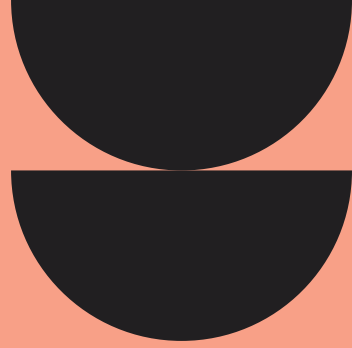


# Guide Dogs.



Guide Dogs NSW/ACT

## Canine Court Companion Program.



## **Thank you for your interest in the Canine Court Companion Program (CCCP).**

The following Information Booklet contains information about the program which we hope you will find useful.

The CCCP is a collaborative initiative between Department of Communities and Justice/ Victims Services and Guide Dogs NSW/ACT.

Since its introduction in 2018, the CCCP has been made possible thanks to generous volunteers who strive to make our communities better by donating their time and expertise to giving back.

Having a dog by your side while doing this is just the cherry on top!

### **The Therapy Dog Team**





# 1. Canine Court Companion Program (CCCP) overview.

## Objectives.

The primary objectives of the Canine Court Companion Program are to:

1. Reduce the negative impact of court attendance and support victims of crime through the presence of a specially selected and trained Therapy Dog.
2. Provide nominated courthouses with Therapy Dog teams who are confident, empathetic and committed to their roles.
3. Create opportunities where members of the public can be involved in their community in a meaningful way through a well-structured and supported program.

## What are the benefits of a Therapy Dog?

Interacting with Therapy Dogs has been scientifically proven to lower heart rate, increase speech and memory function and heighten mental clarity. Therapy Dogs can also reduce anxiety, offer a pleasant distraction, and provide non-judgemental support to those in need. In a courthouse environment, emotions and stress are often high, and victims of crime are at risk of being re-traumatised and left feeling vulnerable. Interacting with a Therapy Dog can help reduce these feelings and improve the wellbeing of the individual.

Previous trials of Dogs used in a therapy capacity in courthouses around the world have proven to be highly successful, with positive effects felt by not only the victims of crime, but also by their support networks and staff working in the legal system.

## What does the program look like?

Therapy Dog teams attend nominated courthouses on assigned days at an agreed time to offer support and interact with court users and court staff, accompanied by a specially trained and selected Therapy Dog.

Therapy Dog teams primarily offer support in the public areas of the courthouse, including the main foyer, waiting rooms, interview rooms (when invited) and safe rooms. Teams may also be asked to assist police, Volunteer support groups, or court professionals with individuals who are anxious and may benefit from spending time with a Therapy Dog.



## Selected courts.

### Metro courts.

Manly, Gosford, Sutherland, Burwood and Campbelltown.

### Regional courts.

Lismore, Goulburn, Nowra, Orange, Wagga Wagga and Taree.

## When do Therapy Dog teams attend?

Therapy Dog teams attend court for one and a half hours between 9 am to 12 pm (as per arranged with the court registrar). Most visits occur between 9 am and 10.30 am when courts are the busiest.

## Court days of operation.

Visit days vary between each court and may change. Visit days are currently:

