

Assistance animals including dog guides

Assistance animals, including dog guides, are animals specially trained to help you do things you can't do because of your disability. Like all our funded NDIS supports, we can only fund assistance animals that meet the [NDIS funding criteria](#). We look at if the assistance animal is an NDIS support that relates to your disability.¹

Note:

- When we say 'assistance animal', we mean an 'eligible assistance animal' as defined by the NDIS Act. This is unless the context suggests that the term is being used in a generic sense.
- When we say 'your plan', we mean your NDIS plan.
- As part of the recent changes to the NDIS laws we are moving towards a new framework for planning. Rules need to be developed for this new framework. We're working on how and when we'll introduce these changes.

Until then, the information in this Our Guideline is about our 'old framework' for planning, which includes the legislative changes that became operational when the law commenced. All current plans will be known as 'old framework' plans, and we will continue to develop these until all participants have transitioned to the new framework.

What's on this page?

This page covers:

- [What's an assistance animal?](#)
- [How do we decide if we fund an assistance animal?](#)
- [What funding for assistance animal supports can we include in your plan?](#)
- [What information do we need to decide if we can fund an assistance animal?](#)
- [What if you don't agree with our decision?](#)

You might also be interested in:

- [Assistive technology](#)
- [Reasonable and necessary supports](#)

- [What principles do we follow to create your plan?](#)
- [Plan management](#)
- [What does NDIS fund?](#)
- [Assistance animals](#)

What's an assistance animal?

An assistance animal is an animal specially trained to help you do things you can't do because of your disability. These are things the animal wouldn't naturally do otherwise, like guiding you through crowded places.

To be included in your plan, an assistance animal must, among other things, be an NDIS support that is related to your disability support needs.²

An assistance animal is an NDIS support if it is one of the following:³

- accredited under a State or Territory law that provides accreditation of animals trained to assist someone with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability
- accredited by an animal training organisation prescribed by the Disability Discrimination Act regulations⁴
- accredited by a [registered NDIS provider](#) who is registered to provide assistance animals under s73E of the NDIS Act
- trained to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of a disability and to meet the hygiene and behaviour standards expected for an animal in a public place. To learn about how we decide this, go to [How do we decide if an assistance animal is trained to assist a person with a disability?](#)

What's a registered NDIS provider?

A registered NDIS provider may be registered with the [NDIS Quality and Safeguards Commission](#) (the Commission). Generally, if a provider isn't registered with the Commission, they'll be registered with the relevant state or territory authority for assistance animals.

You can search for registered providers using the [Provider finder](#) tool.

Your state and territory will also have websites for providers who are accredited and registered providers in that state or territory.

How do we decide if an assistance animal is trained to assist a person with a disability?

To decide if an assistance animal is trained to assist a person with a disability, we adopt the internationally recognised definition recommended by La Trobe University. La Trobe University worked with 50 international experts to look at reports and industry websites and get agreement about the best definition for assistance animals. You can read the full [La Trobe University report – Key terms for animals in disability assistance roles](#).

The La Trobe University report defines assistance animal as an animal that is trained to:

- a high level of obedience to enable it to access public spaces. This means they can safely go to public places that are typically off-limits to animals, such as a train station, café, or shops.
- perform at least 3 tasks or behaviours to do things you can't do because of your disability.

When we talk about the tasks the assistance animal does to help you, we mean active things that:

- the animal wouldn't naturally do that help you manage your disability
- mean you need less of your other funded supports.

The tasks might be things like:

- open and close doors or fridges
- open and close drawers or cupboards
- pick up dropped items
- reassure you in times of extreme anxiety, such as helping you to leave your home when you're not comfortable to go out
- press the button at traffic lights
- take clothes out of the washing machine
- help you find your way around safely, including stopping at kerbs and stairs
- guide you through crowds
- find a spare seat on a bus
- help you find doors on cars and trains
- block or be a barrier to other people if needed.

An assistance animal is not the same as an animal included in animal-assisted therapy. An animal included in animal-assisted therapy is a tool an appropriately qualified person, like a clinical psychologist, includes as part of delivering goal-directed, structured therapy.

