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# ASSISTANCE DOG MANUAL

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6 Macleod Street Bairnsdale Vic 3875

More Dogs. More Places. More Often

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# Welcome!

We are so excited to have you join us as part of our Assistance Dog Program! We are looking forward to working with you and your dog to achieve your goal of having a fully qualified Assistance Dog. We will be here every step of the way, giving you all the training you'll need to teach your dog the skills they will need to support you in your day to day life. And to enhance your relationship with you and your dog!

This program was developed with love by Megs Hopman who has a specialty in both the disability field and animal behaviour. Headed by Emily Gasko, whose passion is improving the life of people with a disability through education.

This manual will give you an outline of the program and what to expect as we go through the curriculum. It will be a fun journey and the bond you will develop with your dog along the way is what drives us at Playful Paws.

We can't wait to get started!

Please reach out at any point if you have any questions or need further clarification.


Phone Numbers:

Megs (Head Trainer) - 0419 608 270

Emily (Trainer) - 0407 672 468

General Admin - 0421 641 138

We look forward to working with you and your furry best friend,



Megs and the Playful Paws Team



Please contact Playful Paws if you would like to use any of this information.

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# Meet our Trainers

**Megs**  
CEO & Creator - Head  
Trainer



**Emily**  
Head Trainer



**Amity**  
Trainer



**Simone**  
Trainer



Bringing out the best in your best friend!



# PLAYFUL PAWS® PHILOSOPHY

Bringing out the Best in Your Best Friend.

**Vision:** More Dogs. More Places. More Often.

**Mission:** Through education we create a strong positive relationship between you and your dog enabling you to be proud to take your confident dog wherever you want to.

**Values:**

1. Nurture positive community
2. Inspire confidence and creativity
3. Lead and educate with enthusiasm



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## ROLE OF AN ASSISTANCE DOG?

An Assistance Dog is a dog that helps a person with a disability and has met the state and federal standards for public access rights.

Assistance Dog is a generic term for a guide, hearing, or other service dog specifically trained to perform identifiable physical tasks and behaviours to assist a person with a disability in order to aid in quality of life and/or independence.

Assistance dogs live and work alongside one person to provide assistance to them with the aim of alleviating symptoms of a disability and improve functioning.

The area that we cover here at Playful Paws is that of psychiatric assistance dogs.

There are different models that can support the training of assistance dogs.

We are able to train you in preparation for a Public Access Test following the owner-trainer model.

**\* Assistance dogs are not to be confused with a therapy, emotional support or companion dog which are not required to undertake a Public Access Test (PAT) and therefore do not have the same access rights and are not accepted in areas where pet dogs are not.**



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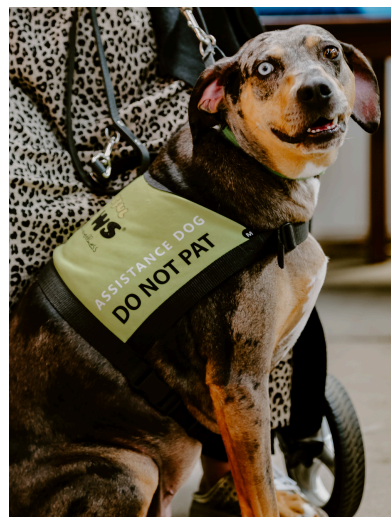


# OVERVIEW OF OUR ASSISTANCE DOG PROGRAM

## OUR MODEL OF TRAINING

Our assistance dog program is called an “owner-trained” program - this means that with our support, you are predominantly responsible for the training! We have found that this is fantastic way to build a strong relationship with your dog, and provides you with the skills to work through different situations you may encounter on your journey. We work to teach all sizes, breeds\* and personalities of dogs to support psychosocial disabilities (such as anxiety, depression, PTSD and similar). Our program is accredited by the Guide, Hearing and Assistance Dog QLD legislation.

A Playful Paws<sup>®</sup> Assistance Dog will help you when out in the community and when fully trained can access places that pet dogs are unable to do so. Such as attending medical appointments and transitioning into school or new workplaces, going out for dinner, helping with the food shopping and going on public transport. Assistance dogs can reduce the need for carer or parent support, and create independence in doing so. Playful Paws<sup>®</sup> is focussed on teaching both you and your dog how to handle different situations with a variety of people. Therefore, there is no cookie cutter approach to our training as every team is different and the speed to become fully qualified can vary. When an assistance dog is fully trained they must meet the requirements of a Public Access Test - which ensures the dog maintains a level of suitable behaviour when in public areas.



