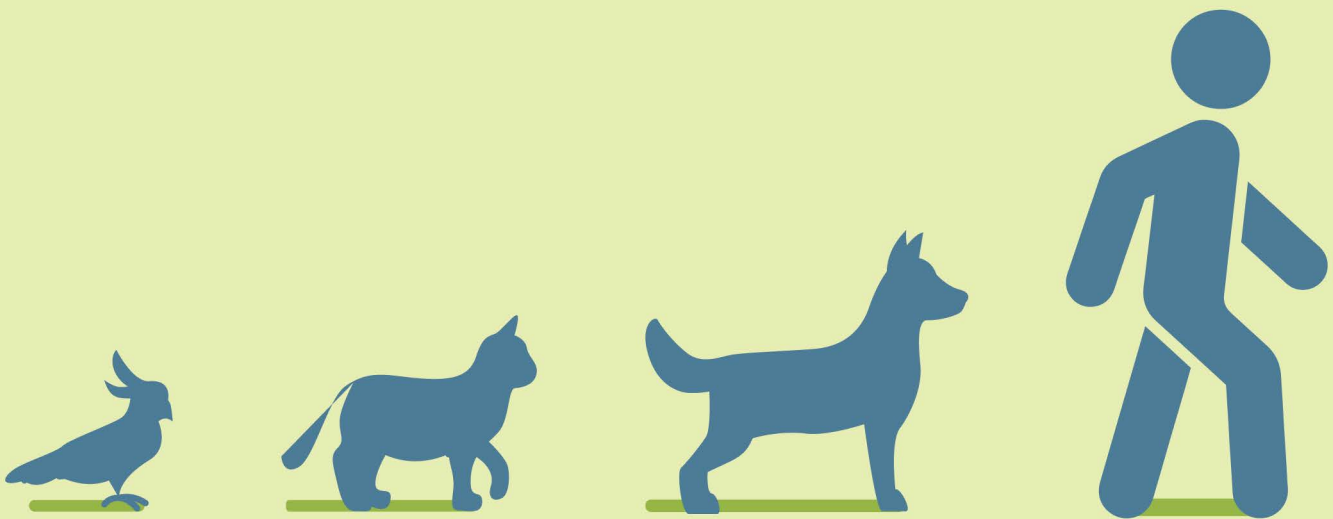


Assistance Animal Inclusive Business Practice Standards: An Audit Tool

"Assistance dogs are a necessary aid to allow a person with a disability to engage in their community. You wouldn't ask someone who needs a walking stick to leave it at the door".

- Assistance Dogs Australia



**Animal
Therapies LTD**
Animals Helping Humans

This audit tool was created under the health promotion charity, Animal Therapies Limited (ATL) and in collaboration with Monash University students. This audit tool has been made in conjunction with ATL's commitment to improve the "understanding, acceptance, and accessibility of Animal-Assisted Services (AAS) and connecting these services to individuals in need".

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1. Introduction

1.1 About the audit tool.

This audit tool can be used by businesses to reflect on whether they are providing exceptional customer service that complies with the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) (the DDA) to individuals with disabilities and their assistance animals.

The audit tool is built around the six standards of exceptional service delivery for people with disabilities and their assistance animals (or assistance animal handlers). Each standard has examples of exceptional service delivery that customer-facing businesses can use to gauge how well their current systems, practices and protocols are meeting the intent of each standard.

The six Assistance Animal Inclusive Business Practice Standards (AAIBPS) are:

- Business Assistance Animal Policy.
- Assistance Animal Evidence.
- Business Service Delivery.
- Assistance Animal Education.
- Business Accommodations.
- Business Safety Considerations.

Through meeting each of these six AAIBPS, this audit tool can aid customer-facing businesses to avoid relevant State and Territory level fines for refusal of service.

1.2 Why the audit tool is important.

Since 2012, the Australian Human Rights Commission reported a yearly increase of complaints from assistance animal handlers regarding the refusal of entry or manner of treatment by customer facing businesses. This includes but is not limited to:

- Restaurants/cafes/shopping centres.
- Residential accommodation.
- Airlines/in airports.
- Medical/health services.

The result of community exclusion causes occupational injustice to assistance animal handlers as they are being restricted from accessing their community. As stated in Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) (the DDA), this is a form of disability discrimination, being when a person is treated less favourably, or not given the same opportunities as others in a similar situation, because of their disability. The DDA states that it is against the law to discriminate against a person because of their disability either:

- by refusing to provide them with goods or services or make facilities available; or
- because of the terms or conditions on which, or the way, the goods, services or facilities are provided.

