 **Information Sheet**

This is an Information Sheet for Guide Dog Handlers who have requested financial assistance for veterinary expenses.

Please read this information sheet carefully, as it explains the process of applying, as well as answers any questions you might have.

## **Financial Assistance for veterinary expenses**

As a Guide Dog Handler, you are expected to meet all veterinary, food, and incidental expenses for your dog, including the cost of special diets. Many vets offer reductions on their accounts to Guide Dog clients. Some vets even provide their services free of charge and only bill for the cost of drugs prescribed.

Occasionally, however, you might find that you are unable to meet a veterinary cost for your Guide Dog. This could be because your Guide Dog has only recently been placed with you and it suddenly becomes seriously ill. Or it could be that a vet treatment the dog needs turns out to be unusually expensive. Perhaps you’re finding it a bit difficult to make ends meet when the bill comes in and you need some assistance to clear it up.

In circumstances like this, Guide Dogs NSW/ACT may agree to subsidise some of the vet costs incurred by you for your Guide Dog. If you find that you’re in a situation like this and you do need some assistance, you can apply to us for Financial Assistance.

## **What we will and will not pay for**

If we do agree to subsidise some of your vet bill costs, there are certain things we will not pay for. These include the cost of dog food and incidentals such as chews, nylon or rawhide bones, toys, etc. We will not pay for dietary dog food, even if has been prescribed by the vet for the health of the dog. We will also not pay for the supply of NexGard Spectra, as this is provided free of charge to Guide Dog Handlers every six months.

We will pay for vet costs for your Guide Dog only. Please ensure that the invoice from the vet has the cost only for your Guide Dog on it. Do not include vet costs for your pets on the invoice, as we will not pay for them. Also, the payment process may be held up if you do this.

## **How to proceed with your Financial Assistance request**

We would like you to fill in the form with the information required and return it to us, along with your vet bills and receipts, as soon as possible. We would prefer that you pay the vet directly for the invoices and then forward the paid invoices to us for reimbursement. You will need to attach your payment receipts when you send in the invoices.

If you don’t send back this form and the invoices and receipts, we will not be able to proceed any further with the Financial Assistance Request. It is advisable to read the form thoroughly and fill out all information required to avoid any delays in processing. If the form is incomplete or has not been filled out correctly, we will return it to you for correction and/or completion.

If you decide you don’t want to continue with the request, let us know and we will cancel it.

If we do not hear from you within 42 days of our letter being sent, we will contact you to see if there have been any problems with filling out the form.

Once we receive the application form and invoices/receipts, the Head of Canine & Supply Chain Services and Guide Dog Training & Service Delivery Manager will review the application and approve it. In some cases, further information may be required before approval. If this is the case, we will contact you to clarify the required information.

If your request for Financial Assistance is not approved, we will contact you straight away and let you know the reasons.

If your request for Financial Assistance is approved, we will reimburse you by EFT once we check, approve, and process the invoices and receipts. This process can take up to two weeks after we receive everything needed from you. If it looks as if it might take longer, we will contact you to let you know. If we think there might be a problem with the invoices, or with the items billed, we will also contact you to keep you informed.

If we agree to reimburse you for vet expenses and you do not receive a reimbursement three weeks after you send in the invoices and receipts, you need to contact us. This will alert us to any possible problems. Likewise, we would appreciate it if you let us know when you do receive the reimbursement. This helps us to ensure that our processes are working properly.

If you don’t return the form and invoices within six months, we will cancel the request. You will then need to contact Guide Dogs NSW.ACT again if you want to proceed.

As most Financial Assistance requests tend to be completed after a few payments, we will complete your Financial Assistance request after six months. If further or continuing assistance is required after six months, you should request more Financial Assistance. You will be asked to complete another Financial Assistance Request form and return it for approval. This is our policy and no exceptions will be made.

Financial Assistance requests generally cover the health problem present when the request was opened. If a second, non-related, health problem occurs while the initial program is open, we may need to open a second Financial Assistance program to cover it. This is to ensure our internal auditing processes maintain their integrity. In these cases, you will need to contact us to discuss whether or not a new program needs to be opened. Please do not send in new invoices for a new health problem and expect them to be routinely paid, as they will not be accepted without our prior knowledge and approval.

## **Some things you need to know about the process**

It is your responsibility to ensure that you supply us with bank account details when you send in the invoices. If for any reason your address is different from that listed on the invoice, you need to let us know when you send the invoices in.

If you are in severe financial difficulties and cannot afford to pay the vet directly, then please let us know when you send in the form. We will then make alternative arrangements with you.

We will not pay for vet invoices that are more than ten months old unless there are exceptional circumstances.

Under no circumstances will we accept invoices directly from the vet unless an arrangement has been made between the vet and ourselves. You will be kept informed of any such arrangement. Any such arrangement will be put in writing for our records.

Copies of all notes, letters, and phone conversations are kept for our records and placed in your client file.