Dog Guide Newsletter - June 2023

Welcome to the winter edition of the DGHA newsletter. In this issue, you will find a range of informative articles including:

Contents

[Essential travel tips for a smooth journey with your Dog Guide](#_Toc137564393)

[Chair person’s report](#_Toc137564394)

[Member’s teleconference on collecting evidence on Dog Guide refusals.](#_Toc137564395)

[AACTRS inaugural meeting](#_Toc137564396)

[Join DGHA to win a prize!](#_Toc137564397)

[Report your refusals!](#_Toc137564398)

[Conference Update](#_Toc137564399)

[Conference sponsors and supporters](#_Toc137564400)

[A summary of some of the things we have planned](#_Toc137564401)

[Conference program](#_Toc137564402)

[Two dog focused workshops](#_Toc137564403)

[How to join DGHA](#_Toc137564404)

[Sign up for this newsletter.](#_Toc137564405)

[Contribute to this newsletter.](#_Toc137564406)

[Dog Guide Handlers Australia.](#_Toc137564407)

[\*\*Disclaimer](#_Toc137564408)

[How dog’s say yes, Anna’s bio and workshop overview](#_Toc137564409)

# Essential travel tips for a smooth journey with your Dog Guide

As the Dog Guide Handlers Conference approaches in August, it's time to start planning your travel arrangements with your loyal four-legged companion. Traveling with a Dog Guide can be an exciting adventure, but it also requires careful preparation to ensure a stress-free experience. In this article, we will provide you with essential tips and must-have items to make your journey comfortable and enjoyable for you both.

### Compact and convenient: the collapsible bowl

When packing for your trip, it's important to consider space limitations. Opt for a collapsible bowl that can easily fit into your suitcase. These lightweight and compact bowls are designed to be portable, making them ideal for travel. They can be expanded to provide your Dog Guide with food and water whenever needed.

### Calm Handler equals calm dog

As a Handler, your calm demeanor is crucial for your Dog Guide's well-being during the journey. Dogs are highly attuned to their Handler's emotions, so it's essential to remain calm and confident throughout the trip. This will help your Dog Guide feel secure and reassured in unfamiliar surroundings.

### Home comforts blanket for the flight and sleep

To provide your Dog Guide with a familiar scent and a cozy spot to rest, pack a blanket that carries the scent of home. This will not only provide comfort during the flight but also serve as a familiar sleeping area at your destination. Having a familiar item can alleviate anxiety and create a sense of security for your Dog Guide.

### Engaging entertainment

Keep your Dog Guide entertained during the trip with a stimulating toy. A Kong filled with peanut butter can provide hours of entertainment and mental stimulation. The challenge of extracting the tasty treat will keep your Dog Guide occupied, minimizing boredom and restlessness during travel. Another favourite toy is a simple pillow-case, with a knot tied in the middle. This provides a bit of fun while in your hotel room, and allows your dog to release some of its extra energy.

### Safety first: seat-belt clip for car or flight

Whether you're travelling by car or plane, ensuring your Dog Guide's safety is paramount. Invest in a seat-belt clip designed specifically for dogs. This clip attaches to your dog's harness or collar, securing them in place during the journey. It provides peace of mind and prevents any potential accidents or injuries.

### Hair management: brush to remove shedding

Dealing with dog hair while travelling can be a challenge. To keep yourself and your clothing free from excess fur, bring along a suitable hairbrush. Regularly brushing your Dog Guide will help control shedding and keep their coat looking tidy throughout the trip.

### Home away from home: travel bed options

Providing your Dog Guide with a comfortable and familiar sleeping area is essential during your travels. Consider investing in a travel bed such as the Snooza Traveller or Indie Boho. These portable beds are designed to be lightweight, easy to set up, and offer the same level of comfort your Dog Guide is accustomed to at home.

### Smaller portions: pre-measure dog food

To avoid any hassles and ensure your Dog Guide's dietary needs are met, pre-measure their food for the duration of the trip. This will help you keep track of their meals and avoid overfeeding. Using resealable bags or containers can help you stay organized and maintain portion control.

