

# Assistance animals including dog guides

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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 supports, we only fund assistance animals that meet our funding criteria. We look at whether the assistance animal is a disability-related support that will help you with your disability support needs.<sup>1</sup>

We can only fund an assistance animal if it's effective and beneficial based on evidence and its value for money. We also need to make sure it meets the definition of an assistance animal and is trained by an accredited provider. It must be able to actively do at least 3 tasks that you can't do because of your disability. We'll also check if the assistance animal has passed the public access test. This is so we know it will be able to support you in the community.

## What's on this page?

This page covers:

- [What's an assistance animal?](#)
- [How do we decide if we fund an assistance animal?](#)
- [What information do we need to decide if we can fund an assistance animal?](#)
- [How do you get funding for an assistance animal in your plan?](#)
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You might also be interested in:

- [Assistive technology](#)
- [What principles do we follow to create your plan?](#)

## What's an assistance animal?

An assistance animal is an animal specially trained by an [accredited assistance animal provider](#) to help you do things you can't do because of your disability.<sup>2</sup> These are things the animal wouldn't naturally do otherwise, like guiding you through crowded places.

It's an animal that actively helps you to do things you previously couldn't do because of your disability. It's not an animal or pet used for therapeutic or 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 for social engagement, but these things alone don't mean it meets the definition of an assistance animal.

For us to fund an assistance animal it needs to meet all the [NDIS funding criteria](#). It must be [effective and beneficial](#) for you.<sup>3</sup> To help us decide if an assistance animal will be effective and beneficial for you, we have adopted the internationally recognised definition of assistance animals recommended by La Trobe University. It describes what is and isn't an assistance animal. 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](#).

We need to make sure the [assistance animal is related to your disability](#), otherwise we can't fund it.<sup>4</sup> The La Trobe University report defines assistance animal as “an animal that is trained to perform at least 3 tasks or behaviours which mitigate the effects of a person's disability”. This means an assistance animal that has been trained to do at least 3 specific things that you need, but 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 too frightened 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
- blocking or being a barrier to other people if needed.

An example of an assistance animal is a dog guide. They're specially trained to help you do tasks, for example 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.

The La Trobe University report says the assistance animal, "must also be trained to a high level of obedience". 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
- hearing assistance animals
- physical assistance animals
- assistance animals for some participants who have been diagnosed by a psychiatrist with long term but stable Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) who are able to take on the ongoing responsibilities of a primary handler.

We can only fund an assistance animal if there's evidence that the animal will be, or is likely to be, effective and beneficial for you, taking into account current good practice.<sup>5</sup> When we say taking into account current good practice, we mean thinking about what's recommended, or has been found to work well, for other people in situations like yours. The types of assistance animals we fund are based on research for hearing, vision and physical impairments, as well as PTSD.<sup>6</sup>

When we fund an assistance animal, we make a decision based on the criteria in the section [How do we decide if we fund an assistance animal](#).

## What about other kinds of animals?

The [La Trobe University report – Key terms for animals in disability assistance roles](#) also talks about other types of animals which are **not** considered assistance animals. 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 that takes part in therapy activities that are led by a therapist

- **facility animals** - an animal that may or may not live onsite and is trained to work in a specific facility or type of facility, such as a residential aged care home
- **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 types of animals can be helpful in your life, but they're unlikely to meet our NDIS funding criteria.

We'll always consider your individual situation when we decide whether a support meets the [NDIS funding criteria](#). But we generally won't fund an animal if it doesn't meet the definition of an assistance animal or dog guide. This is because they're unlikely to be a [disability-related support](#), [effective and beneficial](#), or [value for money](#).

We generally don't fund medical alert animals, even though they can sometimes be seen as a type of assistance animal. This is because there's currently not enough evidence about the effectiveness of these animals, having regard to current good practice.<sup>7</sup>

For example, there's currently very little evidence that epilepsy seizure dogs are an effective and reliable disability support.<sup>8</sup> It's not clear that an animal can effectively detect and warn someone of an epileptic seizure. The existing evidence base is weak, and the narrowness of existing research make it hard to draw clear conclusions about their effectiveness.<sup>9</sup>

If you have epilepsy, there are other supports that would meet our NDIS funding criteria, that are more effective and beneficial and better value for money. [Our Guideline – Disability-related health supports](#) has more information about epilepsy supports we may fund.

We must look at available evidence of how effective the assistance animals are for other people in similar situations.<sup>10</sup> We'll look at things like:

- published and refereed academic research
- any agreement of expert opinion
- your lived experience or the experience of your carers
- anything we have learned in our experience at the NDIS.<sup>11</sup>

We must also take expert opinion into account.<sup>12</sup> This is because it might be relevant to whether an assistance animal will be effective and beneficial. We'll also think about your individual situation. For example, if the animal is for a young child, or if you have any behaviours of concern. The [La Trobe University report – Reviewing Assistance Animal Effectiveness](#) provides more detail about the effectiveness of assistance animals.

## How do we decide if we fund an assistance animal?

As with all our supports, if we fund an assistance animal, it must meet all our [NDIS funding criteria](#).

For us to fund an assistance animal, it needs to be what we call a reasonable and necessary support.<sup>13</sup>

This means the assistance animal:

- [will help you pursue your goals](#)<sup>14</sup>
- [will help you with social and work activities](#)<sup>15</sup>
- [is value for money](#)<sup>16</sup>
- [is effective and beneficial for you](#)<sup>17</sup>
- [does not replace the role of family, carers, informal supports or community support](#).<sup>18</sup>

To decide if we'll fund an assistance animal, it must meet **all** of the criteria.

