ADELAIDE K9 SERVICES

ASSISTANCE DOG POLICY

Assistance Dog Policy

Adelaide K9 Services

Document Control

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Applies To: All staff, contractors, volunteers, clients and handler/dog teams.
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Disclaimer

This Assistance Dog Policy has been developed by Adelaide K9 Services to guide the training, welfare, management, and public access standards of assistance dogs and their handlers. It reflects current best practice and relevant Australian legislation. It is not legal advice. Adelaide K9 Services accepts no liability for use of this document outside our programs.

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Acknowledgements

Adelaide K9 Services acknowledges the work of trainers, behaviourists, veterinarians, researchers, disability advocates and organisations whose evidence and experience inform this policy. This policy adopts humane, evidence-based methods including positive reinforcement and the Least Intrusive, Minimally Aversive (LIMA) approach.

Purpose and Scope

The purpose of this Assistance Dog Policy is to define the standards, responsibilities and procedures governing the selection, training, welfare, assessment, public access, and retirement of assistance dogs trained or supported by Adelaide K9 Services.

This policy applies to:

- All Adelaide K9 Services staff, contractors and volunteers.
- All clients and handlers enrolled in assistance dog training.
- All dogs participating in assistance dog programs delivered by Adelaide K9 Services.

Quality Assurance & Continuous Improvement

Policies and procedures are reviewed on a two-year cycle, or earlier if legislation, science or industry practice changes. Feedback from staff, clients, handlers and relevant authorities is welcomed and may be sent to info@adelaidek9.com.au

Application Across Sectors

- Veterinary and animal care services
- Disability and aged care services
- Community and mental health services
- Education, therapy and public access environments

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1. Our Services

Adelaide K9 Services provides training services for assistance dogs in compliance with national standards and within a professional training environment.

1.1 Our Services

We empower our clients by assisting them to **train** and **certify** their own assistance dog.

What we can do:

- Assess our client's current dog, with a view of training them as an assistance dog.
- Assessing a prospective dog located by our client.
- Coaching our client to train their own assistance dog.
- Assisting with complex / role training.
- Preparing our client, and their dog, for the Public Access Test (PAT).
- Providing maintenance training and ongoing support.
- Assistance dog behaviour modification.

What we can't do:

- Guide dogs for the blind.
- Hearing dogs for clients with hearing loss.
- Medical alert dogs with an olfactory component (i.e. blood sugar).

1.2 Service Workflow

- Assessments of dog and handler.
- Foundation training (loose leash walking, basic obedience, attentiveness).
- Intermediate training (public access preparation, handler - dog teamwork).
- Advanced training (complex or specialised tasks).
- Ongoing assessments to confirm suitability at each stage.

2. Staff Qualifications

2.1 Accepted Qualifications

- Cert IV Animal Behaviour and Training
- Cert IV Companion Animal Services
- Diploma of Canine Behaviour Science Technology
- Karen Pryor Certified Training Partner
- Professional Canine Trainer – Accredited
- Professional Canine Behaviour Consultant - Accredited
- Certified Behaviour Consultant Canine – Knowledge Assessed
- Certified Professional Dog Trainer – Knowledge Assessed

2.2 Units of Competency

All staff and contractors delivering assistance dog training must hold, be working towards, or demonstrate competency in the following:

- **ACMADT301:** Selection of appropriate equipment for an assistance dog and handler.
- **ACMADT401:** Assessment of prospective handler's suitability.
- **ACMADT402:** Instruction of handlers with disability to train assistance dogs.
- **ACMADT403:** Training of dogs using operant and classical conditioning techniques.
- **ACMADT501:** Planning and conducting assistance dog training in specific and complex tasks.

2.3 Competency Assessment

If a staff member has not yet completed the required units competency can be demonstrated by:

- Previous employment, volunteer or paid, in a dog training role at an approved assistance dog provider.
- Previous experience in a training role leading to the accreditation of assistance dogs.
- Auditable relevant experience in real-world assistance dog training conditions (e.g., public settings, homes, and transport).
- Practical demonstrations are required for all key competencies.
- Documentation to be maintained in accordance with Adelaide K9 Services requirements.

Policy Position:

Adelaide K9 Services prefers staff who have invested in their education and are competent in modern force free training techniques.

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3. Assistance Dogs – Background

Assistance dogs, such as guide dogs have traditionally been employed to assist individuals with physical disabilities, such as vision or hearing impairments, and those with limited mobility. These dogs have played an important role in permitting many individuals to live as independently as possible. More recently, assistance dogs also support people with chronic mental illnesses or developmental disorders, such as autism, post-traumatic stress disorder, and generalized anxiety disorder. Some assistance dogs may even help inform their diabetic handler of a potentially fatal change in their handler's blood sugar levels or warn epileptic handlers that a seizure is forthcoming.

Growing evidence and awareness for how assistance dogs can improve the quality of life for people with disabilities is driving demand for more assistance dog trainers. It is a job role with one of the highest projected growth rates to 2024 which, at 10.5%, means there will be over 2,000 new entrants to the industry. Assistance dog trainers need to be skilled at working with both dogs and handlers with disabilities. It takes considerable investment to train an assistance dog, and not for profit organisations such as Assistance Dogs Australia and Guide Dogs Australia have waiting

lists of over two years. For this reason, many people are turning to independent dog trainers. It is important that people undertaking this work are adequately skilled, to support higher success rates, a better return on investment and wellbeing outcomes for the dog and the handler.

The expansion of assistance dogs into fields covered by the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) and other health streams has brought an increasing demand for greater regulation and skilled delivery of assistance dog training. There are also widespread calls by industry for nationally recognised training to ensure workers possess the core skills to prepare dogs and handlers for a variety of lifestyle and assistive purposes.

Trainers need to be skilled at training the dog/handler team to be ready for different tasks and environments (particularly but not exclusively in public access environments) and providing advice to handlers on how to form a long-term reciprocal relationship with a dog beyond the assistive support it can provide. This includes:

- Advising handlers on lifelong bonding activities and suitable training or enrichment activities for their dog.

- Identifying suitable dog behaviour training techniques that are positive rewards-based, force- and fear-free, while incorporating negative punishment and the underpinning theoretical principles of dog training and tasks, as well as advising handlers how to care for their dog.

- Relaying the importance of the monitoring and maintenance of dogs' work/life balance, condition, and physical, emotional, mental health needs to handlers.

Trainers need knowledge in canine behaviour, breed and breed type characteristics, dog and handler health and welfare, as well as the impacts of various human disabilities. They must also understand applicable legislation, risk management strategies, and public and workplace health and safety guidelines.

Assistance dogs provide essential support to individuals with disabilities, enabling independence, safety, and improved quality of life.

Examples include:

- **Guide Dogs** – support for individuals with vision impairment.
- **Hearing Dogs** – alert to important sounds.
- **Medical Alert Dogs** – detect blood sugar changes, seizures, or other health events.
- **Mobility Dogs** – assist with balance, walking, or retrieving objects.
- **Psychiatric Support Dogs** – assist people living with PTSD, anxiety, or autism.

Policy Position:

Adelaide K9 Services recognizes the difficulty disabled people have in accessing the life changing support of an assistance dog. We are also cognisant of the fact that this cohort may be vulnerable, and we must be careful to **under promise** and **over deliver**. Dogs are sentient beings, and not all dogs will be suitable to be trained as assistance dogs.

4. Human–Dog Bond

It is not known when the relationship between humans and dogs began but the estimates range from 10,000 to 30,000 years ago. The earliest remains of humans and dogs interred together date to 14,000 years ago.

It was only by the tiniest bit of genetic chance that our cross-species union was forged at all. Dogs and wolves share 99.9% of their mitochondrial DNA—the DNA that's passed down by the mother alone—which makes the two species nearly indistinguishable. But elsewhere in the genome, there are a few genetic scraps that make a powerful difference. On chromosome six in particular,

investigators have found three genes that code for hyper-sociability—and they are in the same spot as similar genes linked to similar personality traits in humans.

Our ancestors didn't know what genes were many millennia ago, but they did know that every now and then, one or two of the midsize scavengers with the long muzzles that came nosing around their campfires would gaze at them with a certain attentiveness, a certain loving neediness, and that it was awfully hard to resist them. So they welcomed those few in from the cold and eventually came to call them dogs, while the animals' close kin that didn't pull the good genes—the ones we would come to call wolves or jackals or coyotes—would be left to make their way in the state of nature in which they were born. 3 While it was once believed that all dogs descended from the grey wolf, newer research indicates that canines can trace their ancestry to prehistoric wolves that roamed Eurasia between 9,000 and 34,000 years ago. 4

Dr. James Serpell, director of the Center for the Interaction of Animals and Society at the University of Pennsylvania School of Veterinary Medicine, stated:

"We don't actually know why humans and wolves got together in the first place, but once that relationship was established, humans were selecting, very rapidly, for the most sociable wolves—the ones who responded to humans in this characteristically dog-like way," This was obviously something that humans valued from the get-go."5

Today, at least in areas populated by humans, dogs are the planet's most abundant terrestrial carnivore. The single species that is the domestic dog—*Canis lupus familiaris*—has been subdivided into hundreds of breeds, selected for size or temperament or colour or cuteness. What began as a mutual-services contract between two very different species became something much more like love. None of that makes a lick of sense, but it doesn't have to. Love rarely touches the reasoning parts of the brain. It touches the dreamy parts, the devoted parts—it touches the parts we sometimes call the heart. For many thousands of years, it's there that our dogs have lived.6

Other studies include that of Dr. Aubrey H. Fine and Dr Gregory Berns. Dr. Fine has written the 'bible' on animal assisted therapy, a book now in its fourth edition and Dr. Berns has taken us on the journey of evidence in terms of what happens in the dog's brain and how it matches the human brain response. Through his incredible work we know that our dogs love us. The Human Animal Bond Research Institute provides extraordinary information about the amazing difference animals make in the lives of their humans. Dr. Berns has a number of research articles available

where he has conducted awake fMRI on dogs to bring us scientific evidence explaining canine brain's responses to stimuli being remarkably similar to the human.

