
Assistance Dog Information for Venue Owners and Staff

What Is an Assistance Dog?

Under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA)*, an assistance dog is:

- A highly trained animal that assists a person with a disability by performing specific tasks to alleviate the effects of the disability.
- An animal that meets high standards of behaviour, health, and hygiene.

Examples of tasks include alerting to medical conditions, guiding visually impaired individuals, or providing physical or emotional support in public settings.

Legal Protections for Assistance Dogs

- The DDA ensures that people with disabilities who rely on assistance dogs have equal access to public spaces, including shops, restaurants, transport, and other facilities.
- Denying access without a valid reason is considered unlawful discrimination and can result in legal action through the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC).

What You Can Ask For

Venue owners or staff may ask for **reasonable evidence** that the dog is an assistance animal. This evidence may include:

1. An Assistance Animal Identification Card.
2. A certificate or letter from a recognised organisation or trainer.
3. Documentation outlining the dog's role in assisting the handler's disability.

You **cannot** ask for specific medical information about the handler's disability.

Why Denying Entry Is Illegal

Denying access to a person with an assistance dog is unlawful under the DDA unless:

- The dog poses a genuine safety or health risk (e.g., in sterile environments like operating theatres or food preparation areas).
- The dog is out of control, behaving aggressively, or not house-trained.

Common excuses such as allergies, fear of dogs, or inconvenience are **not valid reasons** for denying access.

What to Do If You Have Questions

If you're unsure about assistance dog access or the provided documentation, you can:

- Politely ask for clarification.
- Contact the handler's trainer or organisation for verification (if contact details are provided).

For further information, you may contact:

- The Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC)
- The handler's training organisation (e.g., Assistive K9s)

Assistance dogs play a critical role in enabling people with disabilities to lead independent and fulfilling lives. Compliance with the DDA helps ensure a more inclusive and equitable community for everyone.