An assistance animal is also not a pet kept for companion support, even if you've trained it to do some tasks for you. We also know animals can be good for helping with routines and taking part in social activities. However, these things alone don't mean it meets the definition of an assistance animal.

Learn more at [What about other kinds of animals?](#)

An example of an assistance animal is a dog guide. They're specially trained to help you do tasks if you have a severe vision impairment or blindness. They can guide you so you can independently and safely move around at home and in the community. By doing this, a dog guide will reduce your need for other supports.

We use the name 'dog guide' as this is the general name for dogs that help people with a severe vision impairment or blindness. Guide Dogs and Seeing Eye Dogs are both brand names of dog guides in Australia.

An assistance animal must meet the hygiene and behaviour standards expected for an animal in a public place.⁵ This means they can safely go to public places that are typically off-limits to animals, such as a train station, café, or shops. The types of assistance animals we fund are:

- dog guides
- physical assistance animals
- assistance animals for some participants who have been diagnosed with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD), who are able to take on the ongoing responsibilities of a primary handler.

What about other kinds of animals?

There are other types of animals that are **not** considered assistance animals and are not NDIS supports.⁶ These include:

- **companion animals** - an animal kept for company or fun, including pets.
- **emotional support animals** - an animal that provides emotional and informal support.
- **therapy animals** - an animal included in an activity to provide a positive experience, such as engaging with puppies.

- **animals included in animal-assisted therapy** - an animal that is included as part of delivering goal-directed, structured therapy activities that are led by a therapist.
- **facility animals** - an animal that is trained to work in a specific facility or type of facility, such as a residential aged care home. It may or may not live onsite.
- **visitation animals** - an animal that belongs to a volunteer or provider and is trained to visit residential, health, or educational facilities. These animals bring enjoyment to the clients or students.

All these other types of animals can be helpful in your life, but they're not an NDIS support.

Learn more about [What does NDIS fund?](#)

How do we decide if we fund an assistance animal?

We can only include NDIS supports in your plan if they meet all the [NDIS funding criteria](#).⁷ To help us decide if an assistance animal meets the NDIS funding criteria, we need evidence. Learn more about [what information do we need to decide if we can fund an assistance animal?](#)

The following questions are a good starting point to work out if we can fund an assistance animal:

- [is it related to your disability support needs](#)⁸
- [is it effective and beneficial for you?](#)⁹
- [what is the role of families, carers, informal supports or community support?](#)¹⁰
- [is it value for money?](#)¹¹

We also need to think about:

- [the welfare of the assistance animal](#)
- [if the assistance animal is likely to cause harm to you or be a risk to others](#)
- [if you already have an assistance animal](#)

We need to think about whether the assistance animal duplicates other NDIS supports you get through the NDIS.¹² We also need to understand how it will work with your other supports. We use the [Principles we follow to create your plan](#) to help us to do this. When we approve your plan, we approve it as a whole and not based on individual supports in isolation.¹³

Is the assistance animal related to your disability support needs?

When we decide whether an assistance animal is related to your disability, we'll ask you about your support needs. We'll discuss how the assistance animal can help you do the things you can't do because of your disability. This usually means you'll need less of other disability-related supports.

For example, if you have a vision impairment, we'd think about whether a dog guide would help you do some things you currently can't do in your life. We'd also think about what other supports we'd need to fund if you don't have a dog guide. A dog guide could help you move around the community safely, do daily tasks at home, or get to and from work.

Another example is if you have post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) and can't leave your home because of your disability. An assistance animal would have to be able to help you do some things your PTSD stops you doing in your life. An assistance animal could help you get out into the community, meet with friends and family or go to work.

Example

Joe has low vision and has a goal in his plan to travel by himself on the train to and from work. Joe can mostly get around in less crowded spaces but isn't confident in crowded spaces. Joe and his orientation and mobility specialist look at how an assistance animal could help him and whether it's suitable for his disability support needs.

We may be able to fund a dog guide so Joe can travel on public transport by himself. He needs the dog guide because he can't access public transport on his own due to his disability.

Is an assistance animal effective and beneficial for you?

We need to make sure that an assistance animal will be effective and beneficial for you, taking into account current good practice.¹⁴ Effective and beneficial means it will help you and be suitable for your disability support needs.

