

Dog and Cat Management Board

Accreditation of Disability Dogs



Government of South Australia
Dog and Cat Management Board

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Policy

1. Legislative Context

Section 21A of the *Dog and Cat Management Act 1995* (the Act) allows the Dog and Cat Management Board (the Board) to accredit a 'disability dog'.

21A—Accreditation of disability dogs, guide dogs etc

- (1) *The Board may, on application, accredit a dog, or renew the accreditation of a dog, as—*
 - (a) *a disability dog; or*
 - (b) *a guide dog; or*
 - (c) *a hearing dog*
- (2) *An application for accreditation must—*
 - (a) *be made to the Board in the manner and form approved by the Board; and*
 - (b) *be accompanied by the fee fixed by the Board.*
- (3) *An applicant must provide the Board with any information required by the Board for the purpose of determining the application.*
- (4) *Accreditation of a dog remains in force for the life of the dog unless it is earlier revoked by the Board or surrendered by the owner of the dog.*
- (5) *The Board must maintain a register of dogs accredited under this section by the Board (which may be kept in the form of a computer record) that is to be readily available for public inspection without fee.*
- (6) *The Board may only revoke the accreditation of a dog if the Board is satisfied that—*
 - (a) *the dog's ill-health, injury or advanced age prevents the dog from carrying out its functions as a disability dog, guide dog or hearing dog (as the case may be); or*
 - (b) *the dog is temperamentally unsuitable to continue to be accredited as a disability dog, guide dog or hearing dog (as the case may be); or*
 - (c) *the owner of the dog is unable to maintain effective control of the dog (whether by command or by means of physical restraint).*

Accreditation by the Board allows a dog, when accompanied by a disabled person, to access areas that a dog would not ordinarily be allowed e.g. public transport, supermarkets, restaurants etc. This right of access to public places is referred to as 'Public Access Rights'.

2. Policy Statement and Purpose

The Board must ensure all dogs accredited as 'disability dogs' meet high standards of hygiene and behaviour, and that the applicant requires their dog in public places to alleviate the effects of their disability. It is important that only dogs that meet these standards are accredited for access to public places, to ensure the safety of the dog, its handler, and members of the public.

The purpose of this Policy is to:

- (a) Set out the requirements that a dog and applicant must meet, for a dog to be accredited as a 'disability dog' by the Board; and
- (b) Ensure that dogs the Board accredits as 'disability dogs' have a high standard of hygiene and behaviour, and are suitable for access to public places where dogs are not normally allowed.

3. Definitions

Applicant (the Handler)	The disabled person applying for their dog to be accredited as a disability dog and responsible for the control of a disability dog.
Approved Assessor	A person approved by the Board to assess an applicant and their dog for the Public Access Test
Board Staff	Staff of the Dog and Cat Management Board
Disability	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions; or - total or partial loss of a part of the body; or - the presence in the body of organisms causing disease or illness; or - the presence in the body of organisms capable of causing disease or illness; or - the malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person's body; or - a disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction; or - a disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgment or that results in disturbed behaviour
Disability Dog	A dog trained and used, or undergoing training to be used, for the purpose of assisting a person who is wholly or partially disabled
Effective Control	Responds to commands at all times
Positive Reinforcement	Encouraging desired behaviour through the use of rewards (food treats, praise, and play) and discouraging unwanted behaviour by removing rewards.
Public Place	A place accessible to the general public
Public Transport	A vehicle accessible to the general public
The Act	<i>The Dog and Cat Management Act 1995</i>
The Board	The Dog and Cat Management Board

4. Scope

This policy applies to the Board and Board Staff involved in assessing applications for disability dog accreditation and administrating the requirements of the Act in regard to 'disability dogs'. It also applies to Approved Assessors, prospective applicants, and handlers of accredited disability dogs.

This policy provides background information for Medical Practitioners, Veterinarians, and qualified dog trainers assisting prospective applicants with their application.

Policy Implementation

5. Application Process

Applicants must complete an Application Pack and provide all requested supporting information to the Board. An Application Pack is available from Board Staff.

6. Eligibility – Applicant (the Handler)

To be eligible for the Board's accreditation, an applicant must have a disability (as diagnosed by a registered medical practitioner). Applicants are required to provide the Board with evidence of their disability and evidence that demonstrates they require a dog in public places to assist them to carry out functions or alleviate the effects of their disability.

An applicant must be 18 years of age or older.

7. Eligibility – Dogs

To be eligible for the Board's accreditation, a dog must have completed obedience training with a qualified dog trainer and have reached Level 4 in obedience training. An applicant will be required to provide a declaration from a qualified dog trainer (who must be a person other than the applicant) as evidence that their dog has reached this level.

For a dog to meet the requirements for Board accreditation they must also:

- Meet high standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for a dog in a public place (including toileting on command);
- Be desexed, vaccinated, wormed, microchipped, and registered with the local council;
- Be physically healthy and capable of performing in the capacity of a 'disability dog';
- Walk on the ground whilst on-lead and walk to heel on left or right of handler (dogs which are carried by the owner or are carried in a container or other receptacle are not eligible for the Board's accreditation, except where the applicant is non-ambulatory).

For a dog to meet the requirements for Board accreditation they must not:

- Demonstrate guarding of people, territory, possessions or food;
- Display any inappropriate aggressive behaviour (growling, biting, raising hackles, showing teeth etc) or uncontrollable behaviour;
- Suffer from anxiety, stress, fear, or undue excitement when in public places;
- Be a prescribed breed (Japanese Tosa, Fila Brasileiro, Dogo Argentino, Presa Canario, American Pit Bull) under the Act;
- Be subject to a control dog order under Section 50 of the Act.

