

Guide Dog Mobility Service



WHAT IS GUIDE DOG MOBILITY

A Guide Dog offers a dynamic form of independent mobility, safely guiding their handler wherever they need to go. Guide Dog Mobility enables the handler to walk freely and feel confident knowing their Guide Dog will not only recognise obstacles in their path but guide safely around them. Guide Dogs will also stop at kerbs and assist the handler to cross the road safely.

A person with vision impairment using a Guide Dog has legal access rights to travel on all forms of public transport and enter all public places. This includes taxis, planes, food shops and restaurants, ensuring that the Guide Dog handler enjoys the same rights as a person with full vision.

Guide Dogs Victoria is the premium provider of Guide Dog mobility in the State, currently responsible for around 80% of the working Guide Dog population in Victoria.



WHO CAN BENEFIT?

You don't have to lose your confidence and independence. Anyone who is experiencing difficulty with their mobility as a result of vision loss can benefit from a Guide Dog.

People do not have to be totally blind to be eligible for Guide Dog Mobility. In fact, only a small percentage of our Guide Dog handlers are totally blind, with the majority having varying degrees of residual vision.

There is no age limit for prospective Guide Dog handlers. Guide Dogs Victoria train school aged and university students, parents with young families, people who are employed full time, part time or not in the work force. We also train seniors and people from non-English speaking backgrounds. However, prospective handlers should be sufficiently mature to provide the Guide Dog with the necessary leadership and be physically able to manage and care for the dog.

People with vision loss in addition to other forms of disability can also benefit from our Guide Dog Mobility programs. For example, diabetics with vision impairment greatly benefit from Guide Dog Mobility as it enables them to exercise independently, which is important for their health.

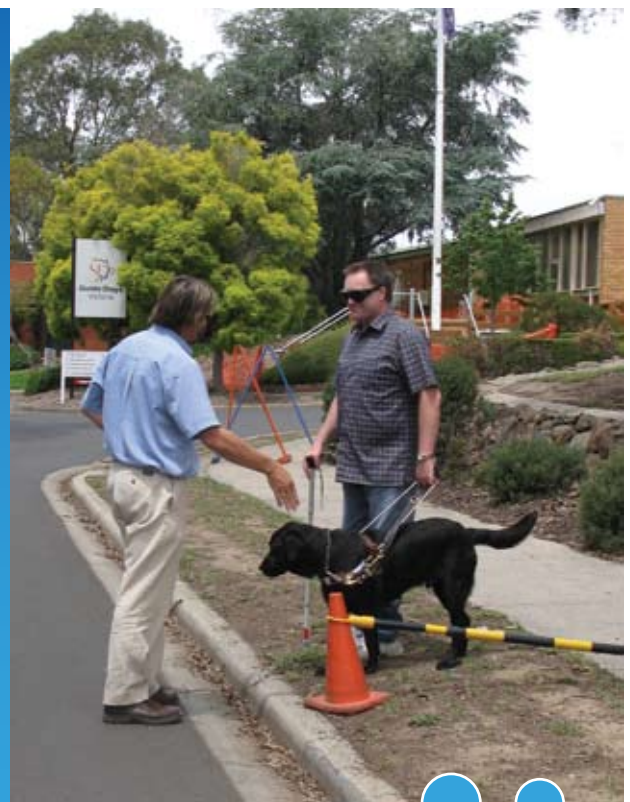




THE PERFECT PARTNERSHIP

The working life of a Guide Dog is, on average, eight to ten years. Guide Dogs will provide constant support and companionship during this time, so it is vital that a strong relationship is formed between the dog and its handler. Guide Dogs must also complement the handler's personal characteristics and suit their individual mobility needs.

Guide Dogs Victoria prides itself in creating strong partnerships and ultimately, successful working Guide Dog teams. Time and care is taken to profile the behavioural traits of each dog in training to ensure that every Guide Dog match forms the perfect partnership.



TRAINING - THE NEW TEAM

Guide Dog Mobility training will be conducted in what is mutually agreed to be the most appropriate training environment based on individual's needs. This training may take place on a domiciliary basis around the person's home environment, in our residential training facility, or a combination of both.

The Guide Dog handler will progressively develop the skills and confidence they need to work successfully with their Guide Dog. Through a combination of practical and educational sessions, they will learn how to care for their dog and gain its respect so the dog works willingly for them. Together, the team develops an incredible bond of trust that will last a lifetime.

All of our training programs are entirely dependent on the person's needs and abilities, with our experienced Guide Dog Mobility Instructors committed to helping them achieve their personal mobility goals.

ONGOING SUPPORT

Follow up and support is provided throughout the working life of each Guide Dog. Guide Dog Mobility Instructors are also available to help the Guide Dog team address other mobility challenges such as a change of environment in a new home or job.

We provide professional and prompt services right across metropolitan and regional Victoria. Our dedicated team of staff travel to every corner of the state to assist people in and around their home environments.

ALL SERVICES ARE FREE OF CHARGE

It costs Guide Dogs Victoria \$30,000 and up to two years to breed and train every Guide Dog. Thanks to community support, we can provide Guide Dogs completely free of charge to Victorians who are blind or vision impaired. This includes all costs associated with training and ongoing follow up services, as well as initial provisions for the Guide Dog (including bedding, guiding harness and food bowls).

Whilst the handler is responsible for their Guide Dog's ongoing veterinary care and maintenance following training, Guide Dogs Victoria will assist our handlers to meet the costs of emergency veterinary bills. We also provide free boarding kennel facilities and access to discounted premium dog food.

Guide Dog handlers are also provided with free access to flea, tick and heartworm protection for their Guide Dogs, courtesy of our generous corporate sponsors.



WE ARE HERE TO HELP

Guide Dogs Victoria is dedicated to supporting the individual needs and goals of all Victorians who are blind or vision impaired. The primary aim of our services is to enhance clients' safety, independence and quality of life at every stage of their journey.

We welcome all enquiries from individuals, family members and health professionals.

Upon making an enquiry, you or person referred will be given the opportunity to have a confidential discussion with one of our friendly and experienced staff members regarding their needs. This is a simple and non-threatening process with no cost, obligation or pressure to proceed with our services.

Family members are welcome to attend at any stage of the enquiry or training process and where appropriate, may stay at our residential training facility to provide additional support during this time.





“Guide Dogs Victoria gives people who are blind or vision impaired the opportunity to live their lives as they would if they had sight. They keep their hopes and dreams alive.”
- Alan Downie, Guide Dog Handler

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