When we think about good practice, we look at how effective the assistance animal has been for other people with similar support needs and in situations like yours.¹⁵ If you've had an assistance animal before, we'll look at how the animal has helped you in the past.¹⁶

We'll think about:¹⁷

- the benefits of having an assistance animal compared to not having one
- if you have any experience using an assistance animal, such as a trial of using it as a support. A trial is generally done after you've tried other best practice supports, which should be described in your assistive animal assessment¹⁸

- if the assistance animal has done, or will be able to do, all the relevant training. This includes being qualified as an assistance animal and passing the [public access test](#)
- if you have the experience and capacity to take on the ongoing responsibilities of a primary handler.

If you have PTSD there is evidence that, in some cases, an assistance animal can be effective and beneficial in helping you actively take part in your community. But we need to know from your treating health professional that you've recovered enough and are ready to have an assistance animal. This means you've completed your other treatments and have recovered to a point where you're ready to take those next steps into the community. Sometimes a companion animal may pass the public access test but is not specially trained. Although a companion animal may give you the confidence to go into the community, it doesn't meet our definition of an assistance animal. This means a companion animal is not an NDIS support and won't be funded by us.

Not everyone with PTSD will be eligible for the NDIS and an assistance animal may not meet the [NDIS funding criteria](#) for everyone with PTSD. There may be other supports that are [better value for money](#) and more effective and beneficial.

Example

Mandy has PTSD and lives with her partner. She has a goal in her plan to do her grocery shopping on her own. Mandy can't leave the house on her own, and relies on a support worker, her husband, or a friend to be with her. She wants an assistance animal so she can leave the house on her own.

Mandy provides her my NDIS contact with an [assistance animals assessment template](#) which was filled out by her psychologist and assistance animal provider. The information Mandy provided tells us that Mandy had a 2-week trial with a fully trained and qualified assistance animal.

Based on Mandy's evidence, the assistance animal was seen as effective and beneficial. This is because the trial with the dog showed that, with its help, Mandy could do her grocery shopping on her own. There is clear evidence the assistance animal did 3 tasks that helped Mandy successfully do her shopping independently.

What is the role of families, carers, informal networks or community support?

When we decide whether to fund an assistance animal, we think about what support is reasonable to expect your family, carers, informal networks and the community to give you.

We think about whether it's reasonable for them to give the type of support that an assistance animal would give you.¹⁹

For example, we usually expect parents to look after their children.²⁰ We think about how much extra support the child needs because of their disability compared to other children of a similar age.²¹

For children, we need to know:

- whether the tasks the assistance animal will do are tasks we would usually expect the child's parents to do, taking into account the child's age²²
- whether the child's needs are a lot more than those of other children the same age because of their disability²³
- if there are any risks to the family's or carer's wellbeing²⁴
- whether the assistance animal will help the child to do tasks without support, taking into account what we would usually expect the child's supports to do.²⁵

We know how important it is to get therapy and supports for children early in life. Early childhood supports help a child be more independent and live an ordinary life. A child and their family usually work with a team of allied health professionals. They'll help you try supports that have been beneficial and effective for other children in similar situations, before thinking about an assistance animal.

For adults, we need to know:

- whether it's suitable for family members, carers, informal support networks and the community to give you the support you need
- how much support you need, and whether your family members and carers can manage this, depending on how old or able they are
- whether there are community supports available to support your family and carers, and if there are any risks to their wellbeing²⁶
- if there are any risks to your wellbeing by having to rely on your family for support²⁷
- whether your informal supports help you to be more independent or not, compared to an assistance animal.²⁸

We know it's important to support and develop informal supports for both children and adults.²⁹

Learn more about [informal supports](#).

Example

Sarah has lived with quadriplegia for the past 5 years. Sarah has some function in her arms but limited function in her hands and problems with fatigue. She uses a power wheelchair for all mobility and needs help with many personal and domestic tasks at home.

Sarah lives with her boyfriend who provides her with support in getting to work and accessing the community. Sarah wants an assistance animal because she wants to increase her independence in accessing her work and the community. Sarah tells us she wants an assistance animal to pick up and retrieve dropped items, open and close doors, and carry items such as bags.

We need to consider Sarah's goal of increasing her independence from her informal supports. We also need to consider what is reasonable to expect Sarah's boyfriend to support her in while also sustaining his role as an informal support.