The foundation of work conducted by assistance dog handling teams such as *Both Ends of the Leash* centred around the human-animal bond.

Summary:

The **human–animal bond** is central to assistance dog partnerships. Adelaide K9 Services recognises that:

- The bond between dog and handler is a product of **thousands of years of co-evolution**.
- Dogs provide not only physical assistance but also **emotional and social support**.
- Handlers must be supported in nurturing this bond through enrichment, consistency, and positive reinforcement.

Research (Serpell, Berns, Fine, HABRI) demonstrates that dogs and humans share **neurological and emotional responses** that underpin the partnership.

Adelaide K9 Services policies emphasise force free, **relationship-based** training.

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5. Animal Welfare – Five Domains

Animal Welfare includes both the physical and psychological health of an animal. The definition in 'Understanding Animal Welfare' by David Fraser animal welfare incorporates three concepts:

1) Physical health and wellbeing.
2) Affective state, which includes emotions and other feelings such as thirst and hunger; and
3) Natural living, or if an animal is living according to what its natural state in the wild would be.

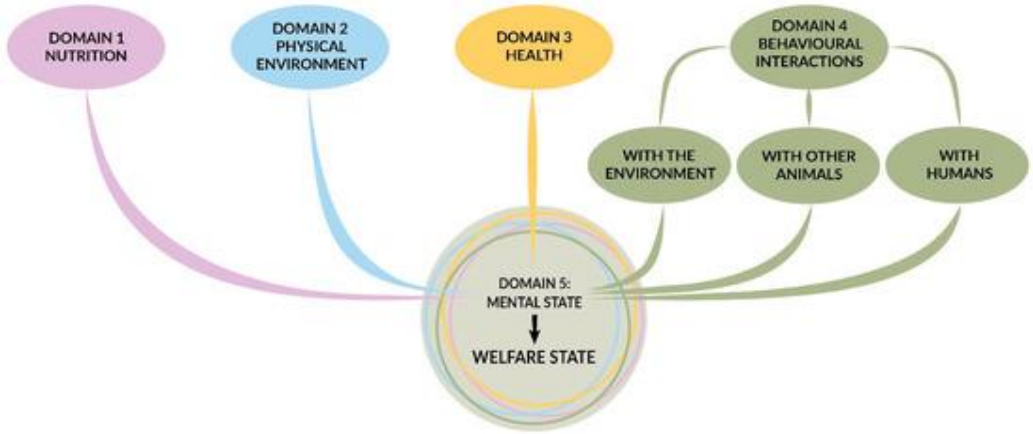
Animal welfare can also be defined using a Five Domains model developed by Mellor and Reid in 1994 and recently expanded to specifically include human-animal interactions.

According to the Five Domains model there are four physical or functional domains and one mental domain.

The domains are:

1. **Nutrition** – Access to clean water and good quality, balanced nutrition.
2. **Environment** – Safe, comfortable, and enriched living spaces, protected from weather and noise.
3. **Health** – Veterinary care, prevention of disease, and monitoring of wellbeing.
4. **Behaviour** – Opportunity to express natural behaviours, social interaction, play, and participate in positive training activities.
5. **Mental State** – The mental state is determined by the other four states.

The 2020 Five Domains Model for animal welfare assessment and monitoring



A means to promote positive welfare is to provide environmental enrichment to an animal. Environmental enrichment can be defined as a positive or enriching interaction between a response and an event, such as between a dog and a toy. Environmental enrichments for dogs can be classified into sensory, food-based, structural, manipulative/cognitive/tactile and social enrichment.

Sensory enrichment focuses on the stimulation of the animals' senses. You can divide it into four subcategories: visual enrichment, olfactory (smell & taste) enrichment, auditory (sound) enrichment, and tactile (touch) enrichment. These senses are all important means of communication and are routes of gathering information about its surrounding environment. As an essential form of enrichment, care needs to be taken when providing sensory enrichment. You are not always aware of what information you are communicating towards your animals. Most types of sensory enrichment are a passive form of enrichment.

Food-based enrichment can be defined as "the manipulation of food or method of providing food". This type of enrichment focuses on the food presentation to make feeding more challenging for the animal. A variety of feeding methods and food presentation encourages animals to work for their food. It can also be enriching providing a novel food item. The ultimate goal is to stimulate and extend the appetitive and consummatory behaviours of an animal. Often zookeepers provide puzzle feeders, which is discussed in cognitive enrichment.

Structural enrichment, also called 'physical habitat enrichment', is defined as "alteration of the physical elements of the enclosure". Its main goal is to stimulate exploratory behaviours to collect information. This enrichment is mainly provided to prevent boredom and keeps the animal physically healthy by encouraging it to become more active. This kind of enrichment, which is different from tactile enrichment, is important because it stimulates curiosity, interest, and development. Unfortunately, it is not often provided. The physical environment should be frequently altered and switched so animals do not become too familiar with their environment, which causes boredom and can eventually cause stereotyped behaviours.

Manipulative/Cognitive/Tactile enrichment is described as "cognitive and mental stimulation that requires problem-solving of different levels of complexity". Zookeepers spend a lot of time developing the most creative enrichment ideas, to keep animals mentally engaged. It focuses mainly on the mental health of animals. Most used devices are puzzle feeders, where animals are

cognitively challenged to be rewarded with food. With different objects, animals are stimulated for investigation and exploratory behaviours. Animals with a higher form of intelligence need to be more mentally stimulated to excite their cognitive abilities.

Social enrichment is focussed on organized interactions between conspecifics, interspecific or human-animal. Sometimes it is also possible to use a substitute as social enrichment (i.e., plush toy). A well-known and most common form of social enrichment is **animal training.** Training can be very beneficial for animal welfare by providing cognitive stimulation, increasing social play, decreasing inactivity, and mitigating social food reactivity during feeding.

Policy Position:

All assistance dogs under Adelaide K9 Services' care must be provided with **structured enrichment**, including:

- Sensory (smell, sound, touch, sight).
- Food-based (puzzle feeders, novel food items).
- Structural (safe spaces, variety in environment).
- Cognitive (problem-solving, training challenges).
- Social (play with humans, dogs, or enrichment substitutes).

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6. Types of Assistance Dogs

Adelaide K9 Services recognises several categories of assistance dogs, each trained to perform specific tasks to mitigate disability:

- **Guide Dogs** – Provide safe navigation for people with vision impairment, including obstacle avoidance and directional assistance.
- **Hearing Dogs** – Alert handlers to important sounds (alarms, phones, doorbells, crying infants) through touch and guidance.
- **Mobility Assistance Dogs** – Support individuals with limited mobility by retrieving items, opening doors, or providing physical stability.
- **Medical Alert Dogs** – Detect health changes such as hypoglycaemia, seizures, or allergic reactions and alert their handler.
- **Psychiatric and Developmental Support Dogs** – Assist people living with PTSD, autism, anxiety, or neurological conditions through grounding, interruption of harmful behaviours, or providing calm focus.

7. Legislative Framework

7.1 Commonwealth Law

Assistance dogs in Australia and people who utilise them are protected under the Federal (Commonwealth) **Disability Discrimination Act 1992** (DDA, 1992). An Assistance animal is defined under this act as:

9 (2) For the purposes of this Act, an assistance animal is a dog or other animal:

– accredited under a law of a State or Territory that provides for the accreditation of animals trained to assist a persons with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability; or – accredited by an animal training organisation prescribed by the regulations for the purposes of this paragraph; or trained: to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability; and to meet standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for an animal in a public place.

According to the Commonwealth Disability Discrimination Act 1992, there is no distinction made between a Guide Dog, Hearing Dog or other type of assistance Dog – they are all considered to be Assistance dogs. As such, from this point forward, the terminology "Assistance dog" will be used instead of distinguishing between the different types of Assistance dogs. The Human Rights Commission oversees discriminatory matters which includes discrimination assistance dogs, and their handlers may encounter while out in public.

7.2 South Australian Law

Weblink: Dog and Cat Management Board – Assistance Dogs

The Dog and Cat Management Board accredits assistance dogs under the **Dog and Cat Management Act 1995 (SA)**.

Assistance dogs, when accompanied by a disabled person, are entitled to access areas that a dog would not normally be allowed e.g., public transport, supermarkets, restaurants, national parks etc. Assistance dogs may be refused entry to hospital intensive care units and food preparation areas.

There is no definition or recognition of 'companion dog', 'therapy dog' or 'emotional support dog' in either Commonwealth or South Australian legislation.

In South Australia Assistance dogs can only be accredited under the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995* by either the Dog and Cat Management Board or the following prescribed accreditation bodies:

Royal Society for the Blind, Guide Dogs Australia, Lions Hearing Dogs, Assistance dogs Australia, Righteous Pups Australia, Vision Australia, Australian Veterinary Behaviour Services and Integra Service Dogs Australia.