Research has indicated that assistance animals provide a range of benefits to individuals who experience disability, trauma, or adversity. Evidence shows that assistance animals not only provide physical or tangible benefits, including route finding and alerting seizures, but they also provide emotional and social support. Moreover, individuals with assistance animals have reported that their social functioning increased as they feel supported and more confident participating in their community.

1.2.1 Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)

The DDA protects people with disability who may be discriminated against because they are accompanied by an assistant, interpreter, or reader; or a trained animal such as a guide, hearing or assistance dog; or because they use equipment or an aid, such as a wheelchair or a hearing aid.

Assistance Animal: Definition

Section 9.2 of the DDA states that an assistance animal is a dog or other animal, accredited under a law of State or Territory, or by an animal training organisation “that provides for the accreditation of **animals trained to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability, and to meet standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for an animal in a public space**”.

In an academic journal article, *Defining Terms Used for Animals Working in Support Roles for People with Support Needs*, assistance animals include but is not limited to “guide animals; hearing animals; mobility assistance animals; psychiatric assistance animals; assistance animals for developmental/intellectual disabilities (e.g., autism assistance); and medical alert animals, such as seizure and diabetes” (pg. 6).

2. How to use the Audit tool

The audit tool defines each Assistance Animal Inclusive Business Practices Standards (AAIBPS) and provides examples of meeting the definition given. The auditors completing the tool are tasked with rating how well they believe the customer-facing business is performing in each section by giving a score of 1-5, with 1 being poor and 5 being exceptional. Scores are based on the **subjective opinion of the auditors** and serve as a numerical indicator of performance.

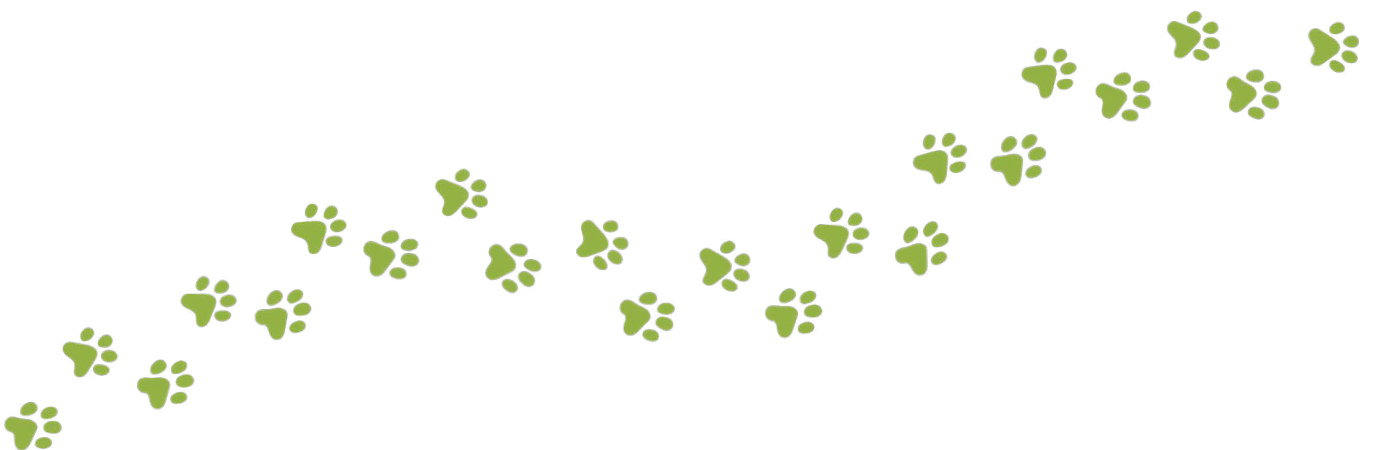
The full scoring scale is defined as below:

- 1 – poor
- 2 – below average
- 3 – adequate
- 4 – above average
- 5 – exceptional

As the auditors go through each section, they are asked to **identify and record the evidence that justifies the score** that has been given. This is to be recorded in “Business Evidence”.

In the case of ratings from 1-4, auditors are asked to **list possible improvements** that can be made to achieve an exceptional rating (5). Possible areas of improvement are to be listed in “Business Improvements”.

