

Guide Dogs.

Applying for a Guide Dog

A guide dog is an advanced mobility aid and is a great option if you are already travelling independently with a mobility aid (normally long cane), but wish to travel more fluidly around obstacles rather than contact them (as a long cane does). They are also loving and loyal companions and can help you connect with the community.

Although they are life changing to many clients, they are not suitable for everyone due to many factors, which will be explored through the application process.

Application Process

1. Pre-screening over the phone.

There are many factors we consider when assessing whether a client would be suitable for guide dog mobility. These include:

- The level of vision loss that causes dependence on a primary mobility aid to ensure safe, independent travel. (Most of our guide dog handlers are legally blind).
- Sufficient work for the guide dog to maintain its safe guiding skills. A broad guide for the amount of work the guide dog would require is approximately 2-3 kilometres a day for 4-5 days a week with a variety of travel routes.
- The physical ability and the appropriate ongoing health status to manage a large, strong, guide dog.
- Financially able to care for a guide dog. Once placed the handler is responsible for all costs relating to the care of the guide dog including vet fees, food, grooming etc. We estimate at least \$50 per week but can go much higher if surgery is required for any reason.

Guide Dogs.

2. Interview and assessment in your home with a Guide Dog Mobility Specialist (GDMS)

The GDMS will discuss your current living and travel arrangements, as well as assess one or two of your regular travel routes you currently do with your long cane, independently.

3. Extended assessment on site, if required.

Three day residential class held on site in Bald Hills with other guide dog applicants. You work with a several different dogs to get an idea of the training and commitment required for guide dog mobility.

4. Guide Dog waiting list.

When you have completed and passed the assessment process you will be added to the guide dog waiting list.

Frequently Asked Questions

What does a Guide Dog do?

A guide dog is trained to guide a handler in a given direction unless told otherwise, avoiding obstacles and ignoring distractions along the route. It will stop at kerbs and steps, find doors, crossings and places which are visited regularly, and it will guide you across the road, but it is up to you to decide where and when to cross safely.

The guide dog and handler are a partnership, with the handler giving commands and encouragement and telling the guide dog which way to go. The guide dog is not infallible, but for some people it can offer a unique, safe and effective way of getting about independently.

Guide Dogs.

How does the Guide Dog know where it is going?

The dog will learn your travel routes gradually. However, it is a partnership, and you need to have knowledge of your environment to support and direct your dog as it guides you through the environment.

How do Guide Dogs know when it is safe to cross the road?

The short answer is that they don't. The decision to cross the road is made by the handler working the guide dog who decides where and when it is safe to cross.

What types of dogs are used?

We mainly use Labradors, Golden Retrievers and crosses of these two breeds.

How often should I go out with the Guide Dog?

Like all young dogs, guide dogs need regular exercise. It is important that they are exercised whilst working in harness to reinforce and maintain their training. A broad guide for the amount of work the guide dog would require is approximately 2-3 kilometres a day for 4-5 days a week with a variety of travel routes. Many guide dog teams work further and more often than this.

Can anyone apply for a Guide Dog?

Any citizen or permanent resident of Australia who is legally blind and over the age of 16 years, is eligible to apply for a guide dog. We have schools nationwide so if you don't reside in Queensland we can refer you to your local school.

How long would I have to wait before I could be trained?

The waiting time can vary depending on the length of the waiting list. This is governed by the types of guide dogs available at any given time and in some cases the waiting period can be as long as two years. The length of waiting time is dependent upon identifying a guide dog that will suit your needs, abilities and lifestyle.

Guide Dogs.

Do I need any training to use the Guide Dog?

Yes - training is as important for you as it is for the guide dog, and even experienced guide dog handlers need to re-train when they are allocated new dogs. Training usually lasts from three to five weeks depending on each person's situation and their experience.

During training you would learn how to handle your guide dog in the various situations you would encounter when working together. Much of the training takes place outdoors and you would be required to undertake two or three walks a day in different environments.

How much does a Guide Dog cost?

Guide dogs are provided to clients on a fee for service basis. All NDIS eligible clients will be required to apply for guide dog funding. Where there is no funding, the organisation will also provide guide dogs at no charge to applicants who complete the application process successfully.

Applicants are expected to take responsibility for the care and financial maintenance of their guide dog. The minimum cost for caring for a guide dog is at least \$50 per week but can be much more.

- The following are an estimate of the minimum costs involved:
 - Food approx. \$780 per year (\$65 per month)
 - Grooming and bath approx. \$960 per year (\$80 per month)
 - Pet Insurance approx. \$1200 per year (\$100 per month)
 - Ingestion surgery (without insurance) approx. \$10,000 - \$15,000
 - Cruciate ligament (without insurance) approx. \$6500 - \$10,000
 - Dental cleaning as required (not covered in insurance) approx. \$800 - \$2000

Guide Dogs.

If I am eligible for the NDIS how much will I be charged?

If eligible for NDIS the costs for the application process will be provided to you on a service agreement, for you to approve prior to commencement of services. If accepted for the waiting list a full quote for the cost of the guide dog and training will be provided for you to submit to the NDIS, along with an AT report.

How long does the Guide Dog work for - and what happens at the end of its working life?

Guide dogs are usually between eighteen months and two years old when they begin to work, and this work will continue for approximately seven to eight years. At the end of its working life, you may decide to keep the dog or may know of a friend or family member who would care for the dog. Guide Dogs Queensland provide a service which selects suitable homes for retired guide dogs when people are not able to keep them after they are retired.

Is the Guide Dog allowed into public places and on public transport?

The Guide, Hearing & Assistance Dogs Act 2009 and Anti-Discrimination Act in Queensland mean that guide dogs are legally allowed in most public places including shops, hotels and restaurants as well as on public transport. However, guide dog handlers unfortunately still experience issues accessing some restaurants, hotels and transport providers like taxis and rideshare.

What if a Guide Dog is not for me? Are there any other options?

Many vision-impaired people travel safely and independently using other forms of mobility. If during, your application, the decision is made that a guide dog is not the right mobility aid for you, we will discuss other services we can offer for your consideration.

For further information on the guide dog application process please contact us on:

Phone: (07) 3500 9060

Email: clients@guidedogsqlld.com.au