\* Please note that we are unable to support restricted breeds, or those that are deemed menacing or dangerous by law.

# ASSISTANCE DOG TEAMS IN ACTION

You and your dog have been appointed to your special role in the community as a Playful Paws<sup>®</sup> Assistance Dog team.

Out in public your dog should assist you when needed, however they also need to be so well behaved they often are not even noticed! They sit or lay calmly in new environments and walk politely on lead ignoring other people / dogs / food.

Always ensure your dog is toileted before entering inside a building - this is easiest by putting toileting on a cue - such as "go toilet" or "Do your jobs".

Once qualified, as a team, you will be able to access areas that are not eligible for pet dogs. In regards to the current legislation no-one can ask you what your disability is, but they can ask you how your dog assists you and ask for a record of training. If you are refused entry to somewhere, you can refer them to Playful Paws<sup>®</sup> or we can support you to help with community education.

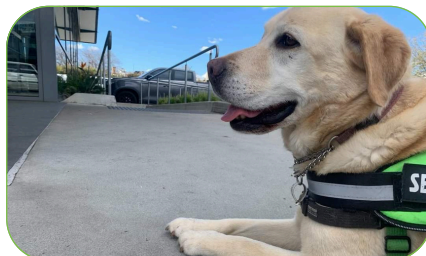
## WHAT ARE THE RIGHTS OF SOMEONE WITH AN ASSISTANCE DOG?

The rights of a person with an Assistance Dog are protected under Federal Law through the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (DDA 1992). The DDA allows qualified Assistance Dogs to accompany their handler into all public spaces.

### HANDLERS

A handler of a certified guide, hearing or assistance dog can be the:

- Primary handler - a person with a disability who relies on the dog to reduce their need for support.
- Alternative (Secondary) handler - an adult, who supports the primary handler of the dog to physically control the dog (e.g. a family member or carer). Generally there is only one secondary handler and the dog will not do tasks for them. Not all teams require a secondary handler.



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# HOW DOES MY DOG BECOME AN ASSISTANCE DOG?

Playful Paws ®: Training and Wellness is committed to ensuring that any dog that is appointed as a Playful Paws ® Assistance Dog maintains the standard expected for a dog in community and public areas.

Initially you will send in an application form and receive an initial consultation with a qualified trainer. From here, if successful, they will make a plan for ongoing training and support.

There are different ways you and your dog can learn the skills to become an assistance dog team.

\* Please note that there are ongoing training and attendance requirements should you want to maintain your qualification.

## 1. Private sessions with you and your dog

These 1:1 Sessions are aimed to assist you and your dog as a team, while supporting you through the training curriculum towards the end goal of the Public Access Test

## 2. Attend group classes

Group classes are a fantastic environment to work on distractions and interact with other members of the Playful Paws ® community and supporting your inclusion within the community.

## 3. Pick up and Train

This is where one of our trainers will pick up your dog and kick start their learning by teaching them skills you may need some extra support with.

Generally a blended model of multiple options works for the best outcomes! Your trainer will assist you with what is best in your initial assessment.

Please remember that training is a journey and there are times it can feel overwhelming. Ensure you reach out to your Playful Paws contact so we can best support and guide you.





# AM I ELIGIBLE?

Anyone with a recognised disability under the Disability Discrimination Act, 1992 is eligible to train an Assistance Dog.

The Disability Discrimination Act 1992 refers to a disability as the following:

To assist, a disability in relation to your patient means:

- a. Total or partial loss of the person's bodily or mental functions, or
- b. Total or partial loss of a part of the body, or
- c. The presence of the body of organisms causing disease or illness, or
- d. The presence in the body of organisms capable of disease or illness, or
- e. The malfunction, malformation or disfigurement of a part of the person's body, or
- f. A disorder or malfunction that results in the person learning differently from a person without the disorder or malfunction, or
- g. A disorder, illness or disease that affects a person's thought processes, perception of reality, emotions or judgement or that results in disturbed behaviour. and includes a disability that:
  - h. Presently exists, or,
  - i. Previously existed but no longer exists, or
  - j. May exist in the future (including because of a genetic predisposition to that disability), or
  - k. Is imputed to a person.