On application and after passing a Public Access Test with a Board approved assessor. Dogs accredited under the Act are issued with handler ID cards. The accreditation expiry is listed on the card, and a renewal of the Public Access Test is required to continue accreditation.

Summary:

Under the **Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)**, an *assistance animal* is defined as a dog (or other animal):

- Accredited under State or Territory law, or
- Accredited by a prescribed training organisation, or
- Individually trained to:
  - Assist a person with a disability by alleviating the effects of the disability, and
  - Meet standards of hygiene and behaviour appropriate for a public place.

Policy Position:

Adelaide K9 Services requires all assistance dogs, and handlers, to comply with the rules and regulations in the Disability Discrimination Act. And in addition we acknowledge:

- There is no legislation for assistance dogs in training, we rely on the good will of business owners to allow us access for training. This public access is critical for us, and other assistance dog organisations, and must be protected and maintained by professional behaviour of our trainers, our clients, and any dog in our care.
- We will provide advice and assistance, but handlers are ultimately responsible for their dog's behaviour and hygiene, including during training.

7.3 Other States and Territories

Australian Capital Territory

Weblink: Assistance animals - City Services (act.gov.au)

To support and clarify this overarching legislation, the ACT Government has developed a legislative framework within Part 5 of the Domestic Animals Act 2000 (ACT) that allows for assistance animals to be accredited as meeting the ACT's public access standards. Once accredited, the Registrar of Domestic Animals may register the assistance animal and issue the handler with an ID card for up to two years. The standards of behaviour and hygiene for assistance animals in public places is listed within the regulations for the Domestic Animals Act 2000.

The ACT assistance animals' framework does not create new access rights. Under existing Commonwealth law people who rely on an assistance animal have the same rights of access as anyone else. The ACT framework clarifies the rights of access so that you have less risk of being turned away by businesses as they have assurance your animal meets standards of behaviour and hygiene for public places.

The rights of access for assistance animals which are accredited and registered under the ACT framework are further protected and promoted by a suite of penalties for businesses or individuals who refuse access. A business or individual who refuses a non-accredited assistance animal access to a public place may still be subject to repercussions under ACT and Commonwealth law.

New South Wales

Weblink: Assistance Animals - Office of Local Government NSW

Some animals are trained to provide assistance to people with a disability to help alleviate the effect of that disability. These assistance animals are not pets. They provide an important service that helps people to more fully participate in personal and public life activities with more confidence and independence. This website provides information on laws for assistance animals under the Companion Animals Act 1998 (NSW). See transport for NSW Assistance Animal Policy.

Other Government agencies can provide you with advice about how assistance animals are treated under other NSW laws.

Northern Territory

The Northern Territory Government information about assistance animals is currently under development.

Queensland

In Queensland, the **Guide, Hearing and Assistance dogs Act 2009 (QLD)** protects the public access rights of dogs and their handlers that have been through a certification process.

To gain certification, you must work with one of the following approved trainers or training institutions to train your dog and complete the public access test and certification process. You may then request the trainer to obtain a handler identity card for you, and a blue and white cloth badge for your guide, hearing or assistance dog to display on its coat or harness.

Weblinks:

Choosing a guide, hearing or assistance dog

Completing the public access test and certifying your dog | People with disability | Queensland Government (www.qld.gov.au)

In Queensland the Public Access Test (PAT) establishes a minimum standard for guide, hearing and Assistance dogs to be certified under the *Guide, Hearing and Assistance dogs Act 2009* (the Act).

"You must use an approved trainer or training institution to work with you to train your guide, hearing or assistance dog, take you and the dog through the PAT, and certify your dog.

A trained dog must be certified within 7 days after successfully completing the PAT. This will confirm your dog is safe and effective in a public place, public passenger vehicle, or place of accommodation, and is able to be physically controlled by you, as primary handler of the dog, or as a primary handler with the support of an alternative handler.

Trained dogs become certified when they:

- Perform identifiable physical tasks or behaviours to assist a person with a disability to reduce their need for support
- Have passed a pat conducted by an approved trainer or training institution within 7 days of certification and prior to requesting a handler identity card
- Are not a restricted breed under the *animal management (cats and dogs) act 2008* (pdf)
- Are de-sexed and vaccinated
- Have not been declared a dangerous dog under a local law.

Dogs must also undergo regular skill updating and testing to make sure they stay safe and effective in public places and public passenger vehicles.

To be eligible you need to:

- Have a disability as defined by the *Guide, Hearing and Assistance dogs Act 2009* (PDF)
- Rely on a guide, hearing or assistance dog to reduce your need for support
- Be able to physically control your dog, or identify an alternative handler to support you to control the dog
- Have your dog pass the PAT and be certified by an approved trainer or training institution.

Tasmania

Tasmanian governments online information is under development.

Weblink: View - Tasmanian Legislation Online

Dog users and trainers' rights under the Tasmanian **Guide Dogs and Hearing Dogs Act 1967**

Victoria

Weblink: Guide dogs, seeing eye dogs and Assistance dogs | Dogs | Animal Welfare Victoria | Livestock and animals | Agriculture Victoria

The Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (the Act) protects people with disabilities from discrimination. This includes protection from discrimination because a person has an assistance dog.

Employers, goods and service providers and others, must not discriminate against someone because they have an assistance dog. This means that a person with an assistance dog must generally be allowed:

- Onto transport.
- Into cafes.
- Into restaurants.

The Act specifically says that it is unlawful to refuse to provide accommodation to a person with a disability because they have an assistance dog. You also can't charge the person extra or ask them to keep the assistance dog somewhere else.

The Act doesn't apply this protection to other types of companion animals.

Guide dogs (and seeing eye dogs) are legally able to go to any event, business or premises in Victoria (except operating theatres).

This includes travelling on planes, and any form of public transport (taxis, buses, trams and trains).

It includes entering:

- Theatres.
- Restaurants.
- Supermarkets.
- Hotels.
- Retail stores.

These access rights apply to:

- Guide dogs.
- Guide dogs in training.
- Guide dog puppies.

The rights of guide dog users are covered under the Domestic Animals Act 1994 and the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 — both of which override the Health Act, which prohibits dogs from entering food premises.

Western Australia

Weblink: Assistance dog Approvals Policy (dlgsc.wa.gov.au)

The Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries provides an accreditation system for assistance animals in Western Australia under the provisions of the Dog Act 1976, with the authorisation card that is issued providing evidence that the dog is “accredited under a law of a State or Territory that provides for the accreditation of animals trained to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability”.

Policy Position:

Adelaide K9 Services will ensure that the advice we give clients is general in nature and conforms with the relevant legislation. If in doubt clients should seek their own legal advice.

7.4 Human Rights

The **Australian Human Rights Commission** oversees discrimination matters relating to assistance dogs.

References:

Disability Discrimination Act 1992

Australian Human Rights Commission

Policy Position:

Adelaide K9 Services will coach clients around public access issues, and support them in obtaining legal advice, or lodging a complaint, where discrimination has occurred.

8. State and Territory Accreditation

Variation exists between jurisdictions in the accreditation and recognition of assistance animals. Adelaide K9 Services requires trainers and handlers to comply with local regulations.

Australian Capital Territory

- Accreditation is managed under the **Domestic Animals Act 2000**.
- Handlers may be issued ID cards valid for up to two years.
- Access rights are aligned with Commonwealth protections.
  Reference: ACT Government – Assistance Animals

New South Wales

- Governed by the **Companion Animals Act 1998**.
- Assistance animals are recognised as distinct from pets and cannot be refused entry to public spaces.
- Specific permits are required for public transport.
  Reference: NSW Office of Local Government – Assistance Animals

Northern Territory

- Information is currently under development.
- Adelaide K9 Services requires all NT-based handlers to seek updates from government resources.
  Reference: NT Government – Assistance Animals

Queensland

- Governed by the **Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dogs Act 2009**.
- Dogs must pass a **Public Access Test (PAT)** with an approved trainer.
- Certified dogs are issued handler ID cards and identification badges.
  Reference: Queensland Government – Public Access Test

South Australia

- Accreditation is overseen by the **Dog and Cat Management Board** under the Dog and Cat Management Act 1995.
- Dogs must pass a PAT conducted by an approved assessor.
- Handler ID cards are issued with expiry and renewal requirements.
  Reference: Dog and Cat Management Board – Assistance Dogs

Tasmania

- Governed by the **Guide Dogs and Hearing Dogs Act 1967**.
- Handlers and trainers have legal rights to access public spaces with accredited dogs.
- ID cards are issued by approved institutions.
  Reference: Tasmanian Legislation – Guide Dogs and Hearing Dogs Act

Victoria

- Protected under the **Equal Opportunity Act 2010** and **Domestic Animals Act 1994**.
- Refusal of access or accommodation on the basis of an assistance dog is unlawful.
- Dogs, including those in training, have access rights.
  Reference: Agriculture Victoria – Assistance Dogs

Western Australia

- Accreditation under the **Dog Act 1976**, managed by the Department of Local Government, Sport and Cultural Industries.
- Authorisation cards are issued to demonstrate accreditation.
  Reference: WA Government – Assistance Dog Approvals Policy

Policy Position:

All Adelaide K9 Services training programs must be tailored to the specific disability-related needs of the handler, and in accordance with the relevant legislation.

