



Guide for new teams

CONTENTS:

Who are we	2
Eligibility for an assistance dog	3
Suitable dogs to become assistance dogs	3
Time frame and process for training	4
What is involved in the training	4
How much might it all cost?	5
What is required of you?	5
What is required of the dog?	6
What is involved in the Public Access Test?	6
What happens after the public access test?	7
Conditions	7



Who am I?

At Laura Mundy Assistance Dogs (LMAD), my focus is individually tailoring the training and the support that I provide you, **and** your dog, in preparation for becoming a certified assistance dog and handler team. I am committed to using force free, positive-focused training methods to help you achieve your goals of having your dog trained to assist you in the ways you need. I am able to help you through the process whether you have begun with acquiring a new puppy or have an adult dog that you wish to begin training.

Located in the western suburbs of Melbourne, Victoria, I provide the training in-person throughout the local area. To train with me, you will be required to travel to the western suburbs of Melbourne for your training sessions.

My educational background is in psychology and behavioural neuroscience, as well as achieving qualifications and extensive experience in dog training and behaviour spanning almost 20 years. I am in the unique position of being able to provide you with extensive knowledge and training in assistance dogs as well as the benefits they provide. I look forward to speaking with you and seeing how I may be able to assist you moving forward on your assistance dog training and certification path.

The following pages will help you understand what is required of you and your dog in order to achieve certification as an assistance dog and handler team. Applying to undertake training with myself and even undergoing training does NOT guarantee successful certification as an assistance dog team. Successful training towards and completion of a Public Access Test (PAT) will be required at the end of your training as well as every two years of your time working together with your dog. An annual check in with us to ensure your dog's training and behaviour standards are up to standard for working in public is also required.



Eligibility for an assistance dog:

In order to be eligible for an assistance dog you must meet the requirements as stated under the Disability Discrimination Act (1994) as having a disability.

This criteria states:

*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 of the body of organisms causing disease or illness, or
the presence in the body of organisms capable of 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 judgement or that results in disturbed behaviour. and includes a disability that:
presently exists, or,
previously existed but no longer exists, or
may exist in the future (including because of a genetic predisposition to that disability), or
is imputed to a person.*

To avoid doubt, a disability that is otherwise covered by this definition includes behaviour that is a symptom or manifestation of the disability.

If you feel you fit the above criteria, a medical professional must complete the medical form accompanying the application form available on our website, stating that you fit the above criteria based upon their assessment. They will also complete whether they feel that having a dog as an assistance dog would be beneficial to you, reduce your need for other supports and that there would be no known welfare concerns for either yourself or the dog by having one in your care.



Suitable dogs to become assistance dogs:

Any dog can be suitable as long as they fit a number of key criteria. Your veterinarian must also assess them as being fit and able to fill the role of an assistance dog. We do not want dogs that are suffering from any pain or illness that would make it unethical for them to train and work as an assistance dog. The dog must also NOT be a restricted breed or have ever been declared a dangerous dog by council. We do not take dogs aged over 7 years to begin their training. Training a dog to assistance dog level and achieving a successful pass on a Public Access Test may take 12 to 18 months of training. Most assistance dogs will begin to reduce workload and many may even retire, at the age of nine to ten years. It would not be fair to put a dog over the age of 7 years through the training required to possibly only work for a year or two at an older age before needing to retire. With six-monthly vet assessments however, which deem the dogs still physically capable of continuing, dogs aged over 10 that are **already working as assistance dogs** can continue to work.

Breeds such as short-statured dogs and dogs with flat noses will require more thorough vet assessment and restrictions on workload and conditions. It is unethical to have a short-nosed breed work in higher temperatures and for longer periods, this could be potentially deadly. It is important that you consider your needs from an assistance dog and whether that would match the ability of the dog to do this for you.

Timeframe and process for training:

Depending on whether you have recently purchased a puppy to begin training with or have an adult dog or rescue a dog from a shelter, the process and time taken to train your dog may vary.