We also need to think about:

- [if the assistance animal relates to your disability](#)<sup>19</sup>
- [if the assistance animal is likely to cause harm to you or be a risk to others](#)<sup>20</sup>
- if the assistance animal duplicates other supports you get under alternative funding through the NDIS<sup>21</sup>
- whether providing [the assistance animal will not meet Commonwealth, state and territory laws](#)<sup>22</sup>

We'll look at the [quote](#) you get from your provider to help us decide if the assistance animal meets our funding criteria.<sup>23</sup> We also need to know your provider is an [accredited assistance animal provider](#).

When we decide if an assistance animal meets the [NDIS funding criteria](#), we'll also think about how it will work with your other supports. We use the [Principles we follow to create your plan](#), to help us to do this.

The assistance animal must meet the NDIS funding criteria by itself, and when considered as part of your total package of supports. We approve your plan as a whole, not individual supports in isolation.<sup>24</sup>

## Does an assistance animal help you pursue your goals?

We need to know an assistance animal will help you to pursue the goals in your plan.<sup>25</sup> We'll look at the disability specific barriers that stop you from pursuing your goals, and how an assistance animal could help your disability support needs.

For example, you might have a goal to travel in the community. We'll look at all the ways you might be able to pursue that goal. Funding an assistance animal to help you could be one way. There may be other supports that also meet your needs and meet our [NDIS funding criteria](#).

Learn more about [setting goals](#).

There are some things to remember:

- Even if you set more and bigger goals, it doesn't necessarily mean we'll fund more or bigger supports.
- If you set a goal about a specific type or amount of support you want, for example, an assistance animal, it doesn't mean we have an obligation to fund that support or in that amount.

## Will an assistance animal help you with your social or work life?

We need to know how an assistance animal will help you to do things that let you take part more in social or work life.<sup>26</sup> We look at what you do at the moment, and how an assistance animal could help you do these things more easily. We'll also look at the things you might not be able to do at the moment and the things you hope to do in the future. For example, an assistance animal might help you to get or keep a job, or to meet up with friends by yourself.

This means we'll ask you:

- what social or work activities you do
- anything that's stopping you from doing more in your social or work life
- the tasks the assistance animal will be specifically trained to do to help you.

## Is an assistance animal value for money?

We need to know that an assistance animal is value for money.<sup>27</sup> We check if the assistance animal is the most cost effective support option for you, compared to other supports that might help in the same way for less cost.<sup>28</sup>

When we think about value for money, we look at:<sup>29</sup>

- if there are other supports that will help you in the same way for a much lower cost, such as other types of [assistive technology](#), therapy supports or a behaviour support plan
- whether there's evidence that an assistance animal will make life much better for you than it is now and be of long-term benefit to you.<sup>30</sup> For example, we look at how the assistance animal will help you to do things, or manage your disability in a better way, with less help from other supports
- whether it's likely to mean you'll need less other supports funded in the long term.<sup>31</sup> For example, it might mean you need less support from a support worker at home or to go out. To work this out we look at the long-term benefits of the assistance animal, such as how long it will help you, and the costs and benefits over time
- whether you need an assistance animal for your long term support needs
- whether the cost of the assistance animal is the same or similar to other assistance animals in your area<sup>32</sup>
- how could the assistance animal help you to be more independent, and rely less on other funded and informal supports, including how long it would take to reduce your need for those supports<sup>33</sup>
- how the animal will perform as an assistance animal, including the 3 active tasks it will do to help reduce the effects of your disability.

You might have funding in your plan for a support worker to help you get around 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 the community once you have a dog guide.<sup>34</sup>

For example, Rani has a support worker funded in her plan for 20 hours a week to help her get around in the community and do things like 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 the support worker over the long term. We then look at the cost of an assistance animal over that same period.

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

## 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.<sup>35</sup> Effective and beneficial means it will help you and be suitable for your disability support needs.

We need to check if the animal meets the [definition of an assistance animal](#) and if it is, or will be, [fully trained and qualified](#).

We also need to think about good practice. This means we look at how effective the assistance animal has been for other people with similar support needs and in situations like yours.<sup>36</sup> If you've had an assistance animal before, we'll look at how the animal has helped you in the past.<sup>37</sup>

To decide if this support will be effective and beneficial for you, we think about<sup>38</sup>:

- how the assistance animal will actively help you do at least 3 tasks that you can't do because of your disability<sup>39</sup>
- the results and outcomes of having an assistance animal compared to not having one
- whether 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<sup>40</sup>
- whether you've tried best-practice supports and how they worked for you. These are supports that have been helpful for others in similar situations. For example, things like other types of assistive technology or capacity building supports. They're generally seen by medical and allied health professionals as the best way to support people with similar disabilities.
- whether the assistance animal has done, or will do, all the relevant training, which includes [being qualified](#) as an assistance animal and passing the [public access test](#).

We also use evidence from research to help us work out if assistance animals are effective and beneficial.<sup>41</sup> There is currently limited evidence available about the benefits of assistance animals for people with some types of disability. The [La Trobe University report – Reviewing Assistance Animal Effectiveness](#) provides more information about the effectiveness of assistance animals for different types of disability.

We'll look at things like:

- published and refereed academic research
- any agreement of expert opinion
- your lived experience or the experience of your carers



- anything we have learned from our experience.<sup>42</sup>

We must also take expert opinion into account.<sup>43</sup> Expert opinion might be relevant as to whether an assistance animal will be effective and beneficial. We'll also consider your individual situation. For example, if the animal is for a young child, or if you have any behaviours of concern. The [La Trobe University report – Reviewing Assistance Animal Effectiveness](#) provides more detail about the effectiveness of assistance animals.