- Only dogs trained in **task-specific,** identifiable behaviours that alleviate a disability are recognised under this policy.
- Therapy dogs, emotional support animals, and companion animals are **not** classified as assistance dogs under Australian law.

9. Travel and Airline Regulations

- **Civil Aviation Regulations 1988 (CAR 256A)** cover guide and hearing dogs.
- Other types of assistance dogs may travel under specific airline permissions.
- Handlers must provide documentation of accreditation and ensure their dog's behaviour meets cabin safety standards.
  Reference: Civil Aviation Safety Authority – Travel with Assistance Animals

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10. NDIS Funding

The **National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS)** may fund assistance dogs if they meet criteria under Section 34 of the NDIS Act:

- Funding may cover acquisition, training, and maintenance of the dog.
- Written evidence must be provided by allied health professionals, training providers, and the participant.

Reference: NDIS – Assistance Animals

Policy Position:

Adelaide K9 Services staff will remain current with NDIS guidelines but should refer clients to NDIS or their plan manager in relation to funding enquiries.

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11. Codes of Practice

Adelaide K9 Services adheres to State and Territory **Codes of Practice for Dog Training Establishments**. These codes establish the minimum standards of housing, staffing, management, and training.

References: Victorian Code of Practice – Dog Training Establishments
NSW Animal Welfare Code of Practice No. 5

Policy Position:

- All Adelaide K9 Services training sites will comply with relevant legislation and codes of practice.
- Dogs in training must be identified and microchipped before commencement.
- E-collars are prohibited by law in South Australia, and prong collars are banned in line with Adelaide K9 Services' force-free, positive training policy.
- A minimum of $20,000,000 public liability insurance must be maintained at all times.
- Dogs must wear a vest that identifies them as an assistance dog, or an assistance dog in training.

12. Staff Responsibilities

12.1 Managers

Managers at Adelaide K9 Services are responsible for:

- Welfare and wellbeing of all dogs in training.
- Supervising staff, clients, and volunteers.
- Maintaining training records and dog health records.
- Coordinating veterinary care and emergency plans.
- Supervision of daily feeding, watering, inspection and training of all animals.
- Supervision and examination of animals upon entry.
- The overall level of hygiene in the establishment, including the disposal of waste materials.
- Provision of prompt veterinary attention for animals when required.
- Ensuring adequate shade is available at each training venue.
- Provision of cleaning utensils for the disposal of dog's faeces and ensuring that they are available at all times whilst training is being conducted.
- Notifying owners (or their contacts) as soon as possible when an animal is observed to be ailing or injured or promptly after a veterinarian has examined the animal.
- Developing a plan for an emergency situation.

12.2 Trainers and Animal Attendants

- Trainers must demonstrate current competence in **positive reinforcement** methods and in handling dogs for disability support.
- Daily duties include feeding, watering, exercise, record-keeping, and monitoring health.
- Staff must be trained in hygiene, zoonotic disease prevention, and first aid.
- Reporting of sick or injured animals
- Exercising dogs as required by the manager.

12.3 Veterinary Support

- Adelaide K9 Services maintains agreements with veterinarians for emergency and routine care.
- Veterinary input must be sought for vaccination, parasite control, desexing, and behavioural health.
- A dog and person first aid kit must be kept wherever training is being conducted.

Policy Position:

Adelaide K9 Services staff will sign the Acknowledgement confirming they have read and understood this policy and any special instructions given to them *before* undertaking such duties.

13. Husbandry and Housing

Adelaide K9 Services do not currently offer boarding as a regular service, although we have provided temporary assistance for clients in hospital etc.

13.1 Nutrition

- All dogs must be fed at least once daily with a balanced diet appropriate to age, size, and workload.
- Fresh clean drinking water must be available at all times.
- Feeding utensils must be non-spillable, safe, and cleaned daily.

13.2 Vaccination and Health Care

- Dogs must receive core vaccination **Distemper, Hepatitis, and Parvovirus (C3)** prior to training.
- Vaccination against non-core **Parainfluenza Virus** and **Bronchiseptica (C5)** is recommended.
- Vaccination certificates must be current and available for inspection.
- Dogs with known or suspected infectious disease must not be admitted for training.

13.3 Hygiene

The training establishment is to be clean and hygienic at all times. All pens must be cleaned out at least once per day (twice daily if inspection shows it is required) by hosing or other appropriate means, after removing all uneaten food by hand before hosing, to ensure the pen is fresh and clean. Used litter and uneaten food must be placed in sealed plastic bags for disposal.

Animal training establishment sites must have an adequate water supply and must be sewered or on a septic system or have some other adequate method of disposing of faeces.

Waste disposal must be in accordance with the requirements of the local government authority. Use of a trade waste service for collection and disposal of wastes is preferable. Wastes must not be incinerated.

After cleaning, sleeping areas must not be allowed to remain wet.

Disinfection of pens must be done whenever the pen is vacated or every seventh day with hospital grade disinfectants. Utensils must be rinsed after disinfecting to avoid poisoning. Manufacturers' instructions for the use of these agents must be followed.

All watering and feeding utensils must be cleaned daily.

Pests including fleas, ticks, flies, mosquitoes and rodents must be effectively controlled. Chemicals used for pest control must be either prescribed by a registered veterinarian or registered by the National Registration Authority (NRA) under the Agricultural and Veterinary Chemicals Code (Commonwealth) and should be used only in accordance with label instructions.

Summary:

- Kennels must be cleaned at least daily using **F10 SC Veterinary Disinfectant**.
- Waste must be disposed of safely in line with local government regulations.
- Pens must be disinfected every seven days or whenever vacated.

13.4 Housing and Security

Kennel buildings must be able to be securely locked. Design and materials used must ensure the security of the facility.

Each individual kennel must be fitted with a secure closing device that cannot be opened by the animals.

Any security methods used must allow for ready access to animals and ready exit for staff and animals from the premises in the event of an emergency.

All training establishments where dogs are boarded, or protection training occurs must have an external perimeter fence at least 1.8 metres high surrounding the establishment to prevent the escape of animals.

The external walls of the facility may serve as the perimeter fence if an animal escaping from its pen or cage is restrained by these walls.

Dogs in training establishments must be safe from attack, stress or injury and their behavioural needs should be met.

Each dog training establishment must provide an area for reception, records storage, and display of information for clients. Premises must include washing and toilet facilities for staff.

Kennels must be designed, constructed, serviced and maintained in a way that ensures the good health and well-being of the animals, whilst preventing escape or injury to humans.

Housing must provide protection from the weather (wind, rain sun and extremes of climate), vermin and harassment from other animals.

Materials should be selected for ease of maintenance and cleaning, durability and non-toxicity. Floors of animal housing areas of kennels must be made of an impervious material to assist cleaning and drainage. Wood, brick, dirt or grass floors are not acceptable.

The internal surfaces of the external walls of kennels must be constructed of impervious, solid, washable materials optimally curved at the wall/floor junctions to facilitate cleaning and disinfection.

Kennel floors must be sloped to enable wastes and water to run off. A collection drain must be provided to take away water after cleaning.

Pens may be separated by either solid partitions, galvanised chain wire or weld mesh wire dividers. Pens must be completely enclosed having either a solid or wire roof.

All kennels must be provided with a weatherproof sleeping area containing raised beds.

Where dog kennels are constructed indoors, temperature, humidity and ventilation must be considered. Ventilation must be adequate to keep animal housing areas free of dampness, noxious odours and draughts. Cage or pen areas must have an ample supply of fresh air. 24

The requirements in each state and territory are similar to those of Victoria.

In NSW, for example the **NSW Animal Welfare Code of Practice No 5 - Dogs and cats in animal boarding establishments** code is designed for everyone involved in the holding and care of dogs and cats for boarding. By adhering to the code, people involved in the animal boarding industry demonstrate to the general community their concern for the welfare of the animals in their care.

The code has been prepared in consultation with the Boarding and Grooming group of the Pet Industry Joint Advisory Council (PIJAC) representing a number of those involved in dog and cat boarding and is endorsed by the NSW Animal Welfare Advisory Council.

Summary:

- Dogs must be provided with secure housing that protects from weather, vermin, and harassment.
- Kennels must include weatherproof sleeping areas and raised beds.
- Perimeter fencing of at least **1.8m** must surround all facilities where dogs are housed.

13.5 Feeding

Good Basic Feeding Tips from the Dog Breed Info Centre:

'Dogs should be fed at the same time every day. Feeding at the same time will keep a dog on a bathroom schedule. Ask your vet how many times a day you should feed your dog.

Feed your dog the same type and brand of food every day. Unlike humans, a dog's digestive system cannot handle changes in food. It can cause upset stomach and diarrhea.

When switching to a new food gradually transition him/her to the new food by mixing portions of both foods until you slowly phase out the old food. Your dog may experience diarrhea if his/her food is suddenly changed.

If you are mixing water into dry food, you should mix 4 parts dry food to 1 part water.

Keep fresh drinking water available at all times. Change the water at least once a day, more for dogs who drool.

Keep food and water bowls clean.

Don't overfeed dogs.

Monitor dogs' weight and activity level and make feeding adjustments as necessary.

If a dog has loose stool, feeding sweet potatoes is a natural stool hardener. Unlike some medicines, giving too many will not make them constipated. They sell sweet potato chips for dogs in a lot of pet supply stores.'