You should expect the training process to take approximately 12-months. If beginning with a young puppy, this process will take closer to 18-months to allow for the maturing of your dog



and the first six months for your puppy to be focused more greatly on early socialisation and relationship building with you. The process of training a dog to be an assistance dog is not a fast process. Not only are there general obedience-type skills training required but also proofing these behaviours in public areas. Alongside your dog's obedience training and reliability of behaviour in public, we also require your dog be trained in what is called task-training. Task training is the training of your dog in behaviours that are aimed at assisting you and reducing your need for other supports. This may be in behaviours such as deep pressure therapy where your dog may lay across your body to apply pressure which assists in grounding you and reducing symptoms of anxiety. It could be training your dog to retrieve dropped items or opening doors if this may assist with any impacts of limited mobility. In order to be classified as an assistance dog it is required that your dog perform a **minimum** of three tasks. It is expected however, and we will train for, approximately ten to 12 tasks and no doubt across your dog's years as an assistance dog, the number of tasks they do for you will grow.

We will **not** accept enquiries that request that we immediately Public Access Test (PAT) dogs that you believe you have trained already and are ready for public access work. You must commit to an expected 12 months of regular training with me (minimum of monthly sessions) in order to prove consistency in the training level and behaviour of your dog in public before being assessed (undertaking your PAT and becoming certified).

What is involved in the training?

We must have a minimum of one in-person training session per month. There will be ongoing support available through Google Doc updates and logging of your training between sessions. This training will start at the level your dog is at with their training. This may mean I begin with starting basic training foundations or even joining you up to basic group classes local to you that use the same training methods as us (positive only). This may even be required before you officially apply to become an assistance dog in training with myself. Once you register as an assistance dog in training with me, you must only be undertaking training with



me throughout the time of your training and working as an assistance dog. You are unable to attend training with another trainer concurrently as part of the conditions of being certified as a working team with me. If you want to undertake other specific training such as noseworks, agility or another similar activity just let me know and I will no doubt highly recommend it. Other training such as obedience training with a 'balanced' trainer, snake avoidance training and so on is strictly not allowed.

Once your dog is fluent in the basic foundation skills which will be included in the training guide you will be provided, we will begin to do these in public settings. Training is supposed to be enjoyable and stress free. The process is not aimed at testing you every time we catch up or placing pressure on you or your dog. We understand there will also be periods where you may not feel up to training and need to take a break. That is totally fine too! We are here to support you every step of the way and to make training a safe and beneficial experience for both of you. If you start with a puppy we also want you to just relax and enjoy your puppy while focusing on doing normal puppy stuff (puppy school, toilet training, address nipping/biting and so on). Once your pup is older than five months of age, we can then discuss more targeted training. It is important if you do have a puppy that we try to do some socialisation to environments they will likely experience so that they're robust and confident once ready to begin more formal training. We can provide socialisation checklists to help with this.

Task training will be undertaken throughout your overall training program with me and will be a part of your PAT. We remain in regular contact throughout your training and you will be able to correspond through our Google doc folder, email or text. We ask that you try to maintain contact via one main form so that we can be consistent in communication and follow the progress of the discussions more clearly. While you are in training, you will be able to wear an in-training vest while out in training sessions with myself in public. This vest and my presence enables us to do public access training. Between sessions with myself, you can practice your skills in shopping strips, shopping malls, shops that allow dogs and many other options that



mimic public access training.

Group training courses will also be available to assistance dog teams to practice your training in a more social setting if this is something that you are comfortable with.

You will be required to undertake another PAT every two years.

How much might it all cost?

The cost of getting a dog, maintaining a dog and training your dog to completion if a PAT can vary. An approximate breakdown will be itemised below but does not include the cost of purchasing a dog. You will need to add that on depending on whether you already have a dog, are going to purchase a puppy or rescue an adult dog. These costs are associated with the first 12 months. Note that even following your first PAT, maintenance sessions with myself are highly recommended between PATs.