Keep in mind that the audit tool is **best used as a reflective tool** for the customer-facing business to measure their own performance over time. The audit tool can also be **used as an education tool** to jump start the conversation of Assistance Animal Inclusive Business Practices in your customer-facing business.



Six Assistance Animal Inclusive Business Practice Standards

Section 1: Business Assistance Animal Policy

Section	Example	Business Evidence	Business Improvements	Score (1-5)
<p>The customer-facing business provides a policy which is in compliance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) (the DDA), including sections 9.2 and 54A.</p> <p><i>The customer-facing business policy needs to be actioned and acknowledged that the policy is a living document. The policy needs to be reviewed regularly to ensure that it is aligned with current federal legislation.</i></p>	<p>The DDA requires that <i>[insert business name here]</i>, to not discriminate against, or refuse service to people with disabilities and their assistance animals.</p> <p>Employees who engage in discriminatory conduct will be in violation of this policy and their legal obligations.</p>			

Additional Notes:

(use this section to add your business specific notes)

Date of Audit Section Completed:

Name(s) of Audit Team:



Section 2: Assistance Animal Evidence

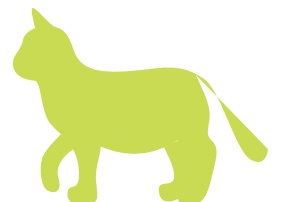
Section	Example	Business Evidence	Business Improvements	Score (1-5)
The customer-facing business will accept various types of evidence that the animal is an assistance animal OR that the animal is trained to meet standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for animals in a public place (in compliance with section 54A.5 of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) (the DDA).	<p>Evidence can include, but are not limited to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Identification cards - State or organisation. • Assistance animal vests/jackets. • State based Transport Passes. • Public Access Test (PAT). • Veterinarian / Trainer letter. • Assistance animal training logs. • Council registration. • The animals behaviour and hygiene* <p>*See more in Research, pg. 21</p>			

Additional Notes:

(use this section to add your business specific notes)

Date of Audit Section Completed:

Name(s) of Audit Team:



Section 3: Business Service Delivery

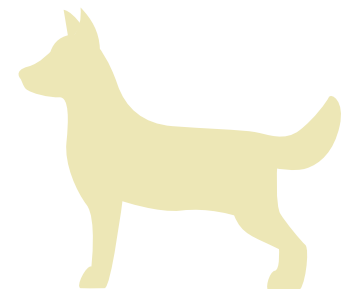
Section	Example	Business Evidence	Business Improvements	Score (1-5)
The customer facing business ensures that all of its employees treat assistance animal handlers with sensitivity and respect when asking for evidence.	<p>An example of asking for evidence includes:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “I see you have your [insert assistance animal] with you, may I please see your evidence that it is an assistance animal?”. <p>It is also important to:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Speak to the person first. • Do not ask personal questions about the person’s disability or intrude on their privacy. • Keep in mind that the assistance animal is working. • Educate, if necessary, to others (employees and/or customers) that the assistance animal is working. • Do not talk to, call, make sounds at, or touch the assistance animal. • Do not feed the assistance animal. • Do not be offended if the person/handler declines to chat about the assistance animal. 			

Additional Notes:

(use this section to add your business specific notes)

Date of Audit Section Completed:

Name(s) of Audit Team:



Section 4: Assistance Animal Education

Section	Example	Business Evidence	Business Improvements	Score (1-5)
The customer-facing business provides up-to-date information on federal law and policies surrounding assistance animals, as well as opportunities to access ongoing training and awareness for employees regarding assistance animals.	<p>Providing opportunities for staff training organised by organisations knowledgeable in disability rights in the assistance animal context.</p> <p>Organisational policies around assistance animals and their handlers should be kept up to date.</p> <p>Keep staff up to date on policies and federal legislation around assistance animals and their rights to access facilities and services with their handlers.</p> <p>Usage of this audit tool as an opportunity to start the discussion around service provided to assistance animals and their handlers in your business.</p>			

Additional Notes:

(use this section to add your business specific notes)

Date of Audit Section Completed:

Name(s) of Audit Team:



Section 5: Business Accommodations

Section	Example	Business Evidence	Business Improvements	Score (1-5)
<p>The customer-facing business provides appropriate and reasonable accommodations for people with disabilities and their assistance animals to enable them to access goods, services, and facilities within the business in accordance with the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) (the DDA).</p>	<p>Having an assistance animal friendly policy in place at your customer-facing business.</p> <p>Offer reasonable adjustments to services/facilities when necessary.</p> <p>Examples from specific industries of reasonable adjustments include, but not limited to:</p> <p>Restaurants/Cafes</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • An extra table to provide more space to accommodate for the assistance animal / offer a table that is comfortable for the individuals and the assistance animal (e.g. a corner table that's tucked away from traffic). • Providing water to the assistance animal. <p>Airports/airlines</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Being respectful and asking for permission from the handler before any interactions with the assistance animal (e.g. for security or check in purposes). 			