The following website: Basic Feeding Guide for Dogs (dogbreedinfo.com) provides helpful information on dogs' nutritional needs.

Policy Position:

When boarding clients dogs staff will comply with code of practice for boarding establishments, and best practice in assistance dog husbandry.

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14. Public Access Test (PAT)

The **Public Access Test (PAT)** is a core requirement for all assistance dogs trained by Adelaide K9 Services.

Policy Requirements:

- The dog and handler are assessed as a team.
- The dog must remain in control of the handler at all times.
- Dogs must exit the handlers vehicle calmly.
- Dogs must navigate busy public places and public transport.
- Dogs must remain calm around food, other animals, people, and distractions.
- Certification is only granted upon successful completion of the PAT.

Weblinks: Dog and Cat Management Board (SA Government)

Assistance Dog Application
Public Access Test Form
Assistance Dog Policy

Policy Position:

Adelaide K9 Services will ensure any client and dog who are ready to attempt the Public Access Test have been adequately prepared, and there is a reasonable expectation of success.

15. Human Disabilities Supported

15. 1 Types of disabilities & support

Human disabilities that may benefit from dog assistive intervention, as provided by an assistance dog include:

- **Physical**: paralysis, loss of any bodily function, spinal cord injuries, chronic pain, medical alert for diabetes and epilepsy etc.
- **Sensory**: hearing impairment, low vision etc.
- **Mental health**: anxiety disorders, post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD), panic attacks, depression, suicidal ideation, hallucinations etc.
- **Neurological, and neurodegenerative**: Alzheimer's disease and Parkinson's disease as well as spinal cord injury, multiple sclerosis (MS), hypoxic ischemia injury, epilepsy, depression, stroke affected etc.
- **Developmental**: autism, cerebral palsy, intellectual disability, down syndrome, traumatic brain injuries (TBI), behaviour disorders etc.

Assistance dogs employed for hearing assistance

Assistance dogs employed for hearing assistance will need to be taught to respond to ringing phones, doorbells, or fire alarms. This can be accomplished by training a dog to sit in front of its owner/ handler and perform a specific action when the sound trigger happens.28 Examples of support provided by assistance dogs includes alerting the owner/handler of the following:

How To Train Your Own Service Dog? A Complete Guide (servicedogregistration.org)

- For specific sounds, such as alarms, ringtones, sirens, or vehicles backing up.
- That people are approaching or trying to get your attention.

Assistance dogs employed for mental/developmental/neurological health assistance

Assistance dogs employed for a disorder such as post-traumatic stress (PTSD) alert their owners/handlers when they recognize signs of a panic attack, disorientation, hypervigilance, hyperventilation, or other distress. Dogs can be trained by simulating a panic or anxiety attack; dogs, by nature, will often come over and try to help. The owner/handler gives them treats when they try to help. This encourages them to develop their natural instinct and respond to the individual owner/handler triggers. Note that some types of alerting behaviour or tactile stimulation looks like the dog is misbehaving because it may entail licking the owners face or nudging the owner.

Assistance with emotional overload or seizures includes:

- Vigorously licking the handler's face on cue to bring them to full awareness. Unpleasant tactile stimulation can divert the handler's attention from something that triggers tears or other inappropriate emotional reactions.

- Those who suffer from panic attacks have reported that the pressure of the weight of a medium size dog or a large dog against their abdomen and chest has a significant calming effect. An assistance dog can be trained to provide deep pressure therapy (depending on the dog's size and handler's preference) during a panic attack.
- In Parkinson's disease, where the person freezes and is unable move, an assistance dog can be trained to make physical contact, such as lightly tapping the handler's shoe with his/her paw. This apparently may be sufficient to allow the handler to resume movement.
- Reportedly, similar behaviour - physical stimulation through pawing or nose nudging - can rouse someone from a disassociation state, at least sufficiently to make the person aware of his/her plight, thus providing a chance to focus and fight the symptoms. This may also be effective in fear paralysis, another symptom of PTSD. Transforming it from an accidental spontaneous behaviour into a reliable skill will require months of diligent schooling and practice.

Assistance dogs employed for mobility assistance

Assistance dogs employed for mobility assistance help persons with a physical disability. These dogs can simply be taught by rewarding them when they fetch an item by word, for instance, by stating the name of the object then pointing at it so they retrieve it. They will learn the cues through practice. Examples of support provided by assistance dogs include the following:

How To Train Your Own Service Dog? A Complete Guide (servicedogregistration.org)

- Seeking help from someone else when the owner/handler is having a medical emergency.
- Pressing a medical alert button for designated emergency contact.
- Retrieving personal items, such as keys or cell phones.
- Carrying items.
- Opening, holding, and closing doors by tugging on a strap attached to a lever handle.
- Bringing medication to the owner/handler at a designated time.
- Turning on and off lights.
- Providing a foundation to steady the owner/handler or helping them stand up.
- Tugging or holding clothing, socks and shoes to assist with dressing and undressing.
- Pulling to assist manual wheelchair propulsion.

Other assistive support

Other examples of assistive support provided by assistance dogs includes the following:

- Cuddling on cue.
- Interrupting repetitive movements or compulsive behaviours.
- Leading the owner/handler to an uncrowded area or place to sit down.
- Responding to an anxiety or panic attack.
- Interrupting nightmares or night terrors.
- Bark at a certain time of day to remind the handler to take medication.
- If the handler is not verbal, an assistance dog can be trained to deliver a written account of requirements on cue.

Assistance dogs can provide assistive support during medical emergencies as well as with day-to-day tasks. In emergency situations an assistance dog can be trained to bring the handler a portable phone when needed on cue; open the front door to let in emergency personnel or members of support system; and call an emergency number on a customised mobile phone by pressing the right button.

15. 2 Odour Detection in Assistance Dogs

Appealing to dogs' olfactory perception/target odours, Volatile Organic Compound (VOC)

Dogs have approximately 300 million scent receptors that send messages to the olfactory bulb in their brain. This is significantly more than the human nose with its 6 million scent receptors.

Science has evidenced what a scent detection dog is recognising is the 5 volatilome of the organism. A volatilome is the entire set of volatile organic compounds (VOC) detectible inside and outside of the body that reflect the unique metabolic state of an organism. This science has led to dogs being trained to detect things such as explosives, cancer and the impending onset of seizures.

Dogs have a long and successful history working as scent detection animals in airports, for border security, the police and in the military services.

Jenkins et al report *"the canine's capacity for odour detection has been reported to be as much as 10,000–100,000 times that of the average human, and the canine lower limit of detectability for volatile organic compounds is one part per trillion (ppt)"*.

http://www.frontier.org/articles/10.3389/fvets.2018.00056/full

In episode 30 of their publication e-360 Epilepsy Action Australia 6 report "*Seizure alert dogs are born with the amazing ability to detect impending seizures and give a warning to that person.*" They go on to say, "*If a dog is alerting to seizures, it can be trained in a way to alert its owner of an oncoming seizure and respond to the owners needs before, during, and after a seizure.*"

It is the volatile organic compound of the impending seizure that the dog detects. Researchers note that dogs can identify targeted chemical vapor profiles. Scientific and anecdotal evidence support the hypothesis that dogs can and do '**alert and respond**' to human VOC changes. This may include:

- Low blood sugar levels.
- Changes in cortisol levels.
- Anxiety.
- Panic attacks.
- Seizures.
- Blood glucose levels.
- Dissociation and depression among many other chemical profiles of illness and disorder.

Dogs can also be trained to detect allergens, such as specific foods or triggering odours; specific smells, such as smoke and gas; and the presence or absence of people in a designated area or location.

In Canine Olfaction Science and Law, Jezierski et al state that:

"*Requiring a dog to perform human tasks is asking much but allowing it to do so as closely as possible to its natural genetic and behavioural ability will make the process easier and more reliable*."

Many assistance dog training organisations, such as Both Ends of the Leash33 work closely with the handler teams to identify these natural alerts to VOC so they can be shaped into identifiable physical tasks that provide the individual living with a disability the greatest possible live, interactive support from their assistance dog.

Suitable methodologies and practices related to odour detection, include the following:

- Items/human conditions and their associated odours that a dog could be required to detect in its working role as a mental health assistant.
- Methods of assessing when dogs are ready to extend the range of odours, they are able to detect.
- Positive and negative indicators shown by dogs when detecting (or not detecting) specific odours.
- Odour imprint - training dogs to memorise odours and respond appropriately.

Adelaide K9 Services recognises that assistance dogs may support individuals with:

- Vision or hearing impairments.
- Mobility limitations.
- Medical conditions (e.g., diabetes, epilepsy).
- Psychiatric and developmental disorders (e.g., PTSD, autism, anxiety).

Policy Position:

Adelaide K9 Services recognises that assistance dogs can be trained to perform a vast range of tasks for their owner / handler. Some role specific training is currently out of scope for the following reasons:

- There are approved organisations that are better suited to the task.
- There are gaps in our corporate knowledge .
- We lack special equipment (particularly related to olfactory medical alerts).

16. Training Principles

18.1 Types of Learning

Associative and Non-Associative learning are two types of learning between which a key difference can be identified. Associative learning refers to a variety of learning in which ideas and experiences are connected. On the other hand, non-associative learning is another variety of learning in which an association between stimuli does not take place. The key difference is while stimuli are linked in associative learning; in non-associative learning this does not take place.