**Manly:** four visits per week; Tuesday (AVO – double visit), Wednesday and Thursday.

**Gosford:** four visits per week; Monday, Wednesday (AVO – double visit) and Thursday.

**Burwood:** four visits per week; Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, and Thursday (AVO).

**Sutherland:** four visits per week; Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday (AVO), and Thursday.

**Campbelltown:** four visits per week; Tuesday (AVO – double visit), Wednesday and Thursday.

**Orange:** two visits per week; Tuesday (AVO) and Thursday.

**Goulburn:** two visits per week; Monday and Tuesday (AVO).

**Nowra:** four visits per week; Tuesday, Wednesday (AVO), Thursday, and Friday.

**Lismore:** three visits per week; Monday, Tuesday (AVO), and Wednesday.

**Wagga Wagga:** two visits per week; Tuesday and Thursday (AVO).

**Taree:** three visits per week; Monday, Tuesday, and Wednesday (AVO).

**Please note:** Victim Services prefer female handlers on AVO days.



## Training

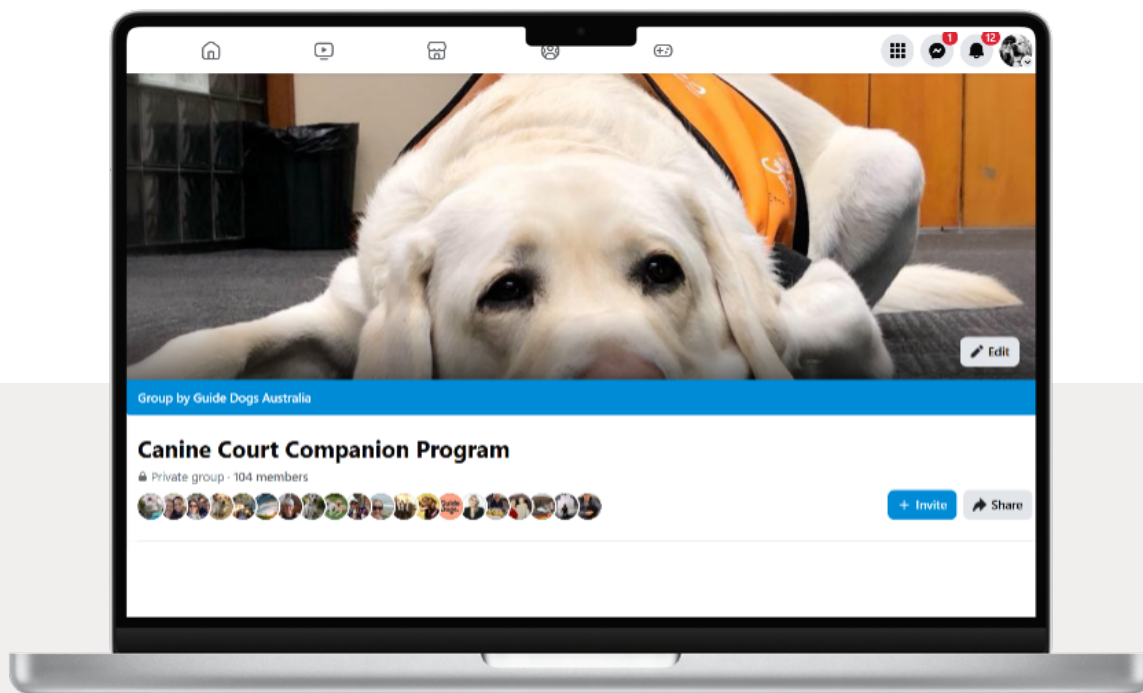
Volunteers are required to attend an online information session with Guide Dogs NSW/ACT. Volunteers will receive dog handling training and a court induction.

## Court Teams per court.

Team numbers vary between courts and depend on the number of visits required each week. There are generally four to six dedicated Therapy Dog and Handler teams per Metro court, and two to four dedicated Therapy Dog and Handler teams per Regional court. Teams share the load and create a support network for each other, so that court visits can be maintained should a Volunteer be unable to attend on their assigned day. Teams may also wish to meet up for training sessions and doggy play dates.

## Communication.

Communication is largely received via the Canine Court Companion Program Facebook group (a closed group specifically for CCCP Volunteers), dedicated court team Messenger groups, a rostering app, phone and email. The Facebook group is an active community where announcements are made, information is shared, and Volunteers are able to share photos of their beautiful dogs at work and play. Where possible, it is preferred that Volunteers have access to Facebook and Messenger.



## Volunteer options.

### **I would like to host a Therapy Dog and become a Primary Carer.**

Fantastic! If you can commit to at least one day per week at a nominated courthouse and have the capacity to care for a Therapy Dog in your home, we would love to have you on board.