### Timing is key: toilet dog as close to boarding as possible

Before boarding a plane or embarking on a long car journey, make sure to take your Dog Guide for a toilet break as close to departure time as possible. This will help minimize the chances of accidents during travel and ensure your Dog Guide is comfortable and ready for the journey ahead.

# Chair person’s report

Hello everyone, I hope your toes are toasty warm as you read this winter edition of the DGHA newsletter.

## Member’s teleconference on collecting evidence on Dog Guide refusals.

Thank you to all who attended our Members Meeting on Monday 5 June. And thank you to member Vaughan Roles who led the informative discussion focused on collecting evidence when we are refused access by taxi and rideshare drivers because of our Dog Guides. Here are some of the tips from Vaughan, a solicitor and Dog Guide Handler who has faced many refusals himself:

1. Screenshot the initial booking which shows the driver’s name and details as these disappear once they’ve cancelled a booking on you.
2. Turn your phone camera on and position yourself where your phone will capture the approaching car’s number plate. It doesn’t need to be perfect, at a later date you or a sighted person can pause the video and zoom in to see the numberplate.
3. Always keep calm so the driver cannot refute your claim due to your anger or aggressive behaviour.
4. While negotiating with the driver who has refused you a ride, ensure that you explain clearly to them that your Dog Guide is a registered working dog and that the law states that it is illegal to refuse service because of a registered working dog. Capture this conversation to make it clear to investigators that they were advised of the laws.

## AACTRS inaugural meeting

On Tuesday 6 June I attended the inaugural meeting of Assistance Dogs Advisory Committee – Taxi and Rideshare Services (AACTRS) (pronounced actors). This workgroup was formed in response to further discussion after a roundtable discussion hosted by VEOHRC (Victorian Equal Opportunities and Human Rights Commission) in February. VEOHRC listened to feedback from a group of people with lived experience and representatives from Dog Guide schools, Assistance Dog schools, and blindness organisations and acknowledged that some action needs to be taken to improve the taxi/rideshare refusal issues for Handlers in Australia, beginning in Victoria.

Nina Smith, an advocate for people living with disability who rely on an Assistance Dog and the founder of TravelPaws is leading this initiative. Nina has drawn together a small group of passionate individuals with lived experience and representatives with specific skills and knowledge. This Advisory Committee will be co designing with an intergovernmental working group to find solutions to taxi and rideshare refusals. This work will begin in Victoria. The members of the Advisory Committee are:The members of this group are:

* Jeremy Anderson, National Policy and Government Relations Advisor from Guide Dogs Australia
* Jackson Reynolds-Ryan, Team Leader of Policy and Advocacy at Blind Citizens Australia
* Sarah Emery, Chief Operations Officer and Deputy CEO at Assistance Dogs Australia.
* Nina Smith, Founder and Director of TravelPaws.
* Myself, Annette Ferguson, Chairperson of Dog Guide Handlers Australia.

AACTRS will meet regularly over the next few months to establish their purpose, vision and mission and define their goals and activities.

Nina will be a presenter at our upcoming conference where she will talk about the work AACTRS are doing to stop taxi and rideshare refusals.

## Join DGHA to win a prize!

DGHA currently has 196 lifetime, financial members. Our Facebook group has over 800 members, which means 600+ people are not financial members! Be the 200th member to join and WIN A PRIZE!! HURRY! [Joining details are below.](#Join)

## Report your refusals!

Just a friendly reminder that our online [Dog Guide refusal reporting form](https://dgha.org.au/dgha/) is still open. We understand that reporting refusals is tedious and tiresome and can retraumatize, but if you can, please report refusals as having supporting data will help us resolve the number of refusals in the long run. The refusal reports have been deidentified and are being shared with VEOHRC to support their work on the issues.

Looking forward to seeing you all at the conference in August!

Annette Ferguson

Chairperson.