Application and pre-suitability assessment: \$250

Monthly worming and flea treatment: \$180

Yearly health check and vaccination: \$100

Food and bowls: \$1000

Toys and treats: \$1000

Beds and equipment: \$300

Pet insurance: \$1200

Twice monthly training sessions: \$3600

Public access test: \$250

Purchase of vest: \$100

TOTAL: \$7755

As mentioned however this figure is very flexible. It will depend on the size of your dog, whether they also require professional grooming based on their coat type, any additional medical needs that may come up and much more. You can expect to spend anywhere up to \$10,000 potentially in the first year.



What is required of you?

Expectations of assistance dog teams in training is high. It's expected that you will complete a public access test after 18 months of training but that training will be regularly attended throughout. If we do not receive responses to contact or there is a no show at training sessions then you do risk being withdrawn from training. I understand that training your dog as an assistance dog is a demanding task and there will be times where breaks may need to occur, it is just asked that there is notification of when breaks need to occur and that no public access is being done during this time. Standards need to be kept high and not keeping up with training may result in your dog's behaviour being negatively impacted upon. It is also required of you that 'in training' status is not going to be prolonged for a period greater than two years.

It's a huge undertaking deciding to become an assistance dog handler. It's a lot of time involved in training, it can be stressful starting to go out in public for the first time, people may look at you and this drawing of attention can be anxiety inducing for many.

Patience! It won't happen straight away and there may be delays in the process as we go along.

I expect our teams to represent us **professionally** and to ensure high standards at all times. If there are any concerns regarding your dog's behaviour we expect that you let us know immediately.

It is vital that the dogs are treated **ethically** and with **kindness**. It won't be tolerated if there are training methods that use a force-based approach or push dogs to work when they aren't up to it. It is ok for your dog to say no some days and that's the reality of working with a living, breathing, sentient animal. We need our teams to know that if it is discovered that any force-based tools are used on your dog then you will immediately be removed from our program. This includes slip leads, correction chains, prong collars, shock collars, squirt bottles,



compression cans etc.

You'll need to be **available** to speak with you to check in or have sessions to ensure your dog and yourself are up to working to standard in public we must be able to reach you to check in. Maintaining up to date contact details are expected.

What is required of the dog?

We require that the dog is of a good hygiene standard including any grooming taken care of, nails clipped, eyes clear and so on. We hope your dog is calm, relaxed, showing no visible signs of stress or physical soreness.

We hope to see your dog feeling comfortable to say no to anything they feel they are unable to do and not show any signs of being behaviourally shut down. This includes lowered head, whale eye, licking of lips, yawning, lowered body, low set tail, furrowed brow etc.

Your dog must also be desexed and up to date with vaccinations.

What's involved in the Public Access Test?

The public access test can be looked at in full via the link below.

https://www.qld.gov.au/data/assets/pdf_file/0032/88655/pat-certification-handler-card-form.pdf

It's a comprehensive assessment of your dog's behaviour in public from a training, manners and fulfilling tasks for you perspective. This test will be completed every three years in order to remain accredited however we will check in with you to do an abbreviated version to ensure standards are still high every 12 months.

You can expect the test to take approximately one hour



What happens after the Public Access Test?

After you have completed your initial public access test you will receive a vest that is yours to keep as well as a handler ID. Please allow 4-6 weeks for these to arrive to you.

We expect that the standards of behaviour seen in the PAT is then maintained. We will check in every 6 months to see how you're going but please reach out whenever needed with any concerns or questions at all.

Every 6 months we like to see a vet report for any dogs aged over 8 years. For those under 8 years a vet assessment is needed every 2 years however annual health checks and up to date vaccination are required.

Conditions:

All teams must have completed an application form and a pre-suitability assessment prior to undertaking any training.

All teams must also complete the terms and conditions form and have signed and dated it prior to the suitability assessment also.

All teams must adhere to the standards contained with the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dog Act 2009 at all times. <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/whole/html/inforce/current/act-2009-004>