When we think about whether you need an assistance animal to manage the functional impact of a psychosocial disability because of PTSD, we need to know that:

- a psychiatrist has diagnosed the PTSD and it's likely to be permanent
- you're receiving support from a psychologist or psychiatrist
- your PTSD is your only diagnosis with no additional psychiatric diagnoses
- your psychologist or psychiatrist agrees your PTSD is stable enough for you to properly care for an assistance animal
- you have enough emotional resilience to be involved in the training and care of an assistance animal.<sup>44</sup>

If you have PTSD there is evidence that in some cases an assistance animal can be effective and beneficial to help 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 that passes the Public Access Test, but is not necessarily specially trained, will be able to provide you with the confidence to get into the community.

Remember, 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](#).

There isn't currently a lot of research or evidence to show that assistance animals, other than dog guides are effective compared to other supports. Before we decide to fund an assistance animal, we have a responsibility under the NDIS Act to make sure other support options have been properly considered. Such as supports that have been effective for others with similar needs and may be less costly.

For example, for autism spectrum disorder (ASD), there's very little research or evidence an assistance animal is more effective than other supports. A companion animal or other supports that people with similar needs use, are shown to be just as effective.

## What about the welfare of the assistance animal?

We will **not** fund an assistance animal if there's a risk to its wellbeing and safety. We need to be sure the animal will:

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

This is so it can do its tasks and be an effective and beneficial support.<sup>45</sup>

We need to make sure:

- you can provide the right diet for the animal and you can feed it regularly
- you can provide a safe, caring home
- the animal will get enough exercise
- 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 animal. For example, if there are young or noisy children who might stress the animal
- the animal will be safe if you or anyone else in your home has behaviours of concern that might pose a risk to the animal.

The assistance animal shouldn't be at risk of neglect or harm because of where it lives or works, or if you have behaviours of concern. The health care professional who prescribes you an assistance animal is responsible for making sure you can properly care for your animal. This isn't our responsibility.

Your health care professional will do an [assessment](#). This will work out if there are any risks to the assistance animal and whether you can take care of it.

We need to know you're in a stable situation and can care for the animal. So, we 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 drug or alcohol in the past 12 months and are not stable
- the home where the assistance animal will live is unsuitable.

We'll also look at your [suitability assessment](#) done by your provider, and will not fund an assistance animal if:

- there is risk to it when doing its tasks, for example, lifting or pulling heavy items or leading an electric wheelchair
- it's likely it won't have enough rest and play time.

Cruelty to animals is against the [law](#) in every state and territory. We also can't fund a support if it's against the law in your state or territory.<sup>46</sup>

## What is the role of families, carers, informal networks and the community?

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. We think about whether it's reasonable for them to give the type of support that an assistance animal would give you.<sup>47</sup>

For example, we usually expect parents to look after and care for their children.<sup>48</sup> We think about how much extra support the child needs because of their disability compared to other children of a similar age.<sup>49</sup>

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 age<sup>50</sup>
- whether the child's needs are a lot more than those of other children the same age because of their disability<sup>51</sup>
- if there are any risks to the family's or carer's wellbeing if they give you support<sup>52</sup>
- whether the assistance animal will help the child to do tasks without support.<sup>53</sup>

We know how important it is to get early therapy and supports for children. Early childhood intervention helps a child get the best functional outcomes for life. A child and their family usually work with a team of allied health professionals. They'll help you try supports which 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 wellbeing<sup>54</sup>
- if there are any risks to your wellbeing by having to rely on your family for support<sup>55</sup>
- whether your informal supports help you be more independent or not, compared to an assistance animal.<sup>56</sup>

We know it's important to support and develop informal supports for both children and adults.<sup>57</sup> [Our Guideline – Informal supports](#) has more information on how we can help you to do this.

## Does an assistance animal relate to your disability?

We can only fund an assistance animal if it's a disability related support, which means the animal should help you with your disability support needs.<sup>58</sup> This is different to an animal that helps you with needs that aren't related to your disability, such as a pet. Pets can have many benefits for people whether they have a disability or not. We need evidence to show the assistance animal helps with your disability related support needs.

We use the [La Trobe definition of an assistance animal](#) to help us work out if the animal is a disability related support. We look at the 3 active tasks the animal does that means you can do things you wouldn't otherwise be able to do because of your disability. That's one way we help work out if it's a disability related support. It also helps us understand how the assistance animal helps with your disability support needs more than a pet would.

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 reduce the effects of your disability. This usually means it should help you need less other disability 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. So, 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. So, an assistance animal could help you get out into the community, meet with friends and family or go to work.

## 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.<sup>59</sup> This includes people you live and work with or see regularly. Risks can include things like dog bites or aggressive behaviour.

We will **not** fund an assistance animal if it's used as a [mechanical restraint](#). Mechanical restraint means the animal is used to stop or limit your movement to control your behaviour. For example, this could be the animal laying on you to stop your behaviours getting worse. We won't fund an assistance animal that will be used as a mechanical restraint because this could be a risk to you.<sup>60</sup>

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, which 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, and if so, if 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.

## Does the assistance animal meet Commonwealth, state and territory laws?

Each state and territory have laws about assistance animals. This includes public access tests for assistance animals. We need to make sure the assistance animal can go to public spaces near where you live.<sup>61</sup> This means the assistance animal needs to be qualified and has passed or is working towards the [public access test](#).

You'll need to discuss this with your provider and make sure the relevant state or territory tests for your animal are part of your [service agreement](#).

We can't fund supports that don't meet the laws of the state or territory where you live.<sup>62</sup>

## 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 one or enter into a [service agreement](#) for a future assistance animal. 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 bought one 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 animal meets the [NDIS funding criteria](#), including our [definition of an assistance animal](#). If it does, we'll include funding in your plan for ongoing maintenance costs.

