

# Guide Dogs.

## Position Statement- Services

Guide Dogs is a registered Charity and also a registered service provider under the National Disability Insurance Scheme (NDIS) since 2014.

Guide Dogs has a responsibility to its key stakeholders (Organisation, Clients, and Donors, Community) to ensure that it:

- Fulfils its charitable purpose of responding to need
- Demonstrates equity and transparency in relation to access to service
- Is sustainable for the future in order to achieve its mission of supporting more people who have low vision and blindness.

To date, Guide Dogs has applied some broad principles about clients' access to services and how government and donor funding will be utilised, however, increased transparency is required.

This document outlines Guide Dogs position on funding support for services to clients. The information, processes, and guidelines in this document are intended to:

- Provide clarity on importance of service agreements.
- Provide clarity on key principles informing how clients can access funding for Guide Dogs services to achieve their goals
- Enable Guide Dogs to equitably and transparently use donor funding to support clients to achieve their goals.

There will be a 3,6,9 and 12-month review of the Position Statement. This position statement applies to access to the following intervention-based Client Services:

- Assistive Technology
- Occupational Therapy
- Low Vision
- Orientation and Mobility Services (including Guide Dog Services)

It does not apply to access to:

- Connection Services
- AT Help desk

## **Service Agreements**

Service Agreements set out the rights and responsibilities of the organisation and clients in relation to services provided. They are a key part of the continuous improvement of Guide Dog's services to clients.

To promote client-led and goal-oriented service delivery, Guide Dogs will collaborate with you to ensure that you have a Service Agreement in place prior to commencing intervention.

Service Agreements provide a clear plan for you and staff about the types and amounts of service that will be provided in order to enable you to achieve your goals. The aim is for all Guide Dogs clients to have a Service Agreement, regardless of the source of their funding. If you do not want a service agreement in place we will seek to understand why and work with you on a solution.

Service Agreements will cover service hours that are provided directly to you via face to face or telepractice. Service Agreements may also cover time spent on agreed non-face to face time required e.g. to write up progress on goals.

For NDIS funded clients, Guide Dogs will seek consent from you to allocate hours in the service agreement for travel time and program support required to enable you to meet your goals. You will not be disadvantaged if you do not consent to non-face to face time being claimed in your Service Agreements.

## **New Service Agreement Support Funding**

Service Agreement Support Funding is a new initiative by Guide Dogs that provides clarity on how services to clients will commence. This funding is available annually to all clients.

Service Agreement Support Funding provides donor funded time for the necessary conversations and administration required to set up a service agreement with a client. This is available whether a client is new, existing, or returning. The maximum number of hours for Service Agreement Support Funding will be 7 hours and this will be donor funded.

In order to start up services, Guide Dogs staff will have conversations with you about what you want to achieve. This will mean setting out some broad aims that can be refined as your needs are assessed in more detail.

To start up services you will:

- Have a conversation with the Enquiries and Intake team to identify your aspirations and needs and identify any potential funding supports.
- Collaborate on an Estimate of Support (EOS) about what types of services you need and how much of these services.
- Undertake specific activities to make sure the EOS is as accurate as possible so that Guide Dog's Service Agreement with you is a good match to what you need.
  - Assessment of Needs
  - Reporting

A Service Agreement is required to commence all services, regardless of the source your funding, unless a client's case is determined to be urgent and needs specific and

immediate intervention. Criteria for urgent services are set out in section 3.3.

Once you are satisfied with the Estimate of Supports, this will be converted to a Service Agreement for your approval. A Client's approval and consent is required to commence service.

### **What defines an Urgent Service?**

A client's need for Guide Dogs services will be deemed as urgent when:

- The client is at significant risk of injury; unable to continue employment or studies, or is unable to continue provision of care to a dependent; AND
- No reasonable actions other than the provision of GDN service can resolve the above issue(s).

These areas will be covered at the point of contact with the Enquiry and Intake team and escalated to the relevant Area Manager for response within 24 hours as part of a risk assessment escalation process.

### **What are the available Funding Sources?**

Guide Dogs Services are made possible through a combination of donor and government funding. This section outlines the key funding supports and how Guide Dogs will work with clients to maximise their access, choice, and control related to funding:

#### **NDIS:**

People under 65 years, an Australian resident and who have a significant and permanent disability are eligible for the NDIS.

- If you are eligible for NDIS but not accessing the scheme, Guide Dogs can assist you to connect and get started with your application to access it.
- Guide Dogs will commence service and issue equipment when a Service Agreement is in place
- You will not be disadvantaged by delays caused by the NDIA, such as delays for plan meetings, and you will have the same wait times as any other clients.
- Where possible and in consultation with you any dog mobility related services provided will be back claimed once your NDIS plan is in place.

#### **My Aged Care**

Clients who are over 65 years may be eligible for funding under the Commonwealth Home Care or Home Support Packages.

- At Enquires and Intake the team will ask you about your CHSP or HCP Package and work with you to align Guide Dogs services to your goals and funding.
- If you are eligible for CHSP but not accessing the scheme, Guide Dogs will assist you to connect and get started.
- Guide Dogs will commence service and issue equipment when a Service Agreement is in place.