# Conference Update

For those early birds who have already registered and paid, thank you for making life easy for the organisers! We really appreciate your enthusiasm.

Places are limited so if you are keen to come, please [register here](http://dgha.org.au/conference-2023/). Registrations close 28 July.

## Conference sponsors and supporters

This year’s conference is generously supported by the following major sponsors:

* Guide Dogs Victoria Connected Together Grant
* Vision Australia
* Guide Dogs Queensland

We’d also like to thank our secondary sponsors:

* [Forward Thinking Dog Training](https://www.forwardthinkingdogtraining.com.au/)
* [Bunnings](https://bunnings.com.au/)
* [Dermal Therapy](https://dermaltherapy.com.au/)
* [Kong](https://kongs.com.au/)
* [Maskco](https://maskco.com/)
* [No Pong](https://www.nopong.com.au/)
* [Taste of the Wild](https://www.tasteofthewild.com.au/)
* [TGI Friday](https://www.tgifridays.com.au/)
* [White Glo](https://whiteglo.com/)

## A summary of some of the things we have planned

* We have some lovely Orientation and Mobility Specialists (O&Ms) available on Friday afternoon to assist those who indicated in their registration form that they’d like some help navigating the venue
* When you register on Friday afternoon or Saturday morning, you’ll receive a lovely goodie bag full of great stuff for you and your Dog Guide.
* A great bunch of vendors will be at our expo on Friday evening showing their wares – assistive technology, dog harnesses and more!
* At our ‘Dogtail’ party on Friday you’ll be able to choose drinks from Braille and large print menus. There will be alcoholic and non alcoholic Dogtails with names like ‘Sex in the kennel’ and ‘Retriever smash’ and ‘Stonehenger’. Do you know what a Stonehenger is?
* Are you a regular parkrunner? No need to miss out while you are at the Conference. There is a parkrun at Southbank on Saturday 5 June at, not far from the Conference venue. It starts at 7 am and we’ll connect you with some volunteers Achilles Brisbane if you email us at dgha@dgha.org.au.
* Breakfast with friends, no one needs to eat alone. We’ll have a couple of meeting times in the morning for people to gather and make their way to a breakfast venue together.
* Morning wake up walks around the park across the road from the venue after breakfast and before we get into the conference program.
* A professional photographer to capture candid moments from late Saturday morning at the conference and our group photo opportunity on Saturday afternoon.
* Australia’s first inclusive raffle with Braille and large print raffle tickets at the conference dinner on Saturday night.
* Presentation of the Golden Harness Award to someone who has made a significant contribution to the Dog Guide community.

## Conference program

* Doug Ritchie from Guide Dogs NSW/ACT sharing research findings from a 3 year study on the Ruffwear Unifly harness
* Bryce Tolliday, CEO and founder of Wayfinding Australia sharing an advocacy story with a positive outcome
* A panel discussion on technology for navigation with speakers from Vision Australia, Humanware and BindiMaps.
* The Public Interest Advocacy Centre: complaints and discrimination claims; durable solutions for taxi and rideshare companies to adopt. Hosted by Katie Butler
* Keynote speaker, Dr Amanda Muller: Shifting the burden of Dog Guide refusal from victim to perpetrator and the PawsRight App.
* Nina Smith, founder of TravelPaws and AACTRS, accessibility advocate for the low vision and blindness community: Stop Taxi and Rideshare Refusals.
* Dr Nicola Cotton, Veterinary and Reproduction Manager Vision Australia: SEDA breeding program and how SEDA assesses and selects dogs for breeding in order to produce a continually improving quality of dog for clients
* Anna Gigliotti-Skret, GDMI and professional dog trainer: Baby steps and setting dogs up for success. Gain a deeper understanding of your individual dog and discover how your dog can communicate whether they would like to interact or if they prefer not to.
* James McFarlaine, Founder, Cocky Guides: Take the lead to improve hotel standards. A workshop to define hotel accessibility standards for Dog Guide users and the tourism industry.
* Paul Adrian, Training Manager, National Programs, Vision Australia: The International Guide Dog Federation, who are they and what do they do.
* Open floor: a chance for conference attendees to share their stories, share their favourite dog products.