18.2 Associative Learning

Associative learning refers to a variety of learning in which ideas and experiences are connected.

The human brain is organized in such a way that recalling a single piece of information in isolation is often difficult. This is because it is connected to other types of information. The theory of associative learning highlights this connection or link between ideas.

According to psychologists, associative learning takes place when we learn something with the help of a new stimulus. Here the theory of conditioning comes into play. Through conditioning, psychologists emphasize how human behaviour can be altered or how new patterns of behaviour can be created in the individual. The process of associative learning takes place through two types of conditioning. They are:

Classical conditioning - a technique introduced by Ivan Pavlov where he conducts an experiment using a dog. In the first phase of the experiment, he presents the dog with food and notices how it salivates. Then he introduces a bell just as the food is being presented and notices how the dog salivates. Thirdly he rings the bell without presenting the food but notices that the dog salivates. Through this, he explains how a natural response to a stimulus can be conditioned.35

Operant conditioning - developed by B. F Skinner, an American psychologist. He believed that behaviour is sustained by reinforcement and rewards and not by free will. He was famous for Skinner box and the teaching machine. This involved conditioning the voluntary, controllable behaviour and not the automatic physiological responses as in the case of classical conditioning. In operant conditioning, actions are associated with consequences by the organism. Actions that are reinforced (i.e., rewarded) become strengthened whereas actions that are punished are weakened. *See 'The four quadrants of dog training' section in this Guide for more information on positive and negative reinforcement.*

18.3 Non-Associative Learning

Both humans and dogs have the ability to learn in non-associative ways. Non-associative learning consists of responding automatically or reflexively to a stimulus, without having to actively try. While we do proactively train our dogs to perform behaviours, a puppy or new dog develops their own non-associative responses to their new environment as well.

Two Types of Non-Associative Learning

There are two forms of non-associative learning: habituation, and sensitisation. They are essentially two sides of the same coin.

Habituation: Habituation is when a dog has learned to tune out a certain stimulus because of the frequency with which they're exposed to it, for example, the sounds of traffic and horns honking eventually fade into the background to the point that dogs in cities, constantly exposed to them, barely notice them. While at first the stimulus may be jarring, through habituation every exposure causes the response to lessen until the dog no longer regards it. Each dog will habituate to individual stimuli at different rates. Horns that honk multiple times every hour will become background noise much more quickly than, say, the sound of an ambulance siren that only passes by once each week. The nature of the stimulus itself also affects how quickly a dog will habituate. Unexciting stimuli are much easier to become accustomed to and ignore than a possum on a fence or a blowing paper bag, for example.

Habituation can be used as a part of dogs' training. It helps reduce reactivity and fear. For a dog that barks at a doorbell, for example, playing the sound of a bell on YouTube at the lowest volume possible, gets the dog used to the sound. Once the dog seems calm and ignorant of the noise, it is turned up a notch. Over time, the dog will likely be less reactive.

Sensitisation: On the other hand, sensitisation is a form of non-associative learning where a dog becomes more reactive over time to a stimulus. This is similar to how many people react to watching or reading horror stories - while normally they may have no problem turning the lights off before bed, they might find themselves jumping at every shadow after watching a horror film. The movie sensitises people to dark shapes and unfamiliar noises, increasing fear over stimuli that hadn't bothered them before. The same can happen with dogs when they are exposed to particularly startling stimuli.

Dogs can also become sensitised to any type of negative stimulus, and this can occur sometimes after only a single exposure. For example, if a dog has a very negative experience at the veterinarian the first time, they are vaccinated then they may show a more and more fearful response every time they return to the veterinarian for vaccination. Habituation does not occur once fear is involved, and it is always better to ensure early experiences are positive ones to enable habituation to occur.

Training a dog to adapt to stimuli is a great way to help them remain calm, happy and unafraid. A well-adjusted dog is a secure and happy dog.

18.4 The Four Quadrants of Dog Training

A reinforcer is something that increases the chances of a specific behaviour occurring. A punishment is something that decreases the chances of a specific behaviour occurring. In common language punishment is used often for a positive punishment (see below) such as yelling or smacking, which can make it confusing for people.

The four quadrants build on B. F Skinner behavioural studies. They are:

One – Positive Reinforcement and Counterconditioning:

Something rewarding is ADDED to a dog's world, and it's something that's more likely to make the dog repeat the behaviour. An example of this in action could be that you ask the dog to sit, they perform the desired behaviour, and so you give them a food treat. The consequence of sitting was the treat, so they are more likely to sit again the next time they're asked.

Positive reinforcement is also used to countercondition unwanted dog behaviour or response to a stimulus into a wanted behaviour or response by the association of positive actions with the stimulus. The best way to countercondition a dog is by combining it with dog desensitization (exposing the dog to the smallest amount of frightening stimulus and then increasing it over time so that they overcome the fear). Counterconditioning combined with systematic desensitization techniques requires some knowledge, such as recognizing subtle signs of stress.

An example of counterconditioning a dog includes reducing a dog's fear of thunder. A recording of thunder is played at a low volume while feeding the dog a treat. When the recording stops, the feeding stops. Then gradually the recording is played louder as the treat feeding continues. The dog makes the association that the sound is what brings the treat.

Two – Negative Reinforcement

Something aversive is REMOVED from the dog's world, and as a consequence, the dog is more likely to repeat the behaviour. For this to work, there would need to be something unpleasant in the dog's world already, so that the removal of it would be considered an improvement on the situation for the dog. An example could be that the dog is wearing a choke chain which is pulled tight until the dog sits, and then the chain is loosened. The loosening of the chain is reinforcing because it removes the dog's discomfort and therefore increases the likelihood they'll sit next time. They learn that sitting removes the pain. **Assistance dog trainers do not recommend the use of negative reinforcement.**

Three – Positive Punishment

Something aversive is ADDED to the dog's world… but this time it's something that will make the dog less likely to repeat the behaviour. Positive punishment is therefore used to deter unwanted behaviours and was the go-to approach only a couple of decades ago. An example of positive punishment in action could be catching the dog chewing up the sofa and reprimanding the dog with a harsh tone of voice (in previous decades it was by hitting the dog). By introducing reprimanding as a consequence of chewing; it is less likely to occur again. While this method was sometimes used in the past, it should be noted that these days this is never considered to be a humane or acceptable technique for dog training and it is known positive punishment reduces the quality of relationship with the dog and is associated with a higher risk of negative behaviours, such as food or fear reactivity.

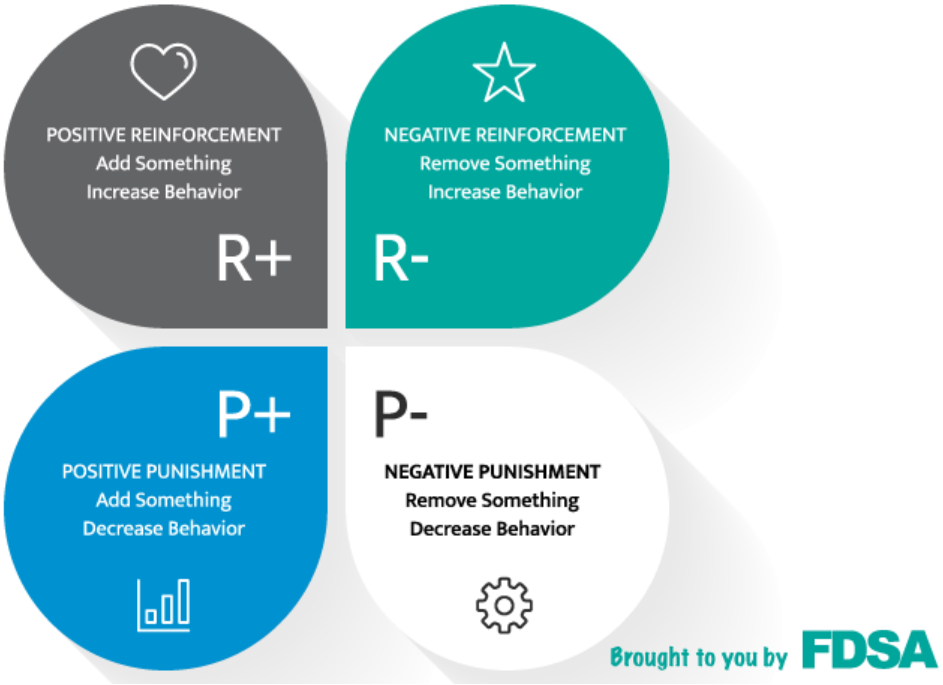
Four – Negative Punishment

Something rewarding is REMOVED from the dog's world, and the removal of that thing will make the dog less likely to repeat the behaviour that caused this consequence. An example could be

that the dog/handler team are playing together, but the dog bites down too hard on the handler's skin – to apply negative punishment, the handler gets up and leaves the room.

When the handler returns, the dog is less likely to bite hard, because this behaviour caused the removal of their playmate! They learn that biting makes the fun stop.

According to the Australian Veterinary Association, ''Punishment and negative reinforcement should not be used in attempts to change the behaviour of dogs. Training of dogs is best achieved through positive reinforcement.''



Operant and classical conditioning technique

Extinction options – aiming for the extinction of a certain behaviour by ignoring the dog when it behaves in a particular undesirable manner (jumping on the handler for example). The dog will stop behaving in that manner if this behaviour does not warrant results and leads to reprimands in the form of loss of owner attention.