- Where possible dog mobility supports will be back claimed once funding has been confirmed and Service Agreement is in place.

## **Donor Funding**

All clients at Guide Dogs receive a level of donor funding for the services they receive, including those with NDIS funding. Specifically, donor funding is utilised when clients:

- Require additional levels of services or equipment to achieve their goals,
- Are not eligible to access government funding
- Have specific hardships in accessing government funding

In order to ensure equity and transparency related to use of donor funds, the following business rules are framed:

- If you are not eligible for government funding support, Guide Dogs will use donor funding to the value agreed in your Service Agreement to enable you to meet your vision-related goals.
- If you need additional time to achieve the goals in your service agreement and you do not have access to additional government funding, Donor Support Funding will be used to cover this.
  - If more time is required to achieve goals, a review of the existing Service Agreement will be held (see process above for Service Agreements).
- If you are eligible for NDIS and require services urgently (see section 3.3) Guide Dogs will provide immediate support to address those urgent needs. If possible, Guide Dogs will seek to back claim for any dog mobility services provided.
- If you require non-urgent services, you are eligible for NDIS, but experiences a delay in accessing government funds which is outside your control, then Guide Dogs will place you on relevant wait lists and commence service when it becomes available. Guide Dogs will require you to allocate the agreed NDIS funding when it becomes available and will seek to back claim where possible.
- If you are eligible for NDIS but choose not to apply, Guide Dogs will seek to understand your position. Where the decision relates to a voluntary choice not to access NDIS funding this will be raised with the Head of Client Services and Head of Fundraising for review and recommended actions by the relevant Area Manager.
- If you have NDIS funding and choose to use it with another organisation for the same services you are seeking from Guide Dogs, Guide Dogs will decline service. There is a liability risk when two providers are engaged delivering the same service. Your right to choice and control over your provider is supported.

## **Equipment and Guide Dogs**

For clients assessed as suitable for a guide dog, there are a range of funding options which are set out in the Guide Dog Information Pack.

If you a) are not eligible for government funding, have b) been denied government funding or c) chose not to access government funding for a guide dog, then special consideration for donor funding for a guide dog will be provided to the Executive for review. A procedure for this has been developed called Procedure for Notification of Clients Awaiting a Guide dog.

When an NDIS client needs additional equipment such as canes or electronic mobility aids and this is not provided for in their plan, Guide Dogs can support the client through a plan review and Area managers may authorise one off supply of a cane. Should a client wish to purchase a cane or mini guide only, a service agreement will not be required however an invoice will be sent for payment.

## **Cancellations**

NDIS clients: In the event of an advised absence, the cancellation guidelines noted in Service Agreements will be applied. Where applicable, cancellation rates will be charged at the rate in the NDIS price guide and applied in the event that it is cancelled by the client with 48 hours or less notice. Exceptional circumstances will be escalated to the relevant Area Manager for consideration.

Other Funding: Services will be suspended in the event of 3 sessions cancelled by the client with less than 48 hours' notice. Discussions will be held with you and the Client Services team to determine how to best support you to continue to access services.

## **Debt Management**

If you are funding services through NDIS via plan managed or self-managed modes, non-payment of 3 invoices in the term of your service agreement, will result in services being suspended until a resolution has been confirmed. If the fault in payment lies with the Plan Manager, you will not be disadvantaged in accessing services.

In all other cases, following advice to you by your Area Manager, the Guide Dogs Finance team will liaise with you to work through options. Services will be resumed once fees for the non-funded sessions have been recovered.

## **Related Documents**

<b>Related legislation and/or standards:</b>	National Disability Insurance Scheme (Code of Conduct) Rules 2018 National Disability Insurance Scheme (Provider Registration and Practice Standards) Rules 2018 Aged Card Quality Standards 2019
<b>Related policies, procedures, documents and forms:</b>	Guide Dog Information Pack Procedure for Notification of Clients awaiting a Guide Dog Guide Dogs Debt Management Policy Client Exit, Termination and Suspension Policy and Procedure Client Client Enquiry and Intake Policy and Procedure Client's Rights Policy

## Definitions

<b>Term</b>	<b>Meaning</b>
Service Agreement	A SA refers to the documented agreement a client makes with a provider about what services and supports they will receive to achieve their goals. A SA with Guide Dogs will set out: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• What supports and services Guide Dogs agrees to provide.</li> <li>• The amount of time needed and costs of those supports and services.</li> <li>• How long you need the supports and services to be provided.</li> <li>• How any problems or issues that may arise will be handled</li> </ul>
Service Agreement Support funding	A set number of hours allocated as donor funded time provided to carry out the necessary administration and assessments required to set up a Service Agreement
Risk Assessment Escalation	The process for the Enquiries and Intake team to assessment whether a client has urgent needs that require immediate service.
NDIS	National Disability Insurance Scheme
My Aged Care	Commonwealth Home Support and Home Care