The section on [What happens once you have an assistance animal](#) has more information about maintenance costs. It also explains how we'll include this funding in your plan.

If we decide the animal doesn't meet the NDIS funding criteria, then we won't fund maintenance costs. You can't use other funding in your plan for the maintenance costs of your animal. This is because you must use the funding in your plan for the supports specified in your plan.<sup>63</sup>

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

An assistance animal must meet our [NDIS funding criteria](#).

You'll need to give us the information explained in this section. All the information and evidence you need to give is listed in the [assistance animal assessment template](#). You 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 you can give us the information and evidence we need](#).

Before we fund an assistance animal, we may ask for information we need to decide whether or not to approve the support.<sup>64</sup>

In order to meet our responsibilities under the law for the NDIS we may also tell you the type of provider who will provide you with an assistance animal, and the qualifications the provider must have.<sup>65</sup>

We need you to give us information that shows:

- the assistance animal is fully trained and qualified. If it's not yet, tell us when the animal is expected to be fully trained and qualified. This may include telling us when the animal is expected to meet the training milestones and timeframes in your service agreement
- what your provider will do if an assistance animal doesn't finish training or is no longer suitable for you
- you have passed a [suitability assessment](#)
- the assistance animal has been, or will be, provided and trained by an [accredited assistance animal provider](#)
- 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 the assistance animal hasn't been fully trained, you'll need to tell us which accredited assistance animal provider will train it.

You need to give us [your quote](#) and the information that's in the [assistance animal assessment template](#) you and the provider will complete. We also strongly recommend that you have a [service agreement](#) that includes all this information.

Learn more about [How do you get funding for an assistance animal in your plan](#).

You can read more about the information and evidence we need to look at funding an assistance animal, in our examples in [Appendix 1](#).

## What is a suitability assessment?

A suitability assessment is an independent assessment done by an [accredited assistance animal provider](#). They look at whether you're suitable to get and use 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 use 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 guide dog 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 and use 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.

## Who is an accredited assistance animal provider?

We'll only fund an assistance animal that has been, or is being, trained by an accredited assistance animal provider. The provider must be able to show us evidence they're accredited to train and qualify an assistance animal. This assistance animal needs to meet your disability related support needs.

An accredited assistance animal 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.

## 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, and it should be done by an unbiased, independent assessor. This means they must not work for your assistance animal's training organisation. Your accredited assistance animal provider will arrange this for you.

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

- shops
- cinemas
- restaurants
- libraries
- travel on 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 accredited assistance animal provider.

The quote will need to include the cost of each of these items, listed separately, and when they can be expected 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 dog 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.

Learn more about [making service agreements](#).

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 will 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 to 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 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 (PAT)
- 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. So, 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 animal assessment template](#). You can either use this template or give it to us in a separate document. We still need all this information even if you've had an assistance animal before.

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

We need information and evidence from:

- allied health professionals to confirm you need an assistance animal
- an accredited assistance animal provider to confirm the assistance animal can be matched to you and is qualified or is being trained
- you, for example, if you've used an assistance animal before.

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 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. But 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.

## How do you get funding for an assistance animal in your plan?

Once you give us all the [information and evidence we need](#), we'll decide if we'll fund the assistance animal. If we decide an assistance animal meets our [NDIS funding criteria](#), we'll include the funding for the assistance animal in your plan.

We'll include the support in your Capital - Assistive technology budget. Your plan will describe the 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 trained by an accredited assistance animal provider.

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 all the money to your plan up front. Then you're responsible for making the payments according to your service agreement and quote.

We'll also include [ongoing maintenance costs](#) for the assistance animal in your plan. This will be described in your Core - Consumables budget. It will cover maintenance support as long as the assistance animal is a reasonable and necessary disability support for your needs.

If we decide an assistance animal isn't reasonable and necessary, we'll explain this to you and why we made this decision.

If you're not happy with our decision to not fund an assistance animal, you can ask us to review our decision.<sup>66</sup> We call this process an internal review.

[Learn more about internal reviews.](#)

## 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 costs 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. 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](#).<sup>67</sup> 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.<sup>68</sup>

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

Training to use 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](#).<sup>69</sup> That is, whether the total costs of the animal and any extra costs, are reasonable compared to the benefits and cost of other supports.

### **What happens once you have an assistance animal?**

If an assistance animal meets the NDIS funding criteria, we'll also fund the ongoing maintenance costs that are included in the criteria. 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 8 years. We'll assess these costs at your plan reassessment.

Maintenance costs may include costs for:

- food
- grooming
- flea and worm treatments
- medication
- vaccinations
- vet services

- yearly reviews with the accredited assistance animal provider.

The average funding for maintenance costs is around of \$2,725.00 per year. We'll fund this in your Core – Consumables budget. You'll see this written in your plan as Assistance Dog (Including Dog Guide) ongoing costs.

We encourage you to self-manage or plan manage your funding for the 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](#).

We'll only include support 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.<sup>70</sup>

## What happens when an assistance animal retires and needs replacing?

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 consider funding another assistance animal until the 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 replacement is reasonable and necessary. You'll need to give us information to help us decide if a replacement 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 any more. The provider of the assistance animal may be responsible for replacement costs under guarantee or additional [warranty](#) if it retires early.

It may take 12 months to replace an 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 meets the [NDIS funding criteria](#).

If you do need a replacement assistance animal and there's going to be a delay, we need to know. You may need temporary supports while you wait for your replacement assistance animal. This might include capacity building or short term assistive technology supports. We expect that once you have a replacement 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 how you can [contact us](#).

### **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 provider to provide a fully trained and qualified animal, even if it takes many attempts to fully train it so it's suitable for your 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.