### **I currently own a dog from Guide Dogs NSW/ACT and am interested in volunteering.**

If you raised a dog for Guide Dogs NSW/ACT that has been returned to you, and you would like to volunteer, please contact the Therapy Dog Team to discuss further.

### **I would like to volunteer with my own Labrador or Golden Retriever.**

Although most dogs working in the CCCP are raised by Guide Dogs NSW/ACT, if you would like to have your dog assessed for the program, please contact the Therapy Dog Team to discuss.



## 2. What does hosting a Therapy Dog involve?

Becoming a Primary Carer of a Therapy Dog requires commitment and a genuine love of dogs.

Our dogs are raised to be around people. As such, Primary Carers are required to treat Therapy Dogs as part of their family. Therapy Dogs must have access to the home most of the time, and sleep inside the home. They require daily exercise and enrichment to maintain good physical and mental health. Therapy Dogs are not accustomed to being left alone for long periods of time and should not be left alone for more than four hours a day.

A Primary Carer's home must have appropriate outdoor shelter, and a dog-safe yard and gates to ensure the welfare of the dog. The Primary Carer is responsible for the dog's overall wellbeing, including physical health. Therapy

Dogs must maintain a healthy weight, a clean coat, and have tidy, clipped nails.

Primary Carers are also responsible for maintaining basic training skills and home manners. It is also important that Therapy Dogs have 'off-duty' time where they are encouraged to relax and play.

Ideally, Primary Carers will live close to a nominated courthouse to reduce travel time and encourage compliance with visits.

Existing pets are fine, providing they are dog social.

Successful applicants will be supported and trained in dog care, dog handling and welfare by Guide Dogs NSW/ACT.

## What will Guide Dogs provide for a Therapy Dog?

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT supplies the Primary Carer with a Therapy Dog Kit (see section 9).

For the duration of the dog's working life, the Primary Carer will also be provided with premium dry dog food, veterinary care (see Primary Carer Agreement), preventive medications (see section 11) and basic equipment.

In Metro areas, supplies are generally collected from a Puppy Development Advisor (PDA). In Regional areas, supplies may be delivered in bulk, or Primary Carers may purchase food from their local pet store and be reimbursed.

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT provides supplies in good faith as a way of saying 'thanks!' for volunteering. To continue receiving supplies, the Primary Carer must generally commit to one visit per week. Should the Primary Carer reduce visit commitments to less than once per week on a permanent basis, Guide Dogs NSW/ACT may cease providing supplies.

## What will Guide Dogs supply for the Handler?

- A uniform consisting of a polo shirt and jacket.
- A CCCP dog coat and training pouch.
- Dog care, dog handling and dog welfare training.
- Courthouse training.





## Stewardship of the Therapy Dog.

Therapy Dogs placed with volunteer Primary Carers remain under the ownership of Guide Dogs NSW/ACT for the duration of the court program. If the Primary Carer completes 12 months of service in the program (with one or more weekly visits), they will be offered permanent ownership of the dog when their volunteer period ends. If the Primary Carer decides to withdraw from the program before completing 12 months and does not have a purpose for the Therapy Dog, the dog may be returned and redeployed at the discretion of Guide Dogs NSW/ACT.

## About Therapy Dogs.

Our Therapy Dogs are the result of careful and selective breeding through the Guide Dogs NSW/ACT Breeding Program. Our Breeding Program maintains strict standards of the health and temperament of our dogs, according to IGDF and ADI criteria.

Our puppies are born and nurtured in the homes of our volunteer Home Whelpers who are supported by our qualified vet nurses and veterinarians. Puppies receive age-appropriate handling, passive environmental enrichment, early neurological stimulation, and integrative activities as part of our Puppy Development Program. They also receive plenty of love, cuddles and playtime!

From two to 14 months old, our puppies are placed into the homes of our volunteer Puppy Raisers who oversee the evolution of our dogs through puppyhood, juvenile development and into adulthood. With the daily support of our skilled Puppy Development Advisors, Puppy Raisers advance through their pup's development, learning critical skills through our Puppy Development Program and weekly group and one-on-one training sessions.