## Two dog focused workshops

### Vision Australia

* Vision Australia will run a workshop focusing on training strategies and techniques on Friday, more details to come!

### Forward Thinking Dog Training

* Anna Gigliotti Skret from Forward Thinking Dog Training workshop “How dogs say yes’. Please see Anna’s bio and a [full description of the workshop](#Anna) at the end of this newsletter.
* Location: Royal on the Park, room TBC
* Time: 10 am – 12.20 pm (2 hours with 20 minutes break, eg. 50 mins, then break, then 50 mins).
* Price: Working position (Max 4 participants) - $80, observing - $40
* Cancellations:Free cancellation if cancelled on or before 31st July, 2023.
* Full cost will apply if cancelled after 31st July, 2023.
* Audio description of what is happening in the class will be available.
* To book, contact Anna by email: anna.gig22@gmail.com
* [www.forwardthinkingdogtraining.com.au](http://www.forwardthinkingdogtraining.com.au)
* [www.forwardthinkingmobility.com.au](http://www.forwardthinkingmobility.com.au)

# How to join DGHA

There are two categories of DGHA memberships. Full membership is $20.00 for any Australian who is blind or vision impaired and who is a Dog Guide Handler. Associate membership is $10.00 and for any other person who is sighted, blind or vision impaired and supports the objectives of DGHA.

If you are not already a member of DGHA and wish to be, please visit our [website](http://dgha.org.au/dgha/membership/) and fill in the accessible membership form. We welcome full memberships for Dog Guide Handlers and associate memberships from Dog Guide trainers, puppy raisers and friends and family of Dog Guide Handlers.

## Sign up for this newsletter.

If you know someone who may be interested in receiving this newsletter, for example, a new Dog Guide Handler, a puppy raiser or your instructor, please send their email address to us (with their permission) at dgha@dgha.org.au, and we’ll add them to our list.

## Contribute to this newsletter.

We welcome your input into this newsletter. If you have a story, an idea, or a review of a doggy product you love, don't hesitate to contact Stephanie by emailing newsletter@dgha.org.au email address to discuss your contribution.

## Dog Guide Handlers Australia.

Email dgha@dgha.org.au

Website [www.dgha.org.au](http://www.dgha.org.au)

Twitter: @DGHAustralia via <https://twitter.com/dghaustralia?lang=en>

# \*\*Disclaimer

Views and opinions expressed in this newsletter are not necessarily those of the editor or DGHA. Any advice is general in nature and should be checked with relevant schools, your vet or other relevant authorities.

# How dog’s say yes, Anna’s bio and workshop overview

Anna Gigliotti Skret

Anna is an internationally qualified Dog Guide Instructor and Certified Orientation and Mobility specialist with extensive experience in the field since 2002. Anna’s Dog Guide traineeship was completed at Vision Australia’s Seeing Eye Dogs in Melbourne and she has worked for Guide Dogs Victoria, Guide Dogs SA/NT and Light into Europe in Romania. Currently living and working independently in Adelaide she can provide remote consults and may travel interstate for work (with prior arrangement). Anna has completed studies into dog behaviour and also consults privately with people and their pet dogs.

Workshop overview

For those wanting a deeper dive into dog body language, we will explore how to recognise when our dog is comfortable or not, as well as how to perform a patting consent test. Providing tips and training ideas to support the ongoing comfort and handling of your dogs, such as naming their body parts prior to handling, as well as how to teach a chin rest or paw shake for enhanced co-operation during grooming and handling procedures.

There are four working positions where you and your dog can get an opportunity for some hands-on training and exploration that is overseen by Anna in real time. This will be verbally described to the audience during the session so that both the Handler and the larger group can learn from the experience of the participants and their individual dogs.

There are fees associated with this workshop. Please review your funding sources to confirm if the workshop can be claimed according to your goals.

[Booking and contact details are here.](#Bookings)