It's important you have a clear service agreement with your provider that includes the supply of a fully trained and qualified assistance animal. It's important the service agreement clearly states what the assistance animal is for, and your expectations. For example, if you need the assistance animal to do a certain task, this should be included in the service agreement.

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.

Learn more about [making service agreements](#).

If you have any issues with your assistance animal as described above, you should contact your provider. Such 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 8 years.

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

## Appendix 1 – Examples

Here are some examples to help show how we make decisions about assistance animals. They explain what information and evidence we need. They can also help you understand what information and evidence we might look at to decide whether we'll fund an assistance animal. Remember, the supports we fund, and evidence we need, depends on your personal situation and disability support needs.

The following examples are included below:

- [Peter – psychosocial disability](#)
- [Mandy - psychosocial disability](#)
- [Sarah - quadriplegia](#)
- [Connor - autism spectrum disorder](#)
- [Joe – low vision](#)

As we have described in this guide, if we fund an assistance animal it needs to meet all of the [NDIS funding criteria](#) and Part [5 of the NDIS \(Supports for Participants\) Rules](#). We explain these in the section [How do we decide if we fund an assistance animal](#).

To help us decide if an animal meets the NDIS funding criteria, we'll also think about whether the animal meets the [definition of an assistance animal](#) and if it is [fully trained and qualified](#).

It's important to note these are examples only. We haven't listed all of the NDIS funding criteria and rules. The information and evidence we need from you will depend on your personal situation and disability support needs.

If you have any questions about the information and evidence you need to provide you can [contact us](#).

### Peter

#### What is Peter's situation?

Peter is 62 years old and has a psychosocial disability. Peter has a goal in his plan to become more independent with daily living tasks and accessing the community. Peter wants an assistance animal to keep him company to do these things. He says he feels calmer when he has a dog with him and is able to do more in the community.



Peter needs help with most activities of daily living such as getting out of bed, showering and cooking. He doesn't go out in the community often. When he does leave his house, he is always with a support worker.

Peter has been seeing a psychologist for 20 years. Peter is at risk of self-neglect and he needs support from carers to do daily living tasks. Peter can't leave the house without severe anxiety and feeling overwhelmed. When he's unwell he can't leave his home and stops eating and shopping for food.

### **What information and evidence do we need to make our decision?**

The type of information and evidence we look at to make our decision includes:

- information we already know about Peter
- evidence of Peter's disability and how it impacts his daily life
- new information we're given
- assessments and reports
- the [assistance animal assessment template](#) filled out by Peter's psychologist.

### **What information and evidence did we get?**

The information and evidence we get from Peter and his psychologist tells us that Peter:

- has a goal in his plan to become more independent with daily living tasks and going out in the community
- has been getting regular help from a psychiatrist, psychologist, mental health occupational therapist, and general practitioner (doctor)
- needs a high level of support within the home and the community
- gets help from support workers with daily living tasks such as showering, cooking and getting out in the community
- is unable to care for himself at times
- has trialled an assistance animal, a dog, for two weeks
- was motivated to get out of bed and walk the dog during the trial, and was feeling happy with the dog as it kept him company
- was able to go out in the community with the dog during the trial, but still needed a support worker
- said his anxiety was less when he was with the dog
- has no history of cruelty to animals.

## What decision did we make and why?

Based on Peter's situation we didn't fund an assistance animal as it **didn't** meet **all** of the NDIS funding criteria. These are our main reasons:

- There is evidence Peter's psychosocial disability is due to PTSD, but this isn't his only diagnosis. He hasn't completed all other treatment options. His psychologist didn't provide evidence that Peter's PTSD was stable enough to properly care for an assistance animal.
- There is a risk that he wouldn't be able to provide the constant care and attention the animal needs.
- There was no evidence the animal would do 3 tasks that would reduce the effects of Peter's disability. Therefore, we couldn't be satisfied an assistance animal would be, or likely be, effective and beneficial for Peter taking into account current good practice.<sup>71</sup>
- The assistance animal wasn't seen as a support specifically related to Peter's disability.<sup>72</sup> There was no evidence the animal would provide any additional support for Peter that is more than the benefits that can already be obtained from a companion animal or pet.
- There was no evidence the assistance animal would be of long term benefit to Peter and reduce his need for other supports.<sup>73</sup> There were other supports available to Peter that would achieve the same result as an assistance animal at a much lower cost.<sup>74</sup> Peter had not trialled these supports. Even if an assistance animal was funded, Peter would still need a support worker to go out in the community when with the dog. Therefore, we decided an assistance animal was not value for money.<sup>75</sup>

## Mandy

### What is Mandy's situation?

Mandy is 45 years old and has post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). Mandy 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.

After receiving a diagnosis of post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD) from a psychiatrist, Mandy has been seeing a psychologist. She has achieved some goals, but she hasn't been able to go out on her own. Mandy still needs help from another person to leave the house.

## What information and evidence do we need to make our decision?

The type of information and evidence we look at to make our decision includes:

- information we already know about Mandy
- evidence of Mandy's disability and how it impacts her daily life
- new information we're given
- assessments and reports
- the [assistance animal assessment template](#) filled out by Mandy's psychologist and assistance animal provider.