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Adelaide Airport - assistance animals are now screened with their handlers (not separately) and are now performed at any security lane, rather than a dedicated lane. • Providing additional seat space for the assistance animal. <p>Zoos/Theme parks/ Aquariums</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Communication to all staff that assistance animals are in the facility. • Clear instructions and explanations around where and why the assistance animal may not be allowed to attend some attractions/enclosures. • The provision of suitable places or staff to leave the assistance animal with if the handler chooses to enter attractions/enclosures where their assistance animal is not permitted. 			
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	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The handler's preferences should be respected and adhered to with consideration for the welfare of the other animals and persons at the venue.			
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Additional Notes:

(use this section to add your business specific notes)

Date of Audit Section Completed:

Name(s) of Audit Team:



Section 6: Business Safety Considerations

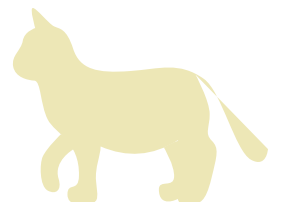
Section	Example	Business Evidence	Business Improvements	Score (1-5)
The customer-facing business, as much as possible, considers all necessary social and environmental aspects of safety in regards to employees, assistance animals, their handlers, and other customers.	<p>The usage of kind, inclusive, and respectful language if the business deems it necessary to deny entry to an assistance animal and their handler due to any safety considerations on the part of the business (in the case of compliance to Section 54A of the DDA*).</p> <p>There may be occasions where a staff member's disability or need has to be considered (e.g. a severe phobia of dogs; or an allergy to the animal). In which case, consider providing options for employees to 'opt out' if they have reasons which they believe will impact on their ability to provide adequate service to assistance animals and their handlers.</p> <p>*See more in Research, pg. 23</p>			

Additional Notes:

(use this section to add your business specific notes)

Date of Audit Section Completed:

Name(s) of Audit Team:



Review section: How did we do?

Sections	Review Comments	Score (1-5)
1. Business Assistance Animal Policy		
2. Assistance Animal Evidence		
3. Business Service Delivery		
4. Assistance Animal Education		
5. Business Accommodations		
6. Business Safety Considerations		

Business name:			
	Name/s of audit team Suggested: 3-4 employees	Date of audit completion	Date of next audit review
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			

<p>1. Business Assistance Animal Policy</p>	<p>The rights of a person with an Assistance animal are protected under Federal Law through the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) (the DDA). This legislation overrides all Australian state and territory laws and policies.</p> <p>The DDA makes it against the law to discriminate against a person with a disability who is accompanied by a trained assistance animal. The legislation recognises that an appropriately trained assistance animal is legally allowed to accompany their handler into all public spaces where members of the public are generally allowed. The only exceptions include:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Surgically sterilised areas (operating theatres). • Industrial food preparation areas (commercial kitchens). • Quarantined areas. • If the animal is not meeting hygiene practices. • If the animal is not demonstrating appropriate behaviour. • If the animal is suspected to have an infectious disease. <p>In compliance with section 54A of the DDA, customer-facing businesses can expect the assistance animal to demonstrate appropriate behaviour and hygiene, and to remain under control of the person with the disability or another person on behalf of the person with the disability.</p>
<p>2. Assistance Animal Evidence</p>	<p>Assistance animals are recognised in several different ways across Australian States and Territories. Currently:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • There is no national standard identification or certification. • It is not a requirement for an assistance animal to wear any form of identification to gain legal rights of access. • There is no list of 'evidence' that exists federally; however there are some at State/Territory level. • What is important is that an assistance animal needs to meet the training requirements of behaviour and hygiene for public access and helps mitigate the effects of an owner's disability. In compliance with Section 54A(5)(b) of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) (the DDA) (see below), 'behaviour and hygiene' should be deemed reasonable, and within context to the service and its environment.