Shaping behaviours – training the dog using various methods, including clicker training, using praise words and food rewards.

Fading techniques – fading prompts used for initial training that are no longer required because the dog does not need prompting to perform the task.

Stretching the ratio – if continuing to dole out treats for every single correct dog response to cues (following initial training) opportunities for improvement are removed and the quality of the behaviour is affected. On top of that, the longer the dog is rewarded for every correct response, the harder it becomes to start phasing out all those rewards when a dog has relied on them for so long. This results in a dog who expects a reward every single time and risks

getting frustrated when he doesn't get it. Deciding when to reinforce a behaviour can depend on a number of factors. In cases where the handler is specifically trying to teach a new behaviour, a continuous reinforcement schedule is required. Once the behaviour has been learned, switching to a partial reinforcement is recommended to reduce the risk of satiation.

Least Intrusive, Minimally Aversive (LIMA) and Least Intrusive Effective Behaviour Intervention (LIEBI)

Least Intrusive, Minimally Aversive (LIMA) dog training uses the least intrusive, minimally aversive strategy out of a set of humane and effective tactics to succeed in achieving a training or behaviour change objective. LIMA does not justify the use of punishment in lieu of other effective interventions and strategies. In the vast majority of cases, desired behaviour change can be effected by focusing on the animal's environment, physical well-being, and operant and classical interventions such as differential reinforcement of an alternative behaviour, desensitization, and counterconditioning.

The process referred to as the **Least Intrusive Effective Behaviour Intervention (LIEBI)** model is based on the ethical theory that treating others in an invasive or highly intrusive manner, where it is unnecessary to do so, is morally problematic. The basis of this practice is that we are ethically obliged to construct interventions that are not only effective but also minimally intrusive. Utilising LIEBI practices when training assistance dogs is important because companion animals cannot provide informed consent regarding the interventions that we choose to implement for them. Responsible training ought to be dedicated to ensuring that the interests of the companion animal are carefully considered and that the animal is accorded respect for their dignity by intervening in a minimally intrusive manner.

Hierarchy of Procedures for Humane and Effective Practice

1. Focus on health, nutritional, and physical factors.
2. Antecedents: redesign setting events, change motivations, and add or remove discriminative stimuli (cues) for the problem behaviour.
3. Positive Reinforcement: employ approaches that contingently deliver a consequence to increase the probability that the desired behaviour will occur.
4. Differential Reinforcement of Alternative Behaviour: reinforce an acceptable replacement behaviour and remove the maintaining reinforcer for the problem behaviour.

Policy Position:

Adelaide K9 Services requires that all training is **humane, evidence-based, and welfare-focused**.

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17. Hierarchy of Behavioural Interventions

Where an assistance dog in training has behaviour that requires intervention Adelaide K9 Services will adhere to the hierarchy of behaviour intervention.

1. **Health check** – Ensure no medical cause for behaviour.
2. **Environmental modification** – Adjust setting to reduce stressors.
3. **Positive reinforcement training** – Reinforce desirable alternatives.
4. **Differential reinforcement** – Reward replacement behaviours.
5. **Mild negative punishment** – Withholding rewards when necessary.
6. **Never use force, intimidation, or aversive equipment.**

Reference: LIMA – International Association of Animal Behaviour Consultants

Policy Position:

When addressing behavioural challenges, Adelaide K9 Services trainers must follow a hierarchy of **least intrusive** interventions.

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18. Training Stages

18.1 Foundation Training

The foundational skills for an assistance dog aren't too difficult to begin with. Assistance dogs need socialisation with humans and other dogs, they need to be well-behaved off a leash, and they should be confident in any environment.

Socialisation is the best way to ensure that a dog becomes a friendly and confident adult. Puppies are particularly open to new socialisation experiences from the ages of 3-16 weeks, but that socialisation should really last for the dog's entire life. Puppies should be handled often by several different people, acclimated to different sounds, and taught to be alone (to prevent separation anxiety). Any interactions with the puppy should be gentle and friendly, not confrontational.

Toilet training a dog is essential to prevent messes indoors. Getting them a crate helps them have a safe place that they want to keep clean. Keeping them in the crate and letting them out to immediately go relieve themselves teaches them that "going" outside is good.

Loose leash walking is also essential for a dog to know their limits. A dog should learn to be focused on you when appropriate, not on the things around them.

These three skills are the most important basics needed in a training program before training a dog to become an assistance dog. It is also beneficial to teach them basic obedience cues such as "sit," "heel," and "down".

Summary:

- Focus on socialisation, toilet training and loose leash walking.
- Reward for attentiveness, engagement, and basic obedience.
- Reinforcement of calm behaviour around distractions.

18.2 Public Access Training

This section builds on the foundational skills by exposing the dog to busy public places with a lot of pedestrian and vehicle traffic, public transport (buses, trains, taxis), shopping centres, healthcare facilities, stairs, lifts, escalators. This is done in a controlled manner, by slowly increasing the intensity of each location, and while challenging it must be overwhelmingly positive for the dog.

- Dogs must demonstrate safe behaviour in busy public spaces.
- Training must include public transport, shopping centres, and healthcare facilities.
- Dogs must remain unobtrusive and under handler control at all times.

18.3 Role Training (Specialised / Complex Tasks)

This step entails encouraging the natural drives and instincts of dogs and how these can assist humans with disability, and it depends on what the handler needs from the assistance dog. At this point, dogs should be well-socialised and trained. They respond to basic verbal cues like “sit” and “stay,” are calm and responsive on- and off-leash and can relate to the handler. From here, the handler can train them for specific tasks based on what is needed.

Definition of a complex task

Assistance dogs can be trained to perform many different practical tasks for their handlers that will help mitigate the need for additional support(s). Some of these alerts and tasks are natural to dogs; while others are what is referred to as specific and complex.

A specific task is a task a dog may be relied on to perform consistently. A complex task requires it to be trained in stages. Breaking down the parts of the task into smaller achievable segments and training the dog sequentially toward the goal of those segments finally coming together to achieve the desired objective.

A complex task such as bringing a beverage so a human partner can swallow medication, for example involves a sequence of skills, takes four to six months to master. The sequence of skills are:

- Going to the kitchen from another room to pull open a refrigerator door or cupboard door with a strap.
- Picking up the beverage from refrigerator shelf before the door swings shut.
- Carrying cold beverage to the partner in another room.
- Going back, if need be, to shut the refrigerator door or instead.
- Fetching a basket or some other container from a kitchen cupboard with a beverage and other items; may also contain antidote type medication in a vial with a childproof cap.

See **S15. Human disabilities** for more examples of complex tasks a dog can perform.

Dogs may be trained for specific disability-related needs, such as:

- Retrieving medication.
- Interrupting panic attacks or harmful behaviours.
- Alerting to medical changes (e.g., blood sugar or seizures).
- Providing stability or support during mobility tasks.

18.4 Off-Leash Reliability

- Dogs should be able to demonstrate attentiveness and response even when not on a lead.
- Off-leash work must only be undertaken in safe and controlled environments.

Policy Position:

Adelaide K9 Services recognises that assistance dogs go through several stages of training which, depending on the age and experience of the dog, take up to 18 months.

We acknowledge that assistance dog training represents and significant investment, without any guarantees, due to the complex nature of the training.

If at any stage we believe the dog is unlikely to meet the criteria for certification we will notify the client, and their health care provider, in writing as soon as possible.

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19. Equipment Policy

19.1 Approved Equipment

The following may be used:

- Standard collars, martingales, and harnesses.
- Leads and leashes of humane design.
- Working jackets and identification vests.
- Clickers, markers, and treat pouches.
- Puzzle toys for cognitive enrichment.

19.2 Prohibited Equipment

The following are **not permitted** under Adelaide K9 Services policy:

- Prong collars.
- Shock/e-collars.
- Choke chains.
- Harsh punishment-based tools.

19.3 Handler Training in Equipment Use

- Handlers must be trained to use all equipment safely and humanely.
- Equipment must never compromise welfare or restrict normal behaviour beyond what is necessary for safety.

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20. Choosing an Assistance Dog

Adelaide K9 Services does not offer trained Assistance Dogs for sale; services we offer are as follows:

- Assess the client's existing pet dog.
- Assess a dog identified by the client before purchase.
- Assist the client to find a suitable dog to be trained.

20.1 Considerations

Considerations to determine if the clients pet dog - or one they have identified - can be trained as their assistance dog include temperament, breed characteristics, the dog's emotional maturity, the dog/handler relationship, and their role requirements.

Some of the information we gather during an initial assessment include:

- Age, Sex and Reproductive Status. How old is the dog? It should be over 6 months old and neutered/spayed so it is not distracted by other dogs while training.
- Full Medical History. Older dogs with health conditions such as arthritis and diabetes may not be receptive to teaching. Their working life would also be shortened, reducing the value-for-money that they would represent as a disability support.
- Temperament. Is the dog's temperament suitable for a handler's personal needs?
- Trainability. How is the dog's attention span? The dog should have an attention span long enough to handle training sessions.
- Suitability. What are the handler's needs? For instance, if a handler needs a dog to help with mobility or balance, a larger breed would be better than a smaller one.

These are important questions to answer before deciding to train a pet as an assistance dog. In general, desirable characteristics of assistance dogs are dogs that are calm and confident, intelligent, young and in good physical health, and dogs that respond well to human verbal and/or visual cues. This doesn't always depend on the dog's breed; almost any breed can be trained for the job if they meet the appropriate criteria.