## What information and evidence did we get?

The information and evidence we got tells us:

- Mandy has a goal in her plan to do her grocery shopping on her own
- how often Mandy leaves the house with and without any supports
- Mandy has shown she can take good care of an assistance animal, as she used to have a pet dog at home which she trained from a puppy
- detail about other supports Mandy tried to meet her goals and support needs
- Mandy has trialled clinical and community mental health supports. Her PTSD is stable and she has completed all clinical treatments
- the tasks the assistance animal will do, including standing between her and other people and nudging her when she is getting anxious
- Mandy had a 2 week trial with a fully trained and qualified assistance animal, a dog
- during the trial Mandy was able to do her grocery shopping on her own with the dog. The dog stood between Mandy and other people so she could focus and do her grocery shopping. It also helped her when she started to panic by nudging her, to remind her to stay focussed on the task she was doing
- Mandy currently has 15 hours of support worker help a week to go out in the community
- help from Mandy's support worker will be reduced to 3 hours a week if she gets an assistance animal
- the assistance animal provider has been to Mandy's home and assessed it as suitable
- Mandy has been receiving cognitive behaviour therapy with her psychologist for 2 years and has taken part in graded exposure therapy. Graded exposure therapy is a

type of behaviour therapy that helps you manage your fears by trying to break the pattern of avoidance and fear. The graded exposure therapy has helped Mandy to go to a local cafe on her own, but she has not been able to do the grocery shopping on her own using these forms of therapy.

### **What decision did we make and why?**

Based on Mandy's situation we decided to fund an assistance animal as it met **all** of the criteria. Our reasons are:

- The assistance animal was seen as effective and beneficial because the trial with the dog showed that, with its help, Mandy could do her grocery shopping on her own.<sup>76</sup> There is clear evidence the assistance animal did 3 tasks that helped Mandy successfully do her shopping.
- The assistance animal was seen as value for money.<sup>77</sup> Other supports were looked at or trialled and the dog was found to be the most cost effective compared to other options for supporting Mandy. The evidence shows that the dog would reduce Mandy's need for a support worker from 15 hours per week to 3 hours per week. This will reduce other funding in Mandy's plan over the long term so it's a cost effective support to help her pursue her goals. Therefore, the dog was considered value for money taking into account the benefits achieved and the cost of other supports.<sup>78</sup>

## **Sarah**

### **What is Sarah's situation?**

Sarah is 28 years old and 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. Currently she takes taxis when she needs to get out in the community but would like to be able to get around more independently.

Sarah lives with her boyfriend, and a housemate. Sarah works 8 hours per week and has a goal in her plan to be able to work more. She would also like to use public transport to get to and from work on her own. Her boyfriend and housemate work full time so Sarah is often in the house alone for long periods. She has support workers come into her home daily to help with meal preparation, household tasks and to make sure she's safe.

Sarah wants an assistance animal because she wants to reduce her use of support workers.

Sarah has been working with her occupational therapist for 5 years. She has achieved some independence goals while working with them. She has started employment, but she can only work two days a week. She is hoping an assistance animal will be able to do some of her

household tasks. This will mean she'll have more energy and can increase her hours at work and will be able to catch public transport independently.

### **What information and evidence do we need to make our decision?**

The type of information and evidence we look at to make our decision includes:

- information we already know about Sarah
- evidence of Sarah's disability and how it impacts her daily life
- new information we're given
- assessments and reports
- the [assistance animal assessment template](#) that has been filled out by Sarah's occupational therapist, and assistance animal provider.

### **What information and evidence did we get?**

The information and evidence we got tells us:

- Sarah has a goal in her plan to be able to work more, and use public transport to get to and from work on her own
- how often Sarah leaves the house, and can attend work, with and without any supports
- the other supports Sarah tried, to help her meet her goals and support needs
- that Sarah has been doing occupational therapy for 5 years
- the occupational therapy has helped Sarah to get employment two days a week, but she hasn't been able to increase this
- Sarah has been learning with her occupational therapist how to manage her energy, so she doesn't get too tired and has been using the methods recommended
- Sarah has trialled assistive technology
- Sarah used to have a pet at home that gave her emotional support
- what tasks the assistance animal will do, such as fetching items for her, carrying things for her, helping her to make space on public transport for her wheelchair
- Sarah trialled a fully trained and qualified assistance animal, a dog, for 4 weeks
- during the trial Sarah was able to catch a train when going out in the community on her own. The dog stood between her and other people while she was on the train, so she wasn't crowded or bumped

- by having the dog at work with her Sarah could get it to fetch items in her workspace
- the trial showed that Sarah will be able to increase employment to 3 days a week with an assistance animal
- Sarah currently has 4 hours of support worker help on weekdays to help her prepare meals at home, to do household tasks and to make sure she's safe. Her occupational therapist expects this to reduce to 1.5 hours on weekdays to help her with meals only
- Sarah will be able to do most things on her own with an assistance animal, and can use friends and family for other times
- Sarah showed that she took good care of her previous pet
- the assistance animal provider has assessed Sarah's home environment to be suitable for the assistance animal.

### **What decision did we make and why?**

Based on Sarah's situation we decided to fund an assistance animal as it met **all** of the criteria. Our reasons are explained below:

- The dog was seen as effective and beneficial for Sarah.<sup>79</sup> It was also seen as a disability related support.<sup>80</sup> The information shows that the dog is a fully trained and qualified assistance animal. The animal did 3 tasks that helped to reduce the effects of Sarah's disability and had benefits that were more than a pet could give.
- Evidence from the trial Sarah did showed the assistance animal was effective and beneficial for her. It helped her to manage travel on public transport, at work and in the community.<sup>81</sup> The animal also reduced Sarah's dependence on support workers.<sup>82</sup>
- The assistance animal was value for money when thinking about the benefits achieved and comparing the cost of other supports.<sup>83</sup> This is because the assistance animal would likely reduce Sarah's need for other supports in the long-term.<sup>84</sup> The evidence showed that having an assistance animal meant she wouldn't need a support worker for 2.5 hours per day for help in the home and she was able to increase her work hours from 1 to 3 days.