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

Our speciality is assisting owners to train psychiatric assistance dogs - those which support your mental and emotional wellbeing.

These include (but are not limited to)

- Autism
- Social Anxiety
- Depression
- PTSD - Post Traumatic Stress Disorder

Currently we only assist with dual disabilities on a case-by-case basis.

\* Please note we will require a signed medical form from a specialist.



# TRAINING METHODS

At Playful Paws® we need to ensure that all dogs are treated with dignity and respect. We only support positive training methods. This is imperative for the dog to feel confident within their role, and also to be able to make decisions, at times, on your behalf.



## CLICKER TRAINING

We use “clicker training” to support learning and development with all dogs that we work with. Clicker training uses a mechanical ‘click’ noise to mark the moment when your dog is doing a desirable behaviour. This is then followed with a small yummy treat which reinforces the behaviour - making it more likely to occur again! We will go through this with you in more detail during your sessions.



## TRAINING EQUIPMENT

We approve fear-free methods and equipment. Positive training methods are endorsed and a requirement of becoming a Playful Paws® Assistance dog. It is important that you complete an equipment check before going anywhere. Your dog should show reasonable control on a collar or front attaching harness.

### Approved Equipment

- Collar
- Harness
- Halti (case by case for safety only)

### Not Approved Equipment - anything aversive

- Correction collars
- E-Collars

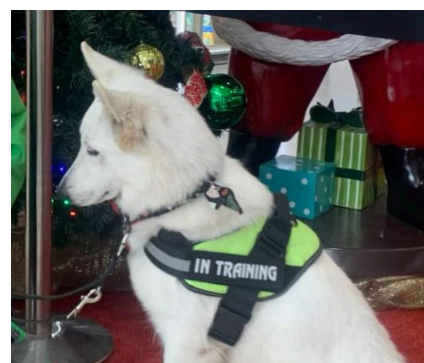


# TRAINING SKILLS REQUIRED

At 9-12 months (depending on your training journey), you will sit a practice public access test. This helps to identify any areas that you may need extra assistance in, or you may even be ready for the real thing! This is generally completed by one of our assessors and to assist with any bias will be completed by a different person than who you regularly work with.

**WHEN YOU AND YOUR DOG ARE READY TO SIT YOUR PUBLIC ACCESS TEST, YOUR DOG WILL BE ABLE TO DO THE FOLLOWING.**

1. Walk past another dog politely and ignore other dogs
2. Leave food, items and spills on the floor when asked
3. Take food gently when offered
4. Tolerate clumsy handling
5. Be comfortable with different things such as sudden loud noises; wheelchairs; loud voices; crutches; people running, sudden movements to name a few.
6. Walk calmly through a large crowd
7. Ignore treats and pats politely from a stranger
8. Be able to settle in new environments
9. Be able to drop, sit or stand and stay with you at a distance
10. Walk on a lead with a soft collar and be comfortable wearing an identifying coat
11. Walk on a loose lead and listen to your instructions
12. Calm after being excited.
13. Four Assistance specific tasks - such as lap target, jumping on lap (if appropriate for little dogs), nudging hands, assisting with anxiety or social interaction (additional tasks listed on following pages)



# TRAINING SKILLS REQUIRED

Being a Playful Paws® Assistance Dog team, is not just about your dog! You will also be required to understand and communicate to be able to be your dogs advocate.

- Identify what signs your dog shows when they are stressed, anxious, overwhelmed or uncomfortable.
- Practice communicating with a variety of people
- Practice multitasking - give your dog instructions at the same time as 'window shopping'
- Continue to have fun and train with your dog
- Practice what to say if someone asks to pat your dog (typically assistance dogs are 'working' and therefore someone patting them will distract them from their job)
- Know the legal obligations to take a dog into the community in this role





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# BEING YOUR DOG'S ADVOCATE

For you to be successful, your number one priority is the health and safety of your dog.

Ask yourself these questions:

- Are they well?
- Are there any signs of stress or anxiety?
- Are they listening to you and checking in with you?
- Are they excited to be in public? Or not?
- Have they been toileted?

If you have any concerns about your dog's well-being - it is important not to take them out in public and give them a rest day. Contact your trainer or vet if unsure.

A stressed or unwell dog can be unsafe or lead to inappropriate situations occurring).