Training an assistance dog depends on the human disability they are expected to accommodate, the temperament of the dog, and other factors. The important and difficult nature of the work

they do means that training can often be unsuccessful but when the handler and assistance dog work as team the rewards are immeasurable.

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21. Client/Handler Suitability

There are occasions where a client / handler could benefit from the many positive aspects of having an assistance dog though they aren't yet suitable to take that step. In **owner-assisted** training the handler must have the capability to **actively participate** in training their dog. This means being able to walk every day and visit a minimum of three public places each week.

Many other social, economic, and health factors are considered during the initial consultation. In a case where careful consideration concludes that the prospective handler does not have sufficient capacity or capability to provide for the needs of an assistance dog the client is referred back to their treatment team with some clearly communicated options for remedy to be reconsidered at a later time.

Doing this with compassion and understanding is paramount, equally important is the trainer's avoidance of making promises that cannot be fulfilled. Even when it comes to dog and handler teams who are initially assessed as appropriate for consideration and training to commence there should never be any promise or guarantee of success. Each team has their own specific and unique situations that the trainer cannot control.

Some things that may affect client suitability include:

- History of substance abuse.
- History of domestic violence.
- History of offences against animals.
- Unable to actively participate in training the dog.

Adelaide K9 Services requires all clients / handlers to:

- Follow training instructions and maintain consistent practice.
- Ensure the welfare of their assistance dog, including nutrition, exercise, and vet care.
- Respect public access requirements at all times, especially during training.
- Always maintain control and ensure the dog behaves safely and appropriately.
- When in public wear the vest provided, carry the identification card provided.
- When in public always carry a backpack with the dog's settle mat, poo bags and wet wipes.
- Develop contingency plans in case of emergencies or handler incapacity.

Policy Position:

Adelaide K9 Services policy regarding handler suitability is one of open and honest communication. We must be mindful that our clients are vulnerable and build trust through being realistic about what we can deliver. We must follow up on things we say. We must not denigrate a person if their history, or disability make them unsuitable.

22. Monitoring Progress

- All dogs and handlers must undergo regular assessment checkpoints.
- Trainers must document progress, challenges, and welfare notes.
- Adjustments to training programs must be made according to **dog welfare, handler needs, and compliance standards**.

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23. Welfare of Assistance Dogs

23.1 Ongoing Care

Caring for an assistance dog basically entails treating them as part of the family and recognising that the dog is not just there for human assistive activity. The dog needs time to play, relax and be cared for. Caring for a dog includes the following:

Feeding

- Feed dogs high quality dog food.
- Feed dogs on a regular schedule (our recommendation is for twice a day).
- Avoid giving dogs an excessive amount of treats or human food (there are many foods such as chocolate, avocados, onions and grapes that are hazardous to a dog's health).
- Give dogs access to water at all times.

Health

- Care for dogs' health and have a good, registered veterinarian.
- Get dogs vaccinated according to the Australian Veterinary Association's Vaccination Policy.
- Get pet insurance, ideally a plan for assistance dogs, which provide higher levels of 3rd party liability cover than typical pet insurance.
- Fit dogs with ID chips.
- Use regular parasite (flea, tick, worm) preventative treatments.
- Consider desexing dogs.

Grooming

- Groom/brush dogs.
- Keep dogs' coat clean.
- Keep dogs' nails trimmed.

Exercising/Socialising and Playing

- Provide dogs with plenty of exercise.
- Stimulate dogs' minds with reward-based training.
- Socialise dogs.

- Allow dogs to play and display behaviours that are normal for the breed

Love and Respect

- Register dogs and put tags on collars.
- Treat dogs with respect and never punish with physical force.
- Be aware that dogs have basic needs - toileting, relaxation, shelter (do not keep a dog cooped up in a kennel for hours).
- Make sure dogs have access to a comfortable place to sleep and is not left out in extreme temperatures.
- Build a bond of mutual love and respect with your dog.

Insurance Recommendation: Medibank Pet Insurance

23.2 Signs of Distress

Trainers and handlers must monitor for:

- Excessive panting, drooling, or restlessness.
- Withdrawal or avoidance behaviours.
- Aggression or reactivity.
- Loss of appetite or weight changes.
- Reluctance to work.

23.3 Response to Distress

- Training must be suspended if a dog demonstrates signs of distress.
- Veterinary or behavioural support must be sought immediately.
- Welfare considerations override training outcomes.

Policy Position:

Adelaide K9 Services is committed to the welfare of all dogs who come into our care, at all stages of their life. We will actively monitor dogs for signs of distress and recommend treatment, including veterinary care, when appropriate.

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24. End-of-Service and Retirement

It can be hard to pinpoint when the right time for the retirement of an assistance dog. Many assistance dogs work until around age 10, with some retiring before and a few retiring after. It will really depend on the dog's health, personality, their working role and the owner/handler's ability to care for an older dog.

The best advice is to gradually wind down the Assistance dog's working life rather than going from all to nothing overnight, unless a veterinarian recommends an immediate stop due to health issues.

Retiring an assistance dog can be an emotional experience, even if they don't have to be rehomed. The human/assistance dog team have spent years together learning each other's needs and cues in a way that few people will ever experience. Sometimes assistance dogs can retire by continuing to live in their usual/familiar habitat and continue to receive love and support. If this is not possible, the dog may be rehomed in a loving pet home to finish out the remainder of their days.

Usually, the training organisation will help with rehoming a retired dog because they typically retain legal ownership of the dog for its working life. Because Adelaide K9 Services does not own the dog we can only assist with retirement and rehoming as required.

- Retirement must be based on **age, health, welfare, and handler needs**
- Retired dogs may:
  - Remain with the handler as a pet.
  - Be rehomed with family or a suitable carer.
  - Be adopted into a welfare-approved home.
  - Transition planning must be discussed well before retirement to ensure a smooth change for both dog and handler.

Policy Position:

While Adelaide K9 Services does not own the assistance dog's we train, we are committed to assisting our clients, and their dogs with end of service requirements.

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25. Training Equipment – Safe and Approved Use

Trainers and handlers must only use **humane equipment**. Prohibited equipment includes:

- Shock collars, prong collars, or choke chains.
- Harsh or aversive devices.

Approved equipment includes:

- Identification vests.
- Fitted harnesses.
- Halti head collars.
- Standard flat collars and martingales.
- Leads – nylon, leather or synthetic.
- Treat pouches, clickers, enrichment toys.
- Settle mats.
- Grooming & cleaning equipment.

Desensitising and socialising equipment used for assistance dogs entails exposure, e.g., umbrellas, chairs, noisy objects like vacuums, mop/broom, various floor types) as well as more specialised objects like wheelchair, walking stick, alert lights used by people with hearing impairment.

Assistance dogs also need to be exposed to lots of different types of people and animals, so having access to people of all shapes, sizes, races, genders, and all sorts of **friendly animals** is important.

Policy Position:

Adelaide K9 Services does not condone the use of fear or intimidation in training and prohibits the use of electronic collars, prong collars, and any other device used in a harsh or aversive manner.

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26. Organisations That Train Assistance Dogs

Adelaide K9 Services acknowledges that multiple organisations across Australia provide training and support for assistance dogs. Examples include:

- Guide Dogs Australia.
- Royal Society for the Blind (See Differently).
- Assistance Dogs Australia.
- Lions Hearing Dogs.
- Mind Dogs Australia.
- Righteous Pups Australia.

Policy Position:

- Adelaide K9 Services maintains professional standards consistent with national best practice, through:
  - Training and professional development.
  - Collaboration with other organisations.

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27. Policy Review and Continuous Improvement

- This policy is to be reviewed **every two years** by Adelaide K9 Services.
- Updates must reflect new legislation, scientific evidence, and industry best practice.
- Feedback from clients, handlers, trainers, and regulatory authorities will be incorporated.

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28. Closing Statement

Adelaide K9 Services is dedicated to upholding the highest standards of **training, welfare, and handler support** in the assistance dog sector.

By adhering to this policy, Adelaide K9 Services ensures:

- Dogs are trained with **compassion, respect, and scientific best practice**.
- Handlers receive the support and education necessary for long-term success.
- The rights of people with disabilities are protected through responsible public access and advocacy.

This policy represents Adelaide K9 Services' commitment to excellence in assistance dog training and welfare.

Scott Corcoran Dip CBST, CBCC-KA
ADELAIDE K9 SERVICES
Director

31. References

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- Centre for Service Therapy Dogs - Autism, Epilepsy, Dementia, PTSD (cstda.com.au)
- https://helpingpawsservicedogtraining.com.au
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- Home - mind Dog Australia View
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- About us | Seeing Eye Dogs Australia View

Acknowledgement

Employee Information

Name: _____

Position: _____

Policy Acknowledgement

I, _____, acknowledge that I have received, read and understood the company's policies outlined in the **Assistance Dog Policy**.

I agree to comply with the policy and understand that failure to adhere to the standards within may lead to disciplinary action, including termination of employment.

I understand that this policy may be updated as required, and that I will be informed of any changes in writing.

By signing below I confirm my acceptance of the policy and agree to abide by the policy.

Employee Signature

Signature: _____

Date: ____ / ____ / ____

Manager / HR Representative

Name: _____

Signature: _____

Date: ____ / ____ / ____