Based on the information, an assistance animal will help increase Sarah's independence and sustain the informal support she receives from her boyfriend.

Is an assistance animal value for money?

We need to know that an assistance animal is value for money.³⁰

When we think about value for money, we look at:³¹

- if there are other supports that will help you in the same way for a lower cost. These could include other types of [assistive technology](#), therapy supports or behaviour supports
- whether there's evidence that an assistance animal will be of long-term benefit to you.³² For example, we'll look at how the assistance animal will help you to do things or manage your disability in a better way
- how the assistance animal could help you to be more independent and rely less on other NDIS funded and informal supports. We'll also think about how long it would take to reduce your need for those supports³³.

You might have funding in your plan for a support worker to help you get around in the community. An assistance animal may be better value for money. This is because you may not need the support worker to help you get around in the community once you have an assistance animal.³⁴

Example

Rani has an acquired brain injury which affects her ability to concentrate as well as her balance and coordination. Rani has a support worker funded in her plan for 20 hours a week to help her get around in the community. This might include supporting her to go to the shops and the library.

When we decide if an assistance animal is value for money for Rani, we look at the cost of a support worker over the long term. We then look at the cost of an assistance animal over that same period.

If Rani had an assistance animal, it might replace or reduce the need for a support worker for most or all of those hours. We would look at whether the assistance animal could help Rani do the same or more than she is able to with a support worker.

An assistance animal could also help her be more independent. Rani would be able to get around in the community when she wants to, rather than wait for her support worker. We would need to see if the assistance animal is better value for money in the long term.

What about the welfare of the assistance animal?

We **won't** fund an assistance animal if there's a risk to its wellbeing and safety.³⁵ So it can do its tasks and be an effective and beneficial support, we need to be sure the animal will:

- be properly cared for
- be treated well
- get enough exercise, rest and play time.

We also need to make sure:

- you can provide the right diet for the assistance animal and feed it regularly
- you can provide a safe and caring home
- if there are other pets in the home, they won't stop the assistance animal from working effectively
- your home environment won't disrupt or stress the assistance animal. For example, if there are young or noisy children who might stress the assistance animal
- the assistance animal will be safe if you or anyone else in your home has behaviours of concern that might pose a risk to their welfare
- there are no risks to the assistance animals when it performs tasks. For example, lifting or pulling heavy items or leading an electric wheelchair.

The assistance animal shouldn't be at risk of neglect or harm because of where it lives or works. The health care professional who prescribes you an assistance animal is responsible for making sure you can properly care for it. This isn't our responsibility, but we need to know you're in a stable situation and can care for the animal. We generally won't fund any assistance animal if:

- you have behaviours of concern including aggressive or violent behaviour
- you've been admitted to hospital for suicide attempts or self-harm in the past 12 months
- you've misused drugs or alcohol in the past 12 months.

Cruelty to animals is against the [law](#) in every state and territory.

Will the assistance animal cause harm to you or be a risk to others?

We can't fund an assistance animal if it's likely to harm you or be a risk to others.³⁶ This includes people you live and work with or see regularly. Risks can include things like dog bites or aggressive behaviour.

We **won't** fund an assistance animal if its purpose is to act as a [mechanical restraint](#). Mechanical restraint means the assistance animal acts to stop or limit your movement to control your behaviour. For example, this could be the assistance animal lying on you to stop your behaviours getting worse. We won't fund an assistance animal that will act as a mechanical restraint because this could be a risk to you.³⁷

We need to know who will control, care for, and look after the health of the assistance animal. We call this person the primary handler. Usually this is an adult or a person who can have full control of the animal. The primary handler of an assistance animal for a child might be a parent.

We need to know:

- who will be the primary handler
- the assistance animal won't cause any risks to you or others
- neither you or the animal will be harmed in stressful situations, such as when you get upset or angry.

If a child needs the assistance animal at school, we also need to know:

- if the school will allow the assistance animal to be there. This is a decision for the school, not us

- who the primary handler will be at school and if they're trained to handle an assistance animal
- if the assistance animal will be around other students. If it will be, that, it's trained for this situation
- if the assistance animal poses any health risks to other students and people at the school
- whether the school is physically set up to manage the feeding and toileting requirements of the assistance animal.