## 10 SIGNS YOUR DOG MIGHT BE STRESSED



Barking



Pacing



Pinned  
back ears



Tail between  
the legs



Panting



Shaking



Destructive  
behaviour



Loss of  
appetite



Digestive  
issues



Shedding

# TASKS

Tasks are specific things your dog does to assist you with your disability. They can fall into 4 main categories:

## 1. Physical

- Pick up your keys
- Help carrying items
- Open and close doors, drawers, cupboards and fridge
- Retrieved dropped items
- Press the button at the traffic lights
- Take the washing out of the machine
- Remove items of clothing
- Pay the cashier at the shops

## 2. Physiological (before you are aware)

- Alert to start of anxiety
- Interrupt hallucinations

## 3. Social

- Safety in community
- Finding an exit
- Alert bark if their owner is in danger
- Use their body to block from danger

## 4. Emotional (once you are aware)

- Disrupt panic attacks
- Alert to dissociative events



As well as tangible day-to-day tasks an Assistance Dog can:

- Assist with the development and improvement of motor skills
- Provide greater freedom and independence
- Reduce the need for a carer
- Improve self-esteem and confidence
- Give love and companionship





# EXAMPLES OF TASKS

## Anxiety

Support needed	Task the dog does
Sensory and tactile input	Playing with ears Eye contact Licking
Deep Pressure	Lap target Lay across body
Removal from stress	Find a chair Find a quiet corner Find the exit
Disrupting early signs of anxiety building (eg nail picking, excessive fidgeting)	Head Nudge Lap target Body Pressure Bring a toy

## Depression

Support needed	Task the dog does
Calming and grounding	Sensory input
Routines	Initiate activity Develop care routine



## Self Harm

Support needed	Task the dog does
Calming and grounding	Sensory input
Disrupting behaviour	Nudge Knock items out of the way

## Motor Skill Support

Support needed	Task the dog does
Confidence in the community	Alert to changes in ground (eg curbs, steps)
Fine motor skills and mobility	Pick up items Give wallet to cashier Retrieve items

## Sleep Disturbances

Support needed	Task the dog does
Trouble settling	Deep pressure
Night terrors	Nudge to wake up Alert partner Turn on lights Give water



## Other Support

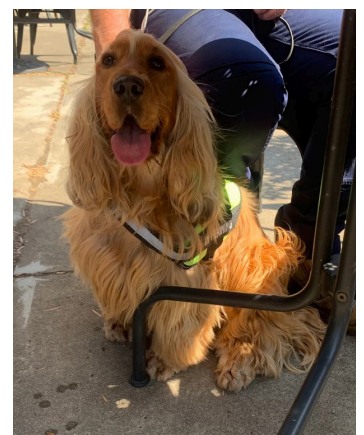
Support needed	Task the dog does
Disassociation	Follow Partner or carer Find chair/ safe place Jump to alert
Flashbacks	Grounding behaviours Deep pressure Sensory input Alert carer Bring water Jump to alert
Hallucinations	Vocal alert if events are real Grounding behaviours Get phone Check doors are locked

## Memory Loss

Support needed	Task the dog does
Loosing objects	Find keys, phone, car.
Remembering medication	Reminders to take medication Bringing medication to you
Confusion in the community	Find the exit Find the car Find parent/ carer Find the toilet
Disrupting early signs of anxiety building (eg nail picking, excessive fidgeting)	Head Nudge Lap target Body Pressure

## PTSD

Support needed	Task the dog does
Movement Tasks	Block handler from moving towards danger (busy road, away from home, etc.) Check the house Clear a room (enter ahead of handler and check for intruders) Crowd control (circling handler) Deep pressure therapy Follow designated person Refuse to move forward if not safe Tactile stimulation



# HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

Application fee (non refundable) - \$250

This includes your suitability assessment and training plan

Your first yearly assessment (PAT) (including your jacket and identification badges) - \$500

All other sessions charged at hourly rate.

Please note there are other costs which are associated with training, including regular grooming, vet visits and 3rd party liability and pet insurance.

\* We may be able to support you through various funding bodies including NDIS, please discuss with your trainer.



