



# Public access rights for veterans with DVA assistance dogs

## FACTSHEET

**Veterans and their trained and accredited assistance dogs supplied by the Department of Veterans' Affairs (DVA) are legally allowed to enter all public places.**

### Rights of veterans with an assistance dog

If you have a trained and accredited DVA assistance dog, you and your dog are legally allowed to enter public places, including:

- Retail, hospitality and recreation venues
- Health and medical services
- Public transport and passenger vehicles
- Accommodation

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Act) makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person with a disability who has an assistance animal, subject to certain exemptions.

The Act recognises suitably trained assistance animals and allows the dog and their handler guaranteed access to public places and services. The Act recognises both physical and psychosocial disabilities and acknowledges the assistance animal as a tool that facilitates the functioning of a person with a disability.

### Accessing public places and transport with an assistance dog

While there is currently no national standard within Australia in relation to assistance dogs, it is an offence to deny entry of a trained assistance dog. There are a few things you can do if you are refused access to a public space or transport, including:

- telling the operator that your dog is a trained assistance animal
- showing them your ID handler card as evidence of your dog's training and accreditation
- making sure your dog is wearing its assistance dog coat
- telling that operator that you are legally allowed to access the service with your assistance dog under your relevant state legislation or the Act.
- Showing the operator your DVA-issued Access Rights Card and asking them to scan the QR code for more information about your right to access public spaces with an assistance dog
- Contacting your assistance dog supplier for information and support

You may also wish to report the incident direct to the operator's business or make a complaint to the Australian Human Rights Commission. The Commission has the power to investigate and attempt to conciliate complaints of discrimination under the Act. The Commission will investigate complaints about discrimination and other breaches of human rights. The Commission may attempt to resolve complaints through a conciliation conference between parties and resolutions may include an agreement to pay compensation. If the conciliation is unsuccessful, in certain circumstances a person may commence legal proceedings regarding the complaint in the Federal Court of Australia or the Federal Circuit and Family Court of Australia. More information is available here: [Complaints | Australian Human Rights Commission](#).

### Obligations for public places and transport providers

Assistance dogs are not pets or companion animals. Assistance dogs are a highly trained support service that allows a veteran to safely participate in personal and public life activities by alleviating the effects of a disability while meeting the standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for a dog in a public place.

Under the Act, an assistance dog supporting an individual with a disability or mental health condition is allowed access to all public spaces and services with their veteran handler.

DVA assistance dogs are highly trained and have passed a Public Access Test, the minimum standard an assistance dog must meet to be considered safe and effective in accessing public places, including public passenger vehicles.

You have the right to request a person to produce evidence that the dog is a trained assistance dog and to expect the assistance dog will be wearing its identifying coat. Operators of public services and spaces are reminded that it is against the law to deny a veteran with trained assistance dog access to a public place or travel on public transport, including a bus, train, tram, taxi or rideshare vehicle.

In addition to the rights of assistance animals under the Act, local legislation and penalties may apply under the laws of a State or Territory across Australia.

### More information

For more information, visit the [DVA website](#).