At 14 months old, our mature dogs return to the Guide Dogs Centre for assessment and training by our qualified Guide Dog and Therapy Dog Trainers. Dogs are matched to the roles aligned with their individual strengths and inclinations. Throughout puppy raising, assessment and training, we continuously consider each dog's individual temperament and skill set to determine which career they're most suited to.

All training throughout our dogs' lives uses positive reinforcement via food and physical and verbal rewards. Guide Dogs NSW/ACT practices protocols as per the Humane Hierarchy and LIMA (Least Intrusive, Minimally Aversive) methods. It is expected that the training and management of all our Therapy Dogs will continue in this manner once placed with a Client. Dominance Theory, such as alpha rolls, rubbing dogs' noses in faeces, and the use of choker chains, is outdated and has been debunked. Harsh or aversive training and management methods are not acceptable. If you wish to manage a dog using these methods, we can not proceed with your application.





## What do we look for in a CCCP Therapy Dog?

Dogs selected for the Canine Court Companion Program (CCCP) have been identified as having a calm and predictable temperament, an engaging demeanour, and the capacity to work happily in stressful environments with high human traffic, without causing disruption to court proceedings.

## What training do CCCP Therapy Dogs receive?

All dogs raised in the Guide Dogs NSW/ACT Puppy Raising program undergo supervised training from eight weeks of age. During the first year of the dog's life, they learn basic skills, including "sit", "drop", "stay", "stand", "wait" (for meals), "on your bed", and "quick quicks" (for toileting). Dogs are trained to walk on the left side of the handler and be manageable and responsive on lead. During puppy raising, pups are also exposed to new and interesting environments to ensure they are confident and adaptable.

In addition to solidifying basic skills, the Therapy Dog Team familiarises the dogs with mobility equipment, noises, traffic, car travel, cafés, children, other dogs, residential areas, rural areas, parks and water ways to name a few. Additional behaviours may also be taught to Therapy Dogs to encourage engagement with court attendees such as "shake", "bow", or "say hi!".

All training throughout our dogs' lives is undertaken using positive reinforcement via food, physical and verbal rewards. It is expected that the Primary Carer will continue with this style of training and reinforcement and refrain from punishment or aversive methods.

Dogs deemed unsuitable for our programs due to health or temperament are first offered back to their Puppy Raiser as a pet dog. If the Puppy Raiser is unable to take the dog as a pet, the dog is placed on our Pet List and is matched and offered to the best suited Pet List applicant.



### 3. The Application process.

Applicants are first required to read this Information Booklet in its entirety. If the applicant is satisfied that they meet the criteria for one of the volunteer options, they may proceed with completing the Application.

The steps are:

1. Upon receipt of an Application, an acknowledgement is sent.
2. Applicants are contacted by a member of the Therapy Dog Team to discuss their interest in joining the CCCP. If deemed suitable to proceed, a trial court walk-through is organised with an existing volunteer to provide a live experience of the role before moving forward.
3. If, after the court walk-through, the applicant would like to proceed, a home assessment date and time are scheduled. Please note, a home assessment is not required if using your own dog.
4. The assessment is conducted in the applicant's home and generally takes up to one hour to complete. If the applicant moves residence after the assessment but before receiving a dog, the new residence will also need to be assessed.
5. Successful applicants will be placed on the Therapy Dog waiting list until a suitable dog match becomes available.
6. Once a match has been determined, the Therapy Dog Team will contact the applicant and make the offer.

Any personal information collected by Guide Dogs NSW/ACT will be treated as confidential. Access to this information will be limited to management and team members involved with service provision.

#### Declined Applications.

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT is committed to providing quality and meaningful services to assist those in need. However, not everyone will be suited to our programs. While every effort is made to ensure applicants are treated fairly and their applications are considered holistically, some applications may still be declined.