What if you already have an assistance animal before your plan is approved?

You must have funding in your plan for an assistance animal before you buy or enter into a [service agreement](#) for one.

We can't include funding for an assistance animal if you have already bought it. For example, you might already have an assistance animal before you joined the NDIS. Or, you may have bought an assistance animal before your plan was approved.

If you already have an assistance animal, we might be able to fund its [ongoing maintenance costs](#). But first we'll need to decide if your assistance animal meets the [NDIS funding criteria](#) to fund the ongoing maintenance costs. We'll also need to check that it meets our [definition of an assistance animal](#).

If we decide the assistance animal doesn't meet the [NDIS funding criteria](#), then we can't fund its ongoing maintenance costs. You also can't use other funding in your plan for the maintenance costs of your animal. This is because you must spend your funds according to the NDIS supports described in your plan.³⁸

Learn more about using your plan in [Our Guideline – Your plan](#).

What funding for assistance animal supports can we include in your plan?

Once you give us all the [information](#) we need, we'll decide if an assistance animal meets the [NDIS funding criteria](#) for you.

If we approve it, your plan will describe the assistance animal supports and what the funding can be used for, such as:

- the cost of the assessment to match the animal with you

- buying or leasing a suitable, and fully qualified assistance animal, or
- milestone payments while the animal is being trained by an assistance animal provider
- ongoing maintenance costs, such as vet services, food and grooming.

If you need to make milestone payments for the animal to be trained, we'll usually fund the payments according to your plan management type and quote. For example, if you self-manage, we may fund the money in instalments in the funding periods in your plan. Then you're responsible for making the payments according to your funding periods, service agreement and quote.

To learn more about how we include NDIS funding in your plan, go to [creating your plan](#).

What about any training costs once the assistance animal is qualified?

When you have a qualified assistance animal, you'll need to learn to work together as a team. This is so you're comfortable and safe using your assistance animal and it does the tasks you need it to do. The cost of this training is usually part of your quote from the provider.

The assistance animal provider will arrange the training for you and your animal. The training will usually be at their training centre and your home.

Generally, training to match assistance animals with their handlers takes 3 to 4 weeks. This is the same whether it's your first assistance animal or you've had one before. You might need some other training for specific tasks. If you do, this will be explained in the quote from your provider.

Do we fund accommodation costs at the training centre?

We may fund accommodation costs for you to stay at the assistance animal training centre if it's not close to your home.³⁹ This allows you to focus on the training with less home life distractions.

We'll think about all of these extra costs when we decide if the animal is [value for money](#).⁴⁰ That is, whether the total costs of the animal, and any extra costs, are reasonable compared to the benefits and the cost of other supports.

We don't give you funding for meals while you stay at the assistance animal training centre. These are considered everyday living costs.⁴¹

What if there are no accredited trainers close to where I live?

Training to be supported by an assistance animal is an intensive program usually done in 2-week blocks.

Your provider may take into account any extra travel they have to do when they quote for your assistance animal. We'll look at all of these other costs when we decide if the animal is [value for money](#).⁴²

What funding for ongoing maintenance costs can we include in your plan?

Once we approve to fund an assistance animal, we'll also fund the ongoing maintenance costs that are NDIS supports. This is to keep the animal healthy and active during its working life. Its working life is the length of time the assistance animal will support you and help you do your tasks. We would expect this to be a minimum of 6.5 years. We'll re-assess these costs at your plan reassessment.

Ongoing maintenance costs include:

- food
- grooming
- flea and worm treatments
- medication
- vaccinations
- vet services
- yearly reviews with the assistance animal provider.

Under NDIS laws, there are things we can't fund or provide.⁴³ This includes:

- pet insurance
- taxidermy and pet cremations, burials or funerals.

Learn more about [Supports that are not NDIS supports](#).

We'll only include funding for ongoing maintenance costs for an assistance animal that's fully trained and qualified. We don't fund these costs while the animal is being trained. It's the provider's responsibility to cover these costs. Or they could include them in the cost of buying or leasing the assistance animal. We also don't fund maintenance costs for companion animals or pets.⁴⁴

We encourage you to self-manage or plan manage your funding for the ongoing maintenance costs of the assistance animal. This is because most providers of these supports won't be registered with us. For example, you might get medication from your local vet or grooming at a dog groomer near you.