## VETERINARY CHECKS

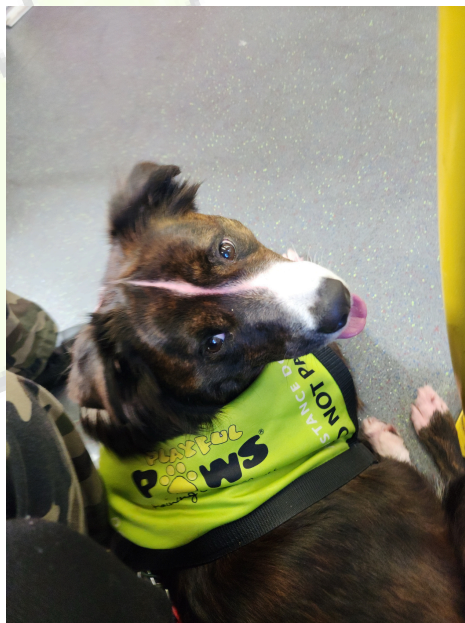
Your dog requires a vet check to ensure they can maintain the level of Assistance work that you need. This can be completed at their yearly vet check / vaccination. Once completed please return to Playful Paws <sup>®</sup>. If your dog is over 8 years old, their working life may not be long, and they may need more frequent vet visits.



# OTHER IMPORTANT CONSIDERATIONS



1. Ensure your dog is up to date with vaccinations, worming and flea treatment
2. Ensure that your dog is always well-groomed – short nails, clean, fresh breath.
3. Ensure that your dog has completed a Vet Check.
4. Undertake a yearly assessment of health and training
5. Hold 3rd party liability insurance
6. Your dog will wear their Playful Paws<sup>®</sup> Assistance dog jacket while working. This jacket cannot be worn by any other dog.
7. You will maintain the health and safety of your dog.
8. Report any incidents to Playful Paws<sup>®</sup> as soon as they occur e.g. dog anxiety, injury, uncomfortable situation etc.
9. Uphold Playful Paws<sup>®</sup> Values
10. Treat every person with respect and dignity
11. Sign an agreement with Playful Paws<sup>®</sup> and abide by all requirements
12. Maintain regular, at least monthly, contact with Playful Paws<sup>®</sup>
13. Public Transport Victoria (or equivalent) Pass



# CONFIDENTIALITY

We respect your privacy and confidentiality. There are times such as if a confrontation happens in the community where we may need to discuss your accreditation. This will not be done without your prior consent. And no disclosure of your needs will occur.

# PRIVACY POLICY

We respect your privacy! We do not sell, rent, or pass on any personal information about our clients to any third party. We promise that you will never receive any unwanted postal or e-mail because of information you have given to us, unless you sign up for it.

Your Personal Information is stored in a manner that reasonably protects it from misuse and loss and from unauthorized access, modification, or disclosure.

When your Personal Information is no longer needed for the purpose for which it was obtained, we will take reasonable steps to destroy or permanently de-identify your Personal Information. However, we will comply with any legislated or Court ordered disclosure of your private information.

All Personal information is handled in accordance with the Privacy Act 1988



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# HOW DO WE SUPPORT YOU?

If successful Playful Paws <sup>®</sup> will be delighted to have you on our Assistance Dog program and will continue to support, you on the job.

- Supply Identification card and an Assistance Dog jacket - these need to be always worn when working. (Your ID and dog jacket is not to be used by any other person or dog.)
- Provide on-going support
- Be your advocate when needed
- Regular client catch ups



## TRAINING DIARY

It is helpful and important for you to keep track of your training and progress. Each session can be documented in a hard copy, on your phone or in a spreadsheet.

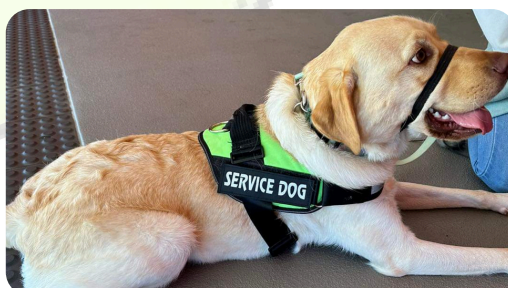
Playful Paws <sup>®</sup> will help you set up a file to keep track of this if needed.

Please note that some travel providers will request this as proof of ongoing training.



## TERMS AND CONDITIONS

Playful Paws <sup>®</sup> terms and conditions allows us to best support you on your journey to become an amazing Assistance Dog Team!



# PUBLIC ACCESS TEST

Playful Paws <sup>®</sup> is committed to ensuring that any dog that attends training for Assistance Dog / or is assessed to become a Assistance Dog for Playful Paws <sup>®</sup> reaches the standard expected to display suitable behaviour in the public. This assessment ensures that dogs and handlers meet that standard. And is run in accordance to GHAD requirements.

