

Assistance Animal FAQs

What is an assistance animal?

In New South Wales, an assistance animal is a dog or other animal that fits any of these descriptions:

- The animal is accredited by an animal training organisation prescribed by the Australian Government.
- The animal is trained to help a person with disability and meet standards of hygiene and behaviour appropriate for an animal in a public place.

This is based on how assistance animals are defined in federal law under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992*. A working dog cannot also be an assistance animal.

What is the difference between an assistance animal and a companion animal?

The key difference between an assistance animal and a companion animal (including therapy or emotional support animals) is whether the animal has been trained to perform certain actions that directly alleviate the handler's disability.

This training is additional to the animal's behavioural training for public places. It is important to note that the mere presence of the animal is not enough for it to be considered an assistance animal.

What does the owner of an assistance animal need to do?

Like all other companion animals, assistance animals need to be microchipped and registered in New South Wales. However, no fee is charged for registering an assistance animal.

It is also strongly recommended that assistance animals are vaccinated and desexed.

How to register your assistance animal?

There is no fee for registering an assistance animal, but you must complete and return a Pet Registration (R2) form to Maitland City Council.

Council is entitled to request reasonable proof that your animal is a genuine assistance animal. Documentation we may request to demonstrate that the assistance animal has received training by an animal training organisation includes:

- A signed statement confirming that the animal is being used as an assistance animal for a disability.
- Evidence that the animal has been trained by an appropriate animal training organisation. This may include a current certificate or other valid documentation from the organisation, confirming that the animal is trained to support your needs and meets the necessary hygiene and behavioural standards for public places.

Individuals with a disability have the right to train their own assistance animal. However, they must provide Council with the following documentation:

- A signed statement confirming that the animal is being used as an assistance animal for a disability.
- Documentation, dated within the last six months, outlining how the animal's skills mitigate the effects of the disability, comply with public behaviour and hygiene standards, and how the individual maintains control over the animal while in public places.

Registration as an assistance animal under the New South Wales *Companion Animals Act 1998* does not necessarily provide proof the animal is an assistance animal for the purposes of entering a public place or public transport.

For more information

If you have further questions or are seeking clarification on any of the points listed above, please contact:

Maitland City Council

02 4934 9700

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