Learn more about [plan management](#).

What happens when an assistance animal retires?

Assistance animals need to retire when they can't work at full capacity anymore. This means they need to stop working due to their age or illness.

We generally won't think about funding another assistance animal until the assistance animal you have has reached the end of its working life. We'll only fund a new assistance animal if you still need it.

Even if you've had an assistance animal before, we still need to make sure a new assistance animal is an NDIS support for you now. You'll also need to give us information to help us decide if a new assistance animal meets the [NDIS funding criteria](#). We'll look at this information [when we do your plan reassessment](#).

We need to know:

- if your situation has changed and you don't need the assistance animal as much now
- if you can still be independent with the help of the assistance animal
- why the assistance animal has to stop work, or why it isn't able to work at full capacity anymore. The provider of the assistance animal may be responsible for the costs under guarantee or additional [warranty](#) if your assistance animals retires early and you need a new one.

It may take 12 months to get a new assistance animal. This is because the provider needs to match and train an assistance animal to your needs.

If your assistance animal is within a year or so of retirement, you should start talking to your provider. You'll need to start getting the information and evidence we need to decide whether another assistance animal still meets the [NDIS funding criteria](#) for you.

If you do need a new assistance animal and there's going to be a delay, we need to know. You may need temporary supports while you wait for your new assistance animal. This might include capacity building or short-term assistive technology supports. We expect that once you have a new assistance animal you won't need the extra supports anymore.

You can give us this information at any time, or at your next planning conversation.

Learn more about [changing your plan](#).

You can decide whether to rehome your retired assistance animal or keep it as a pet. If you choose to keep it as a pet, you are responsible for the ongoing costs to maintain your pet.

Is an assistance animal covered by a guarantee?

We fund a fully qualified assistance animal that will actively perform tasks that help you to manage your disability. It's the responsibility of your assistance animal provider to provide a fully trained and qualified animal. It's their responsibility, even if it takes many attempts to fully train it, so it's suitable for your disability support needs.

If your assistance animal doesn't perform as expected, you should speak to your provider. It's your provider's responsibility to ensure you get the support you paid for. This might include matching and training a new assistance animal.

The [service agreement](#) should clearly state if any guarantee and/or warranties are included in addition to those covered under Australian Consumer Law. You should be familiar with the [consumer guarantees on products and services](#) covered under Australian Consumer Law.

If you have any issues with your assistance animal as described above, you should contact your provider. These issues are between you and your provider. They aren't our responsibility.

The Australian Consumer Law also covers assistance animals. The Australian Consumer Law should cover you if you have any issues with your assistance animal, such as if the animal:

- doesn't perform as expected
- retires after a short amount of time or before the expected working life of 6.5 years.

Learn more about [Australian Consumer Law and your rights](#).

What information do we need to decide if we can fund an assistance animal?

To help us decide if an assistance animal meets the [NDIS funding criteria](#), you'll need to give us the information explained in this section. The information and evidence you need to give is listed in the [assistance animals assessment template](#). Your assistive technology assessor can either use this template or give it to us in a separate document.

We need this information and evidence even if you've had an assistance animal before.

Learn more about [how do you give us the information and evidence we need](#).

We need you to give us information that shows:

- evidence that the assistance animal meets our [definition of an assistance animal](#)
- evidence of allied health professionals confirming you need an assistance animal
- you have passed a [suitability assessment](#)
- the assistance animal has passed the [public access test](#). Or, you have an agreement with your service provider on when the animal must pass this test
- if you've had an assistance animal before. You can provide this evidence as lived experience.

We may also tell you the type of provider who will provide you with an assistance animal, and the qualifications the provider must have. This is so we can meet our responsibilities under NDIS laws.⁴⁵

You need to give us a [quote](#). We also strongly recommend that you have a [service agreement](#) that includes all of this information.

What is a suitability assessment?

A suitability assessment is an independent assessment done by an assistance animal provider. They look at whether you're suitable to get an assistance animal. This includes things like:

- how the assistance animal will actively help you
- how the assistance animal has been, or will be, trained to help with your specific support needs
- other supports you have tried
- whether you're ready and able to be supported by an assistance animal
- if you can look after an assistance animal and give it the right attention and care
- who will be the primary handler for the assistance animal
- where the assistance animal will live.

