Australian Government
Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

Assistance Animal National Principles

Consultation Report

Summary



Easy Read

Australian Government

Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

The Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing wrote this.

We say **DHDA** for short.

When you see the word **we** it means DHDA.



We wrote this in an easy to read way.

We use pictures to explain some ideas.

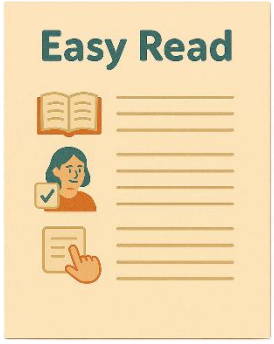
Bold

Not bold

We have some words in **bold**.

This means the letters are thicker and darker.

These are important words.



This is an Easy Read summary of another document.

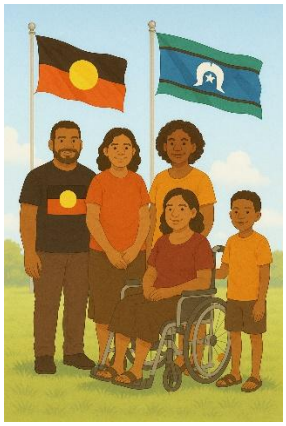
This means it has the most important ideas.



You can ask for help to read this document.

You can ask

- A friend
- Family members
- A support person.



We recognise Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people as the **Traditional Owners** of the land we live on.



They were the **first people** to live on and use the

- Land
- Waters.

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About assistance animals



Assistance animals are animals that are trained to support people with disability to be

- **Independent**
- Happy and healthy.

Independent means being able to do things on your own.



Assistance animals are usually dogs.

Sometimes other animals can be assistance animals.



States and territories have their own laws about assistance animals.

Laws are **rules** for how we live.



Some states and territories do **not** have any rules about assistance animals.



The Australian Government wants to make the rules more **consistent** across Australia.

Consistent means doing things the same way each time.



This would make it easier for

- People to take their animal with them in public places



- Businesses and services to recognise assistance animals



- People who have assistance animals to be treated the same no matter where they live.

How assistance animals help



Assistance animals help people with disability

- Physically

This can be helping to pick up things like a phone.



- With our **senses**

  Our senses are things like

  - Seeing
  - Hearing



This can help people who are

- Blind or have low vision
- Deaf or hard of hearing.



- With **psychosocial** support

  Psychosocial support is about a persons mental health.

They can help people feel calm and safe.



These supports help people with disability to be independent.

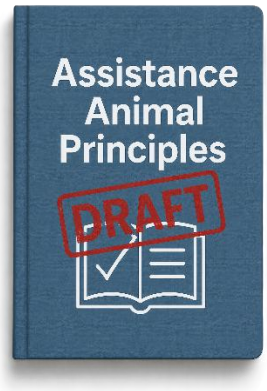
Consultation on assistance animals



The **public consultation** about assistance animals was open

- From 7 March to 1 June 2025.

A public consultation gives everyone a chance to have their say.



We asked people what they thought about

- The **draft** assistance animal **principles.**

  Draft means it is **not** finished.

  Principles say how something should work.



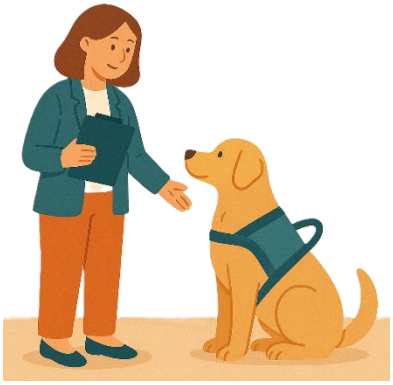
There are 6 draft principles.

They are



1. To have the same rules for trainers across Australia about

    - How assistance animals are trained
    - Who can train them.



2. To have the same rules for what training assistance animals need across Australia.



3. To have the same **Public Access Test** across Australia.

    We call it **PAT** for short.

This makes sure they are safe to be in the community.



4. To have the same **evidence** to say

   - You have a disability
   - The assistance animal helps you.

Evidence is proof that something is true.



5. To have a card and logo for all of Australia.

This will make it easier to tell which animals are assistance animals.



6. To make sure the assistance animal is happy and healthy for their whole life.

Who we heard from



We heard from many people in Australia.

Most people were from

- Queensland
- New South Wales
- Victoria.



Most people lived in cities or regional areas.

We did **not** hear from many people that live in rural or remote areas.





A small number of people were

- Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander
- **Culturally and linguistically diverse.**

We say **CALD** for short.

CALD are people who speak languages other than English.



Most people we heard from were people with disability.

Lots of them said they have an assistance animal.

What we heard



We heard that lots of people who have assistance animals have faced **barriers**.

A barrier is something that stops you from doing what you

- Want
- Need



The biggest barrier was other people **not** understanding about assistance animals.



This made it hard for them to

- Get services
- Go to places like
    - Shops
    - Cafes.



They said at some restaurants they have to

- Sit away from everyone else with their assistance animal.



People would also

- Ask personal questions about their disability
- Touch their assistance animal without permission.



Getting transport was hard for some people who have an assistance animal.

- They were **not** allowed into taxis or car services like Uber.

That means drivers are **not** following the rules that say assistance animals are allowed.



Going on a plane can also be hard because

- Airlines had different rules about assistance animals.



People who have an assistance animal were sometimes

- Charged an extra cleaning fee when staying in places like hotels.



We heard that some animals are called assistance animals but they are **not** trained properly.



This can

- Put people and assistance animals at risk
- Reduce the trust people have in them
- Make having an assistance animal harder for everyone.

What we heard about the principles



Most people thought the principles were a good idea.

Some of the wording in the principles was confusing.



Many people agreed the PAT should be the same across Australia.

They thought a PAT would help people feel

- Safe
- Confident.



Everyone who has an assistance animal can get a card with

- A link to information about their rights
- Name and photo of the person and their assistance animal
- Date of the last PAT.



This would help

- Show people they have the right to have their assistance animal with them



- Protect their **privacy**.

  Privacy is the right to **not** give personal information.

People think the system needs to



- Be low cost
- Be **accessible** for people in rural and remote areas
- Not make new barriers.



Accessible means

- Everyone can use it
- It is easy to get.



They also said assistance animals should be looked after for their whole life.

They need

- Training that is supportive



- Regular checks with a vet



- To be cared for when they stop working.

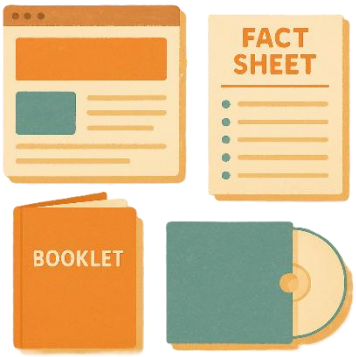
Next steps



We will work with all the states and territories by

- Asking them to agree to the changed principles
- Helping them to
    - Set up
    - Use

  The principles.



We will also work on

- Making sure people know more about assistance animals.

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July 2026.