If your application is declined, you will be notified by the Therapy Dog Team, and a reason will be given. Recommendations encouraging applicants to develop skills or improve environmental conditions may also be provided, so that should re-application occurs, the applicant might be successful in the second instance.

Applicants who have been declined will have the right to appeal.

#### Canine Court Companion Program Agreement.

Guide Dogs NSW/ACT has an ongoing responsibility to ensure that both the Primary Carer and the Therapy Dog have the best possible experience through suitable training and ongoing monitoring. The welfare of the dog is an important shared responsibility of both Guide Dogs NSW/ACT and the Primary Carer, with the dog reliant on its Primary Carer to ensure its overall wellbeing. As such, a Primary Carer Agreement has been designed to outline these responsibilities. You will be asked to sign this agreement upon receipt of a Therapy Dog.

Please find a sample of the Canine Court Companion Program Agreement on the following page.

## Canine Court Companion Program (CCCP) Primary Carer Agreement.

The breeding, raising and training, of a Therapy Dog for Guide Dogs NSW/ACT is a significant investment in time, expense, and emotional commitment by Guide Dogs NSW/ACT, the carers who raise them, and the benefactors who support these costs. The success of the CCCP is reliant upon volunteer compliance and commitment. As such, recipients of Therapy Dogs specifically placed for the purpose of the CCCP, and other CCCP volunteers, are asked to sign this Agreement to demonstrate acknowledgment and acceptance of responsibilities as outlined below.

I

Primary Carer's/Volunteer's Name

of

Address

Therapy Dog Name

Therapy Dog Code

I agree that I will:

1. Fulfil visitation commitments at the agreed location, time and on agreed days.
2. Advise Guide Dogs NSW/ACT immediately if the commitment is no longer able to be fulfilled.
3. Advise GDN immediately if I am unable to attend a visit.
4. Advise GDN immediately if my circumstances change and I need to withdraw from the program.
5. Ensure exceptional health, presentation, and care of the Therapy Dog at all times by:
6. Maintain the weight of the dog as advised by Guide Dogs NSW/ACT Veterinarians.
7. Have the dog examined by a veterinarian every 12 months.
8. Follow health and care guidelines as provided by Guide Dogs NSW/ACT.
9. Engage in positive training and behavioural reinforcement.
10. Undertake regular grooming, bathing, and nail clipping.
11. Maintain the emotional and physical health of the dog by providing adequate and appropriate exercise, socialisation, down time, and affection.
12. Allow the dog to sleep inside the home and have access to the home during the day.
13. Keep the dog safe from abuse, neglect and discomfort.
14. Comply with all legislation and local bylaws related to the keeping of dogs.
15. Maintain personal neat and clean appearance when attending courthouse visits.



16. Maintain cleanliness and neatness of the dog coat and equipment provided.
17. Wear the uniform provided by Guide Dogs NSW/ACT to all visitations and public events when acting on behalf of Guide Dogs.
18. Ensure the dog is wearing the coat unobscured by equipment at all visitations.
19. Comply with any requirements and standards outlined by the courthouse.
20. Maintain a current Working with Children Check and National Police Check.
21. Complete any logs or paperwork required by Guide Dogs NSW/ACT and Department of Communities and Justice /Victims Services.
22. Retain the Therapy Dog personally and not place the dog with any person or organisation without the prior consent and knowledge of Guide Dogs NSW/ACT.
23. Commit to 12 months minimum of volunteer service prior to potential dog ownership transfer from Guide Dogs NSW/ACT to the Primary Carer.
24. Contact Guide Dogs NSW/ACT immediately if the Primary Carer is no longer able to keep the dog, so that the dog can be returned.
25. Contact Guide Dogs NSW/ACT immediately if the Therapy Dog becomes at risk of physical or mental harm, or neglect—including, but not limited to, the Primary Carer being exposed to domestic violence, substance abuse, or an inability to financially care for the dog—so that the dog can be returned.
26. Agree to have open and timely contact with Guide Dogs NSW/ACT should a

cruelty complaint be received about the dog, allow further investigation by Guide Dogs NSW/ACT staff or equivalent, and relinquish the dog without incident if the claims are found to be true.