For a dog guide, a dog guide mobility instructor does this assessment. A guide dog mobility instructor must have specialist training and accreditation recognised by the [International Guide Dog Federation](#). They look at whether you're suitable to get a dog guide. This includes things like:

- the things you need help with because of your vision loss

- different assistive technology that might help you to move around
- how you move around and where you need to go.

Find your closest [guide dog mobility instructor](#), accredited by the International Guide Dog Federation.

What is a public access test?

All assistance animals must pass a public access test to become qualified. A public access test makes sure the assistance animal can safely go into public places and on public transport. This test can be different in each state and territory. The test should be done by an unbiased, independent assessor. This means they must not work for your assistance animal's training organisation. Your assistance animal provider will arrange this for you.

The places the assistance animal should be able to safely go to include:

- shops
- cinemas
- restaurants
- libraries
- public transport.

Do you need to give us a quote?

Yes. You need to give us a quote for the cost of getting your assistance animal from your assistance animal provider. Quotes will also need to be provided for the costs of caring for the assistance animal and making sure it maintains its accreditation.

The quote will need to include the cost of each of these items, listed separately, and when we can expect them to happen:

- assessments
- matching you to the assistance animal to make sure it's suitable for you
- specific training milestones and qualifications for the animal
- any equipment the animal needs, including initial harnesses or grooming equipment
- training for you and the assistance animal to work together, once the animal is qualified
- ongoing costs such as vet bills or special diets.

If the animal isn't fully trained yet, the quote should include the amount or percentage of funds to be paid for the:

- initial payment
- milestone or progress payments
- final payment.

We strongly recommend these terms and conditions for payments are also part of your service agreement.

Do you need a service agreement with your provider?

We strongly recommend you have a clear service agreement with your provider. A service agreement between you and your provider is like any other agreement under Australian Consumer Law. The service agreement should be clear about what you and your provider have agreed to.

Learn more about [making a service agreement](#).

It's important the assistance animal meets your disability support needs. You'll need to explain to your provider why you need the assistance animal and what it'll need to do to support you. The service agreement should have details about:

- your requirements of the assistance animal
- what a successful outcome looks like
- which disability related supports the animal is being trained to actively help you with
- how the animal will help you with these tasks.

For example, if you have a vision impairment, the service agreement will describe what the dog guide will be able to do for you. This might be to help you go out in the community, go to the shops or travel to work by yourself.

Your service agreement should also clearly state who owns the assistance animal. This may change during or after the training process. For example, some providers own the animal for the whole time you have it, even after it's fully trained and qualified. This means you're leasing the animal from them. In some cases, you may make an agreement that you own the animal once it's fully qualified and trained. This means the provider owns the animal during the training.

If your assistance animal harms you or another person, it's the responsibility of the owner of the animal. It's not our responsibility. This is why it's important your service agreement clearly states:

- what your provider is responsible for
- what you're responsible for
- who owns the animal.

The service agreement should also include details from the costs quote. It will commit the provider to the terms and conditions for the items and payments listed in the quote. It should also commit the provider to supplying you with a fully trained and qualified assistance animal that meets your disability-related support needs.

Your service agreement should have details from the quote including:

- initial payment once you're matched with an animal, even if it's not yet fully trained
- milestone or progress payments once matching is complete and the animal has passed various specific tests or milestones, such as completing the public access test
- final payment – when the animal has completed the personal training with you and is now accredited and qualified to be your assistance animal.

You should agree with your provider what happens if the assistance animal does the training, but it doesn't pass the tests or milestones. This means it isn't qualified. Your service agreement should state it's the provider's responsibility to find you another fully trained and qualified assistance animal at no additional cost.

How do you give us the information and evidence we need?

You'll need to give us all the information and evidence listed in the [assistance animals assessment template](#). You can either use this template or give us this information in a separate document. We still need all this information even if you've had an assistance animal before.

The assistance animal provider can use the template to make sure we get all the information we need. This may need to be filled out by the assistance animal provider in consultation with your occupational therapist or psychologist. You may also get help from your doctor to gather this information.