8. Public Access Test (PAT)

The dog and applicant (the handler) are required to undertake and pass the Public Access Test (PAT) to receive disability dog accreditation.

The purpose of the PAT is to determine if the handler and dog meet the minimum standard to be considered safe and effective in accessing public places and public transport on a daily basis.

The handler must demonstrate that they can effectively control the dog in public places at all times and interact safely with the public. The dog must demonstrate that it is highly obedient and responsive to the handler's commands, and that its behaviour and hygiene are suitable for public places and pose no safety risks to the public.

Due to the diverse disabilities that require a person to have a disability dog, the test is conducted to suit each individual case.

The PAT may only be conducted by the Board's Approved Assessor.

There is a fee to undertake the PAT with the Approved Assessor, and payment for the PAT is the responsibility of the applicant. Further information about the fee and details of the PAT assessment are available from Board Staff.

9. Approved Assessor

The Dog and Cat Management Board engages a certified service dog trainer to carry out assessments on its behalf. Prior to the PAT beginning, the Approved Assessor is required to:

- explain each task
- decide when, where and how the testing will be carried out, accounting for the handler's disability
- ensure that the testing process and grounds for termination are understood by the handler

The Approved Assessor reports directly to the Board and must not indicate the outcome of the PAT to the applicant prior to the Board decision. The Approved Assessor must provide the Board a copy of the completed Public Access Test assessment.

The Approved Assessor can seek a second opinion from a suitably qualified person (dog behaviourist, trainer) as required.

The Approved Assessor must provide the applicant a tax compliant invoice for the fee charged to do the Public Access Test.

The Approved Assessor must provide the Board with a copy of the applicant's completed PAT.

10. Termination of the Public Access Test

The Approved Assessor may terminate the PAT at any time if there is a risk to public safety, the handler, or the dog.

Immediate termination will occur if the dog:

- is found to have health issues that are likely to affect its ability to be a disability dog

- has a temporary illness on the day of the test which will unfairly affect its ability to perform
- shows signs of stress, fear, or anxiety
- displays aggression
- displays undue excitement

Immediate termination will occur if the handler:

- inappropriately uses negative reinforcement to maintain control
- is not in control of the dog
- uses a pinch collar, citronella collar or electric collar to maintain control of the dog.

11. Duration of accreditation

Accreditation is for the lifetime of the dog, subject to the condition that the handler and dog undertake and pass the Board's PAT every 2 years, to confirm they still meet the standards required for access to public places.

12. Revocation of accreditation

Under the Act the Board may revoke accreditation if satisfied that:

- the dog's ill-health, injury or advanced age prevents the dog from carrying out its functions as a disability dog; or
- the dog is temperamentally unsuitable to continue to be accredited as a disability dog; or
- the owner of the dog is unable to maintain effective control of the dog (whether by command or by means of physical restraint).

The Board may review accredited disability dogs and if they no longer meet the required standard, will revoke accreditation. The Board can require that a disability dog is reassessed due to a complaint from the public or the age/health of the dog.

13. Costs associated with accreditation

The applicant is responsible for any costs associated with training and accrediting their dog. The Board is not able to provide funding to applicants.

If an applicant needs financial assistance, they are responsible for independently researching and securing any financial supports that may be available to them (e.g. via disability support organisations).

14. Handler Obligations

The handler of an accredited disability dog must inform the Board if the dog ceases to be physically or temperamentally fit to continue as a disability dog, is subject to a control order or is expiated for an attack under the Act.

A handler is required to sign 'terms and conditions' when applying for accreditation and must abide by them if their dog is accredited by the Board.

15. Identification Card

Handlers of Board accredited disability dogs will be issued a photographic identification card, as proof that the dog is accredited and has public access rights.

The identification card is only valid for the dog and handler whose names and photographs appear on the card when they accompany each other. Accreditation cannot be transferred to another dog or handler.

16. Public Access Rights

Board accreditation provides access for handlers and disability dogs that access public transport and public places but does not provide access to private property. This includes private and strata title residences.

Board accredited disability dogs do not automatically have the right to travel in-cabin on aircraft. The Board does not have the power to permit a dog to travel in-cabin on an aircraft because carriage of dogs in aircraft is covered under the Civil Aviation Regulation (1988) 256A.

17. Register of accredited disability dogs

Under Section 21A (5) of the Act, the Board is required to keep a register of accredited disability dogs (which may be kept in the form of a computer record) that is readily available for public inspection without fee.

Only disability dog details will be recorded in the public register. All medical and personal information relating to applicants is confidential and will be handled and kept in accordance with the South Australian Government's Information Privacy Principles.

18. Grandparent Clause

Dogs and handlers that have been accredited by the Board under a previous policy retain accreditation for the life of the dog, unless the accreditation was granted subject to a specified period or is revoked earlier by the Board under Section 21A of the Act.

19. Accreditation of Species Other than Dogs

Under the Act, the Board can only accredit dogs (*canis familiaris*).

20. Appeals on Outcome of application

If an applicant wishes to appeal the Board's decision on their application for accreditation, the applicant must put their appeal in writing and address it to the Board Chairperson. The appeal should clearly state the reasons that the applicant is appealing the outcome.