## **Connor**

### **What is Connor's situation?**

Connor is 7 years old and has autism spectrum disorder (ASD). He lives with his parents. Connor and his parents have a goal for him to go to school full time, and to manage his emotions when he becomes overwhelmed. He becomes overwhelmed with changes in routine and different environments during the school day. This includes getting to and from school and to different classes. Connor can only attend school for 3 hours a day. Connor and

his parents know the benefits that school gives him. He needs help to manage his emotions so he can go to school full time.

Connor wants an assistance animal that's trained to behave in a way that calms him down so he can join in more at school.

Connor has been working with a multidisciplinary team for the past year. A multidisciplinary team is a group of different allied health professionals who work together to help you reach your goals. They might include occupational therapists, psychologists or speech therapists.

Connor, his parents and psychologist look at other supports that might meet his goals and support needs. They do this before asking for an assistance animal. This means they look at how other lower cost supports might help manage Connor's ASD. This includes a therapy program or behaviour support plan.

### **What information and evidence do we need to make our decision?**

The type of information and evidence we look at to make our decision includes:

- information we already know about Connor
- evidence of Connor's disability and how it impacts his daily life
- new information we're given
- assessments and reports
- information from Connor's school
- the [assistance animal assessment template](#) filled out by Connor's psychologist, occupational therapist and his assistance animal provider.

### **What information and evidence did we get?**

The information and evidence we got tells us:

- Connor and his parents have a goal for him to go to school full time and to manage his emotions when he becomes overwhelmed
- Connor had a sensory assessment 6 months ago
- since Connor's assessment the occupational therapist has worked with him to help reduce his feelings of being overwhelmed at school
- the tasks the assistance animal will do to help Connor attend school full time, for example the assistance animal will stay between him and other students to give him space, start nudging to distract him, and might also put its paw on him so he feels calm
- how the assistance animal knows when to help Connor

- that children of Connor's age would generally need some adult help to manage their emotions
- that Connor needs more support than his parents, teachers and other school staff can manage
- that Connor's school has the capacity to provide intervention recommended by his allied health professionals
- that due to time pressures Connor's family need some support to do the intervention recommended by his allied health professionals
- at times Connor can hit and bite other people when he feels overwhelmed
- a trial wasn't done, so no trial outcomes were given
- the school said it wouldn't give permission for an assistance animal to be on site because they were concerned about risks to other students and school staff and did not have any staff who could be its primary handler during school hours
- Connor's psychologist and occupational therapist have put him on a behaviour support plan to help manage his behaviours of concern. A behaviour support plan is likely to help the people that interact with Connor at home and school to understand his triggers. It will also help to them to notice early warning signs before he gets overwhelmed and consistently support Connor in those places.

### **What decision did we make and why?**

Based on Connor's situation we decided not to fund an assistance animal as it **didn't** meet all of the NDIS funding criteria. Our main reasons are explained below.

- The school didn't agree to having the dog on site so it wouldn't have been able to help Connor.<sup>85</sup>
- The assistance animal wasn't considered effective and beneficial for Connor, because there was no evidence that having the animal would mean Connor went to school more often.
- The assistance animal is likely to cause harm to Connor or pose a risk to others because evidence showed that Connor can at times hit and bite others when he feels overwhelmed.<sup>86</sup> There was a noted risk to the animal's welfare from this behaviour. There was also a risk to Connor and others, as the dog may feel threatened by this behaviour.<sup>87</sup>



## Joe

### What is Joe's situation?

Joe is 30 years old and has low vision. He lives on his own and works full time. Joe has a goal in his plan to travel by himself on the train to and from work. He currently travels by train at peak times to get to and from work, using a white cane. He needs to ask passers-by for help to find his way through open spaces and large crowds.

Joe can mostly get around in crowded spaces but isn't confident. Joe and his guide dog mobility instructor look at how an assistance animal could help him and whether it's suitable for his disability support needs.

### What information and evidence do we need to make our decision?

The type of information and evidence we look at to make our decision includes:

- information we already know about Joe
- evidence of Joe's disability and how it impacts his daily life
- new information we're given
- assessments and reports
- the [dog guide assessment template](#) that has been completed by Joe's guide dog mobility instructor.

### What information and evidence did we get?

The information and evidence we got tells us:

- Joe has a goal to travel by himself on the train to and from work
- Joe has tried other supports to help him pursue his goals, including a long cane and other assistive technology
- Joe is living independently, he is working and is able to look after the dog
- the tasks the dog guide will do, which include helping him to walk around people, guiding him to the train door, and finding an empty seat on the train
- Joe did some trial walks with a dog guide that included using it at peak times at the train station. During the trial Joe says the dog guide made it easier for him to get to and from work and helped him to make his way through the train station at peak hour. The dog guide increased his confidence and ability to get around in crowded spaces
- Joe was able to cope in open areas and didn't get disorientated. He moved at a good pace with minimal assistance from passers-by

- Joe tried using a miniguide with his long cane. A miniguide is assistive technology that vibrates to help you know how far away objects are - the faster the vibration rate the closer the object is. Even with the support of a long cane and miniguide, Joe had to get help from passers-by to get through the train station.

### **What decision did we make and why?**

Based on Joe's situation we decided to fund an assistance animal (dog guide) as it met **all** of the criteria. An example of our reasons are explained below:

- The assistance animal was seen as effective and beneficial, taking into account current good practice.<sup>88</sup> It was shown to do 3 guiding tasks that reduced the effects of Joe's disability. This included moving through crowds and finding the train door. During the trial Joe was able to walk on his own in the crowded train station.
- The assistance animal was value for money taking into account the benefits achieved and the cost of other supports.<sup>89</sup> Evidence showed that other similar supports were considered and trialled. These supports didn't help Joe achieve his goal of full independence as well as using a dog guide did. The dog guide helped Joe to travel on his own to and from work without relying on support from others.