## Veterinary Services:

1. Guide Dogs NSW/ACT will provide veterinary services to eligible dogs at the Guide Dog Centre when available or at approved vets. These services will be without charge to you during the term of this Agreement. The treatment of the dog will be at the direction and discretion of Guide Dogs NSW/ACT Veterinarians.
2. It is your responsibility to secure all necessary veterinary care, including emergency care, for the dog when needed.
3. Veterinary care obtained for a dog at a non-Guide Dogs approved veterinary clinic may or may not be eligible for reimbursement through Guide Dogs NSW/ACT.
4. Veterinary care may not be eligible for reimbursement for consults sought due to injury, ingestion, or inhalation. Such issues can be prevented with attentive dog management.
5. I acknowledge that this dog is not an Assistance Animal and therefore does not have public access rights, and that any public access granted is permitted at the discretion of the owner of the establishment, unless additional accreditation is obtained.

Signature

Date

## Therapy Dog placement.

Once a dog match has been accepted, a time and date for placement will be agreed upon. On the day of placement, a Therapy Dog Team member will deliver the Therapy Dog to the Primary Carer's home, where training and living with the dog will begin.

Receiving a dog from any of our programs requires a commitment of both time and energy. For the best possible outcome, Primary Carers should clear their schedules during the placement and training period so that they can focus on receiving information and helping the dog settle into its new home. It is recommended that non-essential visitors keep visits to a minimum, or avoid visiting altogether during the first few days of the initial bonding period, so that the dog has adequate time to settle into its new routine and the Primary Carer has time to develop the skills and confidence required to manage their new dog.

Placements are tailored to suit the Primary Carers needs and skillset and are monitored carefully to ensure a positive outcome. The amount of time spent on a placement varies in accordance with both the Primary Carer and the dog's needs. Most placements take two to four hours.

## What happens at a Therapy Dog placement?

A Therapy Dog Team member will first deliver the kit and dog food to the home. Staff will then provide the Primary Carer with a dog treat and ask them to sit in a comfortable spot while they retrieve the dog from the car (during hot weather, the dog will accompany staff to the door). Staff will then introduce the dog to the Primary Carer, at which point the Carer can give the dog the treat to initiate a positive connection. After this, staff will ask the Primary Carer to show where the dog will be toileted, and the dog will be asked to eliminate to initiate a toileting routine.

The dog will be shown its water bucket and allowed to investigate its new surroundings on lead, then off lead under supervision, depending on the environment and the dog. Staff will then provide information on general care and health management of the dog. Following this, grooming, obedience and feeding will be demonstrated, and the dog will be introduced to its sleeping area. This will be followed by a walk to introduce the dog to its new area and to acquaint the Primary Carer with managing the dog on lead. Once staff and the Primary Carer are confident that the Primary Carer has acquired adequate knowledge and skills to manage the dog independently, staff will leave, and the placement begins.

A follow-up call or visit will be conducted within 24 hours to check on the progress of the dog. During this time, any concerns or questions may be raised and addressed.

## Therapy Dog kit.

Therapy Dogs are placed with a kit suited to their individual needs. All kits include:

- Lead
- Martingale collar.
- Flat collar.
- ID tag.
- Food bowl.
- Brush.
- Nexgard Spectra. Fleas, ticks, heartworm, and intestinal worms (not Hydatid).
- Dry food.
- Toys (Kong, Nylabone).

Other equipment, such as a long line lead, walking harness or short lead for children, may be included if required.

Once these items run out or become worn, it is the Primary Carer's responsibility to advise Guide Dogs NSW/ACT so that they can be replaced in a timely manner.