Your dog must be able to reliably respect cues and instructions when on or off lead. Whilst we recommend that your Assistance Dog be on lead at all times, leads can accidentally be dropped or you may become incapacitated.

To be accepted as a Playful Paws <sup>®</sup> Assistance Dog you and your dog need to:

1. Successfully complete the Public Access Test
2. Ensure your dog is up to date with vaccinations, worming and flea treatment
3. Ensure that your dog is well-groomed at all times - short nails, clean, fresh breath, well groomed.
4. Ensure that your dog has completed a Vet Check as per Playful Paws <sup>®</sup> requirements
5. Undertake a 12 month reassessment of health and behaviours.
6. Be prepared to commit to monthly training sessions and remain in regular contact with Playful Paws <sup>®</sup>
7. Maintain training records
8. Small or toy breeds that are normally carried, **MUST** complete the PAT on the ground





# PUBLIC ACCESS TEST

## SCORING

Your dog will be scored as the following:

Pass - follows the correct cues for the situation

Fail - does not listen at all



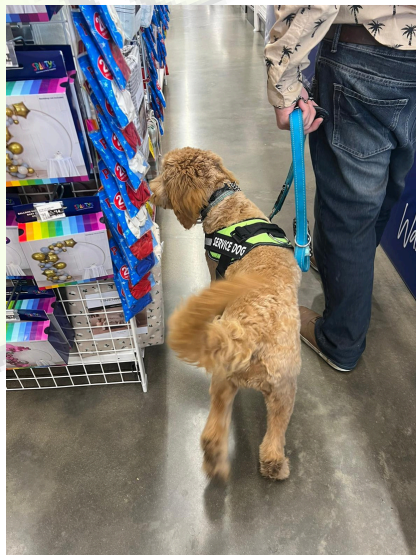
Instant failures include:

- Toileting inappropriately in vest
- Lunging at people and or dogs
- Showing hackles, baring teeth or biting
- Stealing items when in store
- Showing signs of being overwhelmed and/or anxious themselves
- Any dog or handler who, due to their behaviour may loose respect of trainer, public or not uphold Playful Paws<sup>®</sup> values
- Any handler that is harsh or shows aversive techniques on the dog
- Any handler who is not willing to abide by all relevant laws
- Failure of any element of the PAT

**A copy of this test will be provided when you are closer to completion of the program.**

## WE ARE HERE TO HELP YOU

The PAT will be completed in a new environment for you and your dog and will have two assessors for the duration of the test. If at anytime we feel that you or your dog are too overwhelmed to continue we will organise another time for the test to continue.



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# DO's and DON'Ts

This is a simple version for you to follow whilst working with your dog.

## DO

- Toilet your dog before entering into a building
- Brush and clean your dog regularly
- Bring treats and reinforce training
- Bring a mat for your dog to rest on
- Bring your ID card
- Dress your dog in proper ID jacket
- Uphold Playful Paws® Values
- Settle in footwell of transport
- Walk politely beside you
- Advocate for you and your dog
- Remove your dog from stressful situations
- Trust your dog! Allow them to support you, even if it may feel different or unconventional

## DON'T

- Toilet your dog whilst wearing their vest
- Punish your dog
- Be abusive to public
- Use jacket for any other dog
- Allow your dog to pick up random items from the ground
- Allow your dog to say hello to other dogs or people while in jacket
- Allow other people to handle your dog whilst in jacket



# TRAINING ACCEPTANCE FLOW CHART

This is a simple version for you to follow whilst working with your dog.

## Initial Consult

- 1 hr assessment
- Given paperwork
- Client completes paperwork

## Once paperwork is returned

- When paperwork is returned
- ID letter provided
- Training plan arranged

\* Please note that you can start basic training before paperwork is returned

## Formal Check-ins (assessments)

- 3 months (just a chat!)
- 6 months
- 9 months
- 12 months
- 18 months

## Approx 2 years - PUBLIC ACCESS TEST!

- After PAT test
- Monthly check in
- Annual vet check
- Annual PAT test


\* As a partnership things will change along your journey, keeping up regular training sessions will help navigate these changes. The above serves as a guide for minimum only.



**HAVE MORE QUESTIONS?**

**PLEASE CONTACT US!**

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 **0407 672 468**

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