretion whether an additional veterinary certificate of fitness is required prior to re-sitting of the Public Access Test (at the cost of the handler).

10. Duration of accreditation

In accordance with the Act, accreditation is for the lifetime of the dog, subject to the condition that the handler and dog undertake and pass the Board's Public Access Test (PAT) every three (3) years, to confirm they still meet the standards for public access rights. The Board may apply a different timeframe if this is recommended by an Approved Assessor.

A veterinary certificate stating the animal's fitness to undertake its duties as an assistance dog is required to be submitted prior to each Public Access Test undertaken under this section of the policy.

11. Revocation of the accreditation of an assistance dog

The handler of an accredited assistance dog must advise the Board if:

- They wish to retire the dog as an accredited assistance dog (e.g. due to ill health or advanced age of the dog, or advice from their veterinarian),
- The dog ceases to be physically or temperamentally fit to continue as an assistance dog, becomes subject to a control order or is expiated for an attack under the Act.

The Board will revoke the accreditation of an assistance dog, in accordance with section 21A(6) of the Act, if satisfied that:

- The dog's health, advanced age or behaviour prevents the dog from carrying out its functions as an assistance dog; or
- The owner of the dog is unable to maintain effective control of the dog; or,

- A Control Order in accordance with the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995* is placed on the dog or,
- The handler and dog fail to undertake ongoing Public Access Tests as required to continue to have accreditation.

12. Costs associated with accreditation

The handler is responsible for all costs associated with training, veterinary examinations and Public Access Test(s) to accredit their dog. The Board does not provide funding or concessions to handlers.

There is a fee to undertake the Public Access Test. This is set by and paid directly to the Approved Assessor.

13. Identification Card

Handlers of Board accredited assistance dogs will be issued a photographic identification card, as proof that the dog is accredited and has public access rights.

The identification card is only valid for the dog and handler stated on the card when they accompany each other. Accreditation cannot be transferred to another dog or handler.

If an identification card is lost, the handler should notify the Board as soon as practicable to arrange for a new one to be issued.

14. Public Access Rights

Board accreditation confirms access for handlers and assistance dogs to public transport and public places but does not provide access to private property. This includes private and strata title residences.

Board accredited assistance dogs do not automatically have the right to travel in-cabin on aircraft. The Board does not have the power to permit a dog to travel in-cabin on an aircraft, as this is a policy decision by individual carriers.

15. Historical Accreditation

Dogs and handlers accredited by the Board prior to 6 November 2018 retain accreditation for the life of the dog and are not required to re-sit the Public Access Test, unless the accreditation was granted subject to a specified period or is revoked by the Board under Section 21A of the Act. Dogs and handlers accredited after 6 November 2018 are subject to this policy.

16. Recognition of GHAD Accreditation

The Board recognises the Queensland *Guide Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009* (GHAD) accreditation system, as they use the same Public Access Test. As such, accredited handlers and dogs that have passed the GHAD Public Access Test within the last three (3) years will be

exempt from undertaking the Board's Public Access Test on relocation to South Australia for the duration of the GHAD accreditation.

To be acknowledged by the Board, the handler must submit parts A and F of the application form sans documentation and provide a copy of their GHAD identification card. This will be confirmed with GHAD as part of the approvals process. Under certain circumstances, the Board may approve the recognition of an assistance dog registered under the GHAD accreditation system prior to the requirement of registration with local government.

Upon expiration of the GHAD accreditation, the team will need to sit the Board PAT.

This exemption applies to handlers that are compliant with Board policy (i.e. 16 years of age or older).

17. Privacy Statement

Information voluntarily provided during this process will be collected and stored by the Board to enable processing of this application. The information will be provided to relevant staff and Board members where necessary. Any personal information provided by you may be stored in a database. The information will only be used for the purpose it was collected and in line with the South Australian Government's Information Privacy Principles.

APPENDIX 1

21A—Accreditation of assistance dogs

- (1) Subject to this section, a prescribed accreditation body may, on application, accredit a dog, or renew the accreditation of a dog, as an assistance dog.*
- (1a) A prescribed accreditation body (other than the Board) may only accredit a dog, or renew the accreditation of a dog, of a kind approved by the Board in respect of the prescribed accreditation body.*
- (2) An application for accreditation must—*
 - (a) be made to a prescribed accreditation body in the manner and form determined by the prescribed accreditation body; and*
 - (b) be accompanied by the fee fixed by the Board.*
- (3) An applicant must provide a prescribed accreditation body with any information required by the prescribed accreditation body for the purpose of determining the application.*
- (4) Accreditation of a dog remains in force for the life of the dog unless—*
 - (a) it is revoked by the Board or the prescribed accreditation body that accredited the dog; or*
 - (b) it is surrendered by the owner of the dog.*
- (5) The Board must maintain a register of dogs accredited under this section (which may be kept in the form of a computer record) that is to be readily available for public inspection without fee.*
- (6) The accreditation of a dog may only be revoked if the Board or the prescribed accreditation body that accredited the dog is satisfied that—*
 - (a) the dog's ill-health, injury or advanced age prevents the dog from carrying out its functions as an assistance dog; or*
 - (b) the dog is temperamentally unsuitable to continue to be accredited as an assistance dog; or*
 - (c) the owner of the dog is unable to maintain effective control of the dog (whether by command or by means of physical restraint).*
- (7) In this section—*
prescribed accreditation body*—the following are prescribed accreditation bodies:*
 - (a) the Board;*
 - (b) The Royal Society for the Blind of SA Inc;*
 - (c) the Guide Dogs Association of South Australia and Northern Territory Inc;*
 - (d) Lions Hearing Dogs Inc;*
 - (e) any other person or body declared by the regulations to be a prescribed accreditation body.*