For a dog guide, we have a different [dog guide assessment template](#) which you can use to give us the right information.

We need information and evidence from:

- a guide dog mobility instructor to confirm you need a dog guide, that it can or will be matched to you, and is qualified or is being trained
- you, to confirm you need the dog guide and what other supports you have tried.

You don't have to use one of the assessment templates to give us this information and evidence. You can give it to us in a different format if you prefer. If you use a different format, you need to make sure you include all the information we ask for in the assessment templates. This is so we have the right information to make our decision.

You can also look at the [Factsheet – Evidence you need to give us before we create or change your plan.](#)

What if you don't agree with our decision?

If we decide animal assistance supports don't meet the [NDIS funding criteria](#), we can't include them in your plan.

We'll give you written reasons why we made the decision.⁴⁶ You can [contact us](#) if you'd like more detail about the reasons for our decision.

If you don't agree with a decision we make about disability-related health supports, you can ask for an internal review of our decision.⁴⁷

You'll need to ask for an internal review within 3 months of getting your plan.⁴⁸

Learn more about [reviewing our decisions](#).

Reference List

¹NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013, r5.1(b) and 5.1(d).

²NDIS Act s 34(1)(f).

³NDIS (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No. 1) (NDIS Supports) Transitional Rules, 4(1).

⁴These regulations must be for the purposes of paragraph 9(2)(b) of the Disability Discrimination Act. There are currently no defined regulations for this issue.

⁵NDIS (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No. 1) (NDIS Supports) Transitional Rules, 4(1).

⁶NDIS (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No. 1) (NDIS Supports) Transitional Rules, Sch 2 item 7(a).

Key terms for animals in disability assistance roles, La Trobe University, 7 August 2019

⁷NDIS Act s34(1).

⁸NDIS Act s 34(1)(aa).

⁹NDIS Act, s 34(1)(d).

¹⁰NDIS Act, s 34(1)(e).

¹¹NDIS Act, s 34(1)(c).

¹²NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r5.1(c).

¹³NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r 2.4.

-
- ¹⁴ NDIS Act s 34(1)(d).
¹⁵ NDIS Act s 34(1)(d).
¹⁶ NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013 r 3.2(b).
¹⁷ NDIS (Support for Participants) Rules 2013 rr3.2, 3.3
¹⁸ NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r 3.2(b).
¹⁹ NDIS Act s 34(1)(e)
²⁰ NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013, r3.4(a)(i).
²¹ NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013, r3.4(a)(ii).
²² NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013, r3.4(a)(i),
²³ NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013, r3.4(a)(ii).
²⁴ NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013, r3.4(a)(iii).
²⁵ NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013, r3.4(a)(iv).
²⁶ NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013, r3.4(b)(ii).
²⁷ NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013, r 3.4(1)(a)(iii).
²⁸ NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013, r 3.4(b)(iii).
²⁹ NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013, r 3.4(c).
³⁰ NDIS Act s 34(1)(c).
³¹ NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013 r3.1
³² NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013 r3.1(b).
³³ NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013 r3.1(f).
³⁴ NDIS Act 2013 s34(1)(c), NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules, r 3.1(a) and 3.1(c).
³⁵ NDIS Act s 34(1)(d), NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013, rr5.1(a)-5.3(a).
³⁶ NDIS Act s 34(1)(d), NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r 5.1(a).
³⁷ NDIS Act s 34(1)(d), NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r 5.1(a).
³⁸ NDIS Act, s 46(1).
³⁹ NDIS (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No. 1) (NDIS Supports) Transitional Rules, Sch1, items 2(a)(e).
⁴⁰ NDIS Act, s 34(1)(c).
⁴¹ NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules, r5.1(d).
⁴² NDIS Act, s 34(1)(c).
⁴³ NDIS (Getting the NDIS Back on Track No. 1) (NDIS Supports) Transitional Rules, Sch 2 Item 7.
⁴⁴ NDIS (Supports for Participants) r5.1(d)
⁴⁵ NDIS Act ss 33(3), 36.
⁴⁶ NDIS Act s 100(1).
⁴⁷ NDIS Act s 100.
⁴⁸ NDIS Act s 100(2).