## Reference List

- <sup>1</sup> NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013, r5.1(b) and 5.1(d).
- <sup>2</sup> See definition of 'assistance animal' in the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 s9(2), Key terms for animals in disability assistance roles, La Trobe University, 7 August 2019.
- <sup>3</sup> NDIS Act s 34(1)(d).
- <sup>4</sup> NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r5.1(b)
- <sup>5</sup> NDIS Act, s 34(1)(d).
- <sup>6</sup> Key terms for animals in disability assistance roles, La Trobe University, 7 August 2019, Reviewing Assistance Animal Effectiveness, La Trobe University, 30 September 2016.
- <sup>7</sup> NDIS Act 2013 s34(1)(d); NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r3.2.
- <sup>8</sup> see *QTBR v National Disability Insurance Agency* [2021] AATA 1951 (28 June 2021) at [164, 179-180].
- <sup>9</sup> La Trobe Report; also see *QTBR v National Disability Insurance Agency* [2021] AATA 1951 (28 June 2021) at [170].
- <sup>10</sup> NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r3.2.
- <sup>11</sup> NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r3.2.
- <sup>12</sup> NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r3.3.
- <sup>13</sup> NDIS Act 2013 s34(1)(a-f)
- <sup>14</sup> NDIS Act, s 34(1)(a).
- <sup>15</sup> NDIS Act, s 34(1)(b).
- <sup>16</sup> NDIS Act, s 34(1)(c)
- <sup>17</sup> NDIS Act, s 34(1)(d).
- <sup>18</sup> NDIS Act, s 34(1)(e)
- <sup>19</sup> NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r5.1(b)
- <sup>20</sup> NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r5.1(a)
- <sup>21</sup> NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r5.1(c)
- <sup>22</sup> NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r5.3(a)
- <sup>23</sup> NDIS Act 2013 s34(1)(c), NDIS Act 2013 s34(1)(d)
- <sup>24</sup> NDIS Act s33(2)
- <sup>25</sup> NDIS Act, s 34(1)(a), NDIS Act.
- <sup>26</sup> NDIS Act s 34(1)(b).
- <sup>27</sup> NDIS Act s 34(1)(c).
- <sup>28</sup> NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013 r3.1(a).
- <sup>29</sup> NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013 r3.1
- <sup>30</sup> NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013 r3.1(b).
- <sup>31</sup> NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013 r3.1(c).
- <sup>32</sup> NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013 r3.1(e).
- <sup>33</sup> NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013 r3.1(f).
- <sup>34</sup> NDIS Act 2013 s34(1)(c), NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules, r 3.1(a) and 3.1(c).
- <sup>35</sup> NDIS Act s 34(1)(d).
- <sup>36</sup> NDIS Act s 34(1)(d).
- <sup>37</sup> NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013 r 3.2(b).
- <sup>38</sup> NDIS (Support for Participants) Rules 2013 rr3.2, 3.3
- <sup>39</sup> See definition of 'assistance animal' in the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 s9(2), Key terms for animals in disability assistance roles, La Trobe University, 7 August 2019.
- <sup>40</sup> NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r 3.2(b).
- <sup>41</sup> NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r 3.2(a).
- <sup>42</sup> NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r3.2.
- <sup>43</sup> NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r3.3.
- <sup>44</sup> NDIS Act s34(1)(f), NDIS Act s34(1)(d)
- <sup>45</sup> NDIS Act s34(1)(d)
- <sup>46</sup> NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r 5.3(a)
- <sup>47</sup> NDIS Act s 34(1)(e)

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- 48 NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013, r3.4(a)(i).  
49 NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013, r3.4(a)(ii).  
50 NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013, r3.4(a)(i),  
51 NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013, r3.4(a)(ii).  
52 NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013, r3.4(a)(iii).  
53 NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013, r3.4(a)(iv).  
54 NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013, r3.4(b)(ii).  
55 NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013, r 3.4(1)(a)(iii).  
56 NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013, r 3.4(b)(iii).  
57 NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013, r 3.4(c).  
58 NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r 5.1(b).  
59 NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r 5.1(a).  
60 NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r 5.1(a).  
61 NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r5.3(a)  
62 NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules r5.3(a)  
63 NDIS Act, s 46(1).  
64 NDIS Act s36(2)  
65 NDIS Act ss33(3), 36  
66 NDIS Act, s 100(2).  
67 NDIS Act, s34(1)(c).  
68 NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules, r5.1(d).  
69 NDIS Act, s34(1)(c).  
70 NDIS (Supports for Participants) r5.1(d)  
71 NDIS Act, s 34(1)(d).  
72 NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules, r 5.1(b),  
73 NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules, r 3.1(b) and (c).  
74 NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules, r 3.1(a).  
75 NDIS Act, s 34(1)(c).  
76 NDIS Act, s 34(1)(d).  
77 NDIS Act, s 34(1)(c).  
78 NDIS Act, s 34(1)(c).  
79 NDIS Act, s 34(1)(d).  
80 NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013 r5.1(b).  
81 NDIS Act, s 34(1)(d).  
82 NDIS Act, s 34(1)(c).  
83 NDIS Act, s 34(1)(c).  
84 NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules, r 3.1(c).  
85 NDIS Act, s 34(1)(d)  
86 NDIS (Supports for Participants) Rules 2013, r5.1(a)  
87 NDIS Act s34(1)(d)  
88 NDIS Act, s 34(1)(d).  
89 NDIS Act, s 34(1)(c).