

Dog Guide Handlers Australia (Inc)

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# Dog Guide Handlers Australia.

## Recommendations for adopting accurate and consistent terminology.

**About Dog Guide Handlers Australia**

Dog Guide Handlers Australia (DGHA) is an independent association of dog guide handlersand is not affiliated with any dog guide organisation.

**Our Mission:**

DGHA strives to foster, represent, promote, enhance and protect the interests of Australians who are dog guide handlers.

**Key Objectives**

DGHA draws on the experiences and varied knowledge of its members, to provide peer support, advocacy and information for dog guide handlers throughout Australia.

Some of the issues we are advocating for include:

* DGHA hosts biennial national conferences around Australia, to enable people with disability to meet together for peer support, networking, sharing information and participating in various workshop sessions and discussion forums.
* DGHA HOSTS regular members teleconference meetings, with invited guest speakers, and focus topic discussions.
* Advocating for equal access to client services. This includes assisting dog guide organisations to establish client advisory committees, throughout Australia.
* Advocating for the adoption of national and international consistency with terminology when referring to people who are blind or vision impaired who are dog guide handlers.
* Developing a national photo identity card for dog guides and handlers.
* Establishing availability of toileting areas for dog guide and service/assistance dogs within Australian airports.
* Advocating for the establishment of national Australian standards for assistance dog training, public access testing and accreditation.
* Representation on external consultations on issues that affect people with disability.

### Introduction:

This position statement is the result of a robust discussion by the DGHA management committee when the Association was first established, and the name of the organisation was decided.

The convention in Australia was to generically refer to all dogs trained to assist people who are blind or vision impaired as “Guide Dogs. It was argued that this term could cause some confusion amongst the general public, as the name “Guide Dog” and “Seeing Eye Dog” are well recognised as brand names within the different organisations in Australia who provide dog guide services.

It was unanimously agreed by the DGHA management committee that the term “Dog Guide” be used in the name of the organisation, and in all official correspondence, as it is an accurate generic term that describes what the dog does, that is, a dog that is trained to guide a person who is blind or vision impaired.

The term dog guide is inclusive of all dog guides, regardless of the school which trained the dog.

This decision was endorsed after a conversation with Peter Goebel, who was at the time President of the Orientation and Mobility Association of Australasia who strongly suggested that the organisation was branded as Dog Guide Handlers Australia.

### Discussion:

DGHA applauds the International Guide Dog Federation for using the term Dog Guide and would like to see the organisation rebrand its title to reflect this change.

DGHA acknowledges and appreciates that for many years the term “people who are blind or vision impaired” has been adopted and used consistently in Australia when referring to people who are blind or vision impaired.

It is noted that the term “the blind” or “visually impaired” is still commonly used in other countries and we suggest that the continued use of this terminology is inaccurate and inappropriate and could be considered as discriminatory and offensive language.

### Recommendations:

* DGHA strongly recommends that accurate and consistent terminology is used world-wide by all organisations when referring to people who are blind or vision impaired who are dog guide handlers.
* DGHA calls on all organisations within Australia and internationally, who provide Orientation and Mobility and Dog Guide services to adopt the use of consistent and accurate terminology in all official documentation, correspondence and discussions, when referring to people who are blind or vision impaired who are dog guide handlers.
* It is reasonable to expect that reference to the term “guide dog” and “seeing eye dog” will continue to be used in discussions and conversations within Australian organisations and service providers for branding and marketing purposes.
* DGHA recommends that in all official documentation, correspondence and formal discussions or presentations that;

1: The person who is blind or vision impaired is always recognised before the disability and is always referred to as “a person who is blind or vision impaired” and not as ‘the blind” or “visually impaired”.

2: All dogs trained to provide guiding assistance to people who are blind or vision impaired are referred to generically as “Dog Guides” rather than “Guide Dogs”.

### Conclusion:

DGHA will continue to advocate through its stakeholders and networks for the consistent use of terminology when referring to people who are blind or vision impaired who are dog guide handlers.

DGHA acknowledges and applauds the best practise terminology which has already been adopted within Australia and calls on international disability organisations and service providers to implement the use of standardised, accurate, politically correct and consistent language and terminology when referring to people who are blind or vision impaired who are dog guide handlers.