	<p>There is no standard Public Access Test (PAT) in Australia. However, most organisations and providers include the same key elements to assess behaviour. Taken from the Australian Capital Territory PAT example, appropriate assistance animal behaviour includes: The animal remains calm and under effective control at all times.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The animal is not disruptive and does not create safety hazards. • If the animal is trained to bark, it must cease barking on cue. • The dog presents as clean, well-groomed and healthy. <p>If sufficient evidence is not provided the customer-facing business may refuse service or entry as per section 54A(6) of the DDA (see below).</p> <p><u>Section 54 A (5) and (6) of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) (extract only):</u></p> <p>“5) This part does not render it unlawful for a person to request the person with the disability to produce evidence that:</p> <p>The animal is an assistance animal; or</p> <p>The animal is trained to meet standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for animals in a public place.</p> <p>(6) This part does not render it unlawful for a person (the discriminator) to discriminate against the person with the disability on the ground that the person with the disability has the assistance animal, if:</p> <p>The discriminator requests or requires the person with the disability to produce evidence referred to in subsection (5); and</p> <p>The person with the disability neither:</p> <p>(i) produces evidence that the animal is an assistance animal; nor</p> <p>(ii) produces evidence that the animal is trained to meet standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for an animal in a public place.”</p>
<p>3. Business Service Delivery</p>	<p>As per section 54A(5) in the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) (the DDA) (see above), customer-facing businesses are legally allowed to ask for evidence that the animal is an assistance animal; or that the animal is trained to meet standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for animals in a public place. When asking for evidence, it is highly encouraged to do so with sensitivity and respect.</p>

	<p>It is important to consider the person first, providing social validation by framing wording/questions positively. Treating a person with a disability differently to others may constitute disability discrimination (see page 2).</p> <p>It is important to remember that the assistance animal is working. Keep in mind that even though it may appear that the animal is not performing a task at that moment, the animal is still on call and must give their full attention to the person they are accompanying. Refer to examples of exceptional service delivery on page 9.</p>
4. Assistance Animal Education	<p>Research shows that the general public have misunderstandings and lack knowledge on assistance animals and existing legislation. There is an overwhelming need for consistent education, across all social groups. This call to action for education is in line with the suggestions made in existing academic literature.</p> <p>Members of the public need education on appropriate interactions with assistance animals. Additionally, business owners, managers, and gatekeepers need to be educated on each person's rights, and the regulations surrounding accessibility.</p>
5. Business Accommodations	<p>The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) (the DDA) says that "disability discrimination occurs when a person is treated less favourably, or not given the same opportunities as others in a similar situation, because of their disability".</p> <p>The DDA requires businesses to make adjustments considered fair and reasonable to the business, in order to enable a person with disability to access goods, services or facilities. However, the DDA says it will not be against the law to discriminate in providing access to goods, services or facilities if it can be demonstrated that making the required adjustments would cause 'unjustifiable hardship'.</p> <p>Listed examples (see page 14-16) of fair and reasonable adjustments provided from anecdotal evidence (which has been deidentified and reworded).</p>

<p>6. Business Safety Considerations</p>	<p>It is important to take into account the health & safety and wellbeing of both employees and assistance animals and their handlers as customers, and maintain appropriate steps to ensure a kind and inclusive manner for all parties involved.</p> <p>An example of an adjustment made in regards to safety considerations may be that in situations where employees are allergic or have a phobia relating to the assistance animal, consider assigning other employees to provide service to assistance animals and their handlers.</p> <p>The following sections of the DDA are applicable when considering safety issues for the customer-facing business.</p> <p><u>Section 54 A (2), (3), (4), and (7) of the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) (extract only):</u></p> <p>(2) The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth) does not render it unlawful for a person to request or to require that the assistance animal remain under the control of:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The person with the disability; or (b) Another person on behalf of the person with the disability. <p>(3) For the purposes of subsection (2), an assistance animal may be under the control of a person even if it is not under the person's direct physical control.</p> <p>(4) This part does not render it unlawful for a person (the discriminator) to discriminate against the person with the disability on the ground of the disability, if:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (a) The discriminator reasonably suspects that the assistance animal has an infectious disease; and (b) The discrimination is reasonably necessary to protect public health or the health of other animals <p>(7) This part does not affect the liability of a person for damage to property caused by an assistance animal.</p>
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Acknowledgements

Contributions

Assistance Animal Committee, Animal Therapies Limited.

Lisa Robinson, Assistance Animals International.

Dr Tiffani J Howell, La Trobe University.

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