

**ASSOCIATION FOR THE BLIND OF WA (INC.)**  
**GUIDE DOG SERVICES POLICY**

**1.0 INTRODUCTION**

The Association for the Blind of WA (Inc) is committed to providing a Guide Dog Service that effectively and efficiently caters for the needs of people who are blind or vision impaired in Western Australia.

This policy is provided as a framework within which the Guide Dog Service will operate. It does so with the cooperation of the Association's significant Veterinary and Breeding/Kennel partnerships.

**2.0 STATEMENT**

**2.1 Sole Provider**

The Association for the Blind of WA (referred in the Dog Act 1976 as *Guide Dogs for the Blind Association of Western Australia Incorporated*) is the sole, State-based, provider of Guide Dog services in Western Australia. The service provides for the supply, training and maintenance of Guide Dogs for people who are blind or vision impaired.

**2.2 Accreditation**

2.2.1 International Standards

The Guide Dog Assessment, Training and Follow up Program operated by the Association for the Blind of WA incorporates *Standards* as developed by the International Federation of Guide Dog Schools for the Blind.

2.2.2 National Assessment Criteria

A Guide Dog is a primary mobility aid; its main role is to assist its user avoid obstacles in his/her immediate path. In order for the Guide Dog to be able to do this as safely as possible, the Association believes that the suitability and readiness for training of any Guide Dog applicant must be determined against a set of *Assessment Criteria*.

**2.3 Application Process**

2.3.1 Assessment

Applications for training with a Guide Dog may be received from any person who is blind or vision impaired. The Association for the Blind of WA Guide Dog Instructor assesses applicants for their suitability and readiness for training with a Guide Dog.

2.3.2 Eligibility

Only applicants satisfying the Assessment Criteria referred to in point 2.2.2 above will be considered for training.

2.3.3 Reapplication

Applicants assessed as unsuitable or not ready for training may reapply at a later date.

#### 2.3.4 Discretion

The provision of a Guide Dog is at the discretion of the Association for the Blind of WA. The Association reserves the right to have the final decision in the provision of any Guide Dog.

### 2.4 Guide Dog Training Program

The training program for a Guide Dog comprises three stages as follows:

- a) Socialisation (“puppy raising”). This involves placement of the puppy (usually at age eight weeks) with a host family for a period up to 12 months.
- b) Assessment and Guide Dog Training. Suitable dogs undertake an intensive minimum 20-week Guide Dog Training Program.
- c) Placement and Client Training. The Client and the Guide Dog are carefully matched for placement. In this stage, the Client and the Guide Dog are trained together for a minimum period of four weeks. In some cases, training may be extended. On completion of this stage, the Guide Dog Instructor will determine whether the dog will be recognised as a *bona fide* Guide Dog.

### 2.5 Guide Dog Placement Agreement

Prior to Placement and Training as outlined in point 2.4 above, the Client is required to sign the *Guide Dog User Agreement* in conjunction with the Association for the Blind of WA. This Agreement outlines the rights and responsibilities of both parties.

### 2.6 Bona Fide Guide Dog

#### 2.6.1 Legislative Definition

The Dog Act 1976 (part 1, section 3) defines a Guide Dog as “*a dog trained by a guide dog training institution recognised by the Guide Dogs for the Blind Association of Western Australia Incorporated which is used as a guide by a person who is blind or partially blind, and for certain purposes provided for in this Act includes a dog which is in the course of such training*”.

#### 2.6.2 Official Recognition

On successful completion of the Guide Dog Training Program as outlined in section 2.4 above, the Guide Dog will be recognised as a *bona fide* Guide Dog by the Association for the Blind of WA. A graduation medallion and a Guide Dog Harness recognising the status of the dog as a *bona fide* Guide Dog are issued to the Client. This Medallion and Harness will remain the property of the Association for the Blind of WA.

### 2.6.3 Registration Renewal

In accordance with the standards referred to in 2.2.1, the registration of a *bona fide* Guide Dog will be reviewed annually by the Association for the Blind of WA, Guide Dog Instructor.

### 2.6.4 Registration Withdrawal

The Association for the Blind of WA reserves the right to withdraw the recognition of a *bona fide* Guide Dog in circumstances where minimum guiding standards referred to in point 2.2.1 above are not met. In this event, the Client will be required to return the Medallion and the Guide Dog Harness.

### 2.6.5 Recognition

In the case of a Guide Dog trained by another organization within Australia or internationally, that can demonstrate adherence to the standards (or equivalent) as at 2.2.1, the Association for the Blind of WA will –

- formally recognize its status as a Guide Dog; and
- apply all provisions of this policy to both Client and Guide Dog.

## 2.7 Ownership

Upon graduation the Guide Dog becomes the property of the Client and will remain so, even in the event that the Association for the Blind of WA withdraws *bona fide* Guide Dog status as per 2.6.4 above.

## 2.8 Costs

### 2.8.1 Training Program

The Association for the Blind of WA will meet the full cost of the Guide Dog Training Program as detailed in section 2.4 above and the cost of providing a Guide Dog Harness.

### 2.8.2 Ongoing Expenses

The Client will be responsible for all reasonable expenses associated with the care and maintenance of the Guide Dog including food, veterinary expenses, bedding and grooming. The Association will recommend that the applicant takes out pet health insurance.

### 2.8.3 Financial Assistance

In relation to expenses directly related to the maintenance of a Guide Dog, the Association for the Blind of WA will consider reasonable requests for financial assistance from Guide Dog Users in circumstances of financial hardship. Such consideration will take into account the needs of the Guide Dog User, the prognosis for the Guide Dog, the age of

the Guide Dog and the projected number of working years remaining.

**2.9 Indemnity**

In adhering to the provisions of this policy, the Association for the Blind of WA aims to maximise the safety and well being of Clients and their Guide Dogs. The Association for the Blind of WA will not be held liable for any injury or damage arising in the course of, or as a consequence of carrying out its duty.

**2.10 Specification**

The Association for the Blind of WA reserves the right to specify the breed of Guide Dog provided to an approved Client.

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Dr Margaret Crowley  
Chief Executive Officer

11/11/2005  
Effective Date

*First Adopted 2000; Reviewed 2002*