- Prior to placement, the Primary Carer will be responsible for providing:
- An indoor bed. (We recommend a soft but supportive bed suitable for a large dog, approximately 1200 cm by 800 cm.) You may need more than one.
- An outdoor bed (optional). We recommend a trampoline bed.
- A bucket for dog water (9 litre buckets are best for outdoors).
- Pooper scooper and bin.
- Poo bags.
- Dog nail clippers (unless you plan on outsourcing this task).
- Dog shampoo (natural is best, perfume free. For example, Aloveen).
- You may also wish to purchase toys.

## A word on toys.

Many Labradors enjoy chewing and willingly accept toys. However, they are able to destroy soft and stuffed toys, tennis balls and rope toys with little to no effort. As such, these types of toys should be avoided, as internal injuries from ingesting broken parts may result. Hard-wearing toys such as Kongs and Nylabones are recommended.

## Supplies.

In return for your commitment, Guide Dogs NSW/ACT is happy to supply full-time volunteers who conduct one or more visits per week with the following supplies for the duration of the dog's working life at court:

- Premium dog food: approx \$115 per bag.
- Nexgard Spectra: approx \$94 per six pack.
- Yearly vaccinations: approx \$150.
- Canine Court Companion Therapy Dog Handler uniform (polo and jacket).
- Canine Court Companion Therapy Dog coat.
- Equipment: lead, collar, martingale collar, Therapy Dog tag and treat pouch.

\*Prices based on average 2024 product search.

Vet care will be provided as per the CCCP Agreement for dogs remaining under Guide Dogs NSW/ACT Stewardship.

For volunteers using their own dogs, preventative medications will be covered, as will veterinary care should the dog acquire an injury at the court.



## Therapy Dog Handler training.

How dogs are managed and cared for in the courthouse environment is important to both their welfare and longevity as a Therapy Dog. As such, Primary Carers undergo training with the Therapy Dog, including supervised sessions, to ensure confidence and ease of handling when on the job.

Handlers are taught basic cues used with a Therapy Dog, how to reward a dog effectively to encourage desired behaviour, and how to identify stress in dogs so that the dog remains happy in its environment. Other areas of training include information on court procedures, ethics and confidentiality, occupational health and safety, human health and communication, healthcare, infection control, court user rights and animal welfare. This training is conducted in collaboration with Victims Services.

Induction will be conducted at your nominated court, with information sessions delivered largely online and dog handling in person. Training will be delivered in a flexible and supportive manner.

## Complaints.

Volunteers are encouraged to provide feedback, including dissatisfaction with services provided by Guide Dogs NSW/ACT. There will be no disadvantage to ongoing or future services because of any complaint made.

### Complaint procedure.

1. Volunteers will be informed at the commencement of a program that there is a procedure for complaints.
2. Dissatisfaction with Guide Dogs NSW/ACT or its staff or with services should first be raised with the staff member providing the service. If a volunteer feels unable to raise the issue directly with this person, the matter can be raised with the staff member's supervisor or by contacting the Client Feedback Officer on 0466 306 827 or email [feedback@guidedogs.com.au](mailto:feedback@guidedogs.com.au).
3. Wherever possible, complaints will be resolved by the staff member who receives the complaint. More serious complaints will require investigation. The volunteer will be kept informed during the complaint process.
4. The complaint will be investigated, and the volunteer informed of the outcome of the complaint. If the volunteer is unhappy with the resolution of the complaint, it will be reviewed by the Client Services General Manager.
5. If the volunteer remains dissatisfied, they can take the complaint to the NSW Ombudsman (for residents of New South Wales), or the ACT Human Rights Commission (for residents of the Australian Capital Territory).
6. Documentation of complaints is confidential and recorded in a secure register. Details of complaints raised are not recorded on volunteer's records.

## Contact details.

Please feel free to reach out at any time if you have any questions.

Phone: 02 4579 7555

Email: [cccp@guidedogs.com.au](mailto:cccp@guidedogs.com.au)

Website: [The ACT Court Canine Support Program - Guide Dogs NSW/ACT](#)

Address: PO Box 3104 Freemans Reach, NSW 2756

