# DGHA Newsletter Summer 2023

Hello, and welcome to the summer edition of the DGHA newsletter.

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## Vale Kevin Murfitt AM

It is with heavy hearts and deep sadness that we share the news of DGHA's past president, Kevin Murfitt, passing. Kevin departed this world on 6 December, leaving a legacy of resilience, compassion, and remarkable achievements.

Kevin’s calm yet tenacious spirit touched the lives of many through his advocacy and academic work. He was a devoted advocate for the disability, low vision, and blindness community, and his unwavering commitment to creating a more inclusive and supportive environment for individuals with disability has left an enduring impact on countless lives. We will remember Kevin for his contributions to Vision Australia, Blind Citizens Australia, World Blind Union Asia Pacific, DGHA and many other areas and initiatives where his work positively impacted the blind and low-vision community.

In addition to his advocacy, Kevin was a high achiever in blind sports, excelling in water skiing and running.

As we bid farewell to Kevin, let us remember him for the warmth of his spirit, the strength of his character, and for always being the voice of reason and kindness.

Our heartfelt sympathies go out to Kevin’s family.

Rest in peace, Kevin.

## Members’ brainstorming meeting 13 November

Thanks to those who came to our Members' Brainstorming meeting on Monday, 13 November. The DGHA committee appreciate your thoughtful input, engaging discussion, suggestions and feedback. We were unable to get through the whole agenda in the allocated time. However, the main action that came out of the meeting for the DGHA Committee to pursue in the new year is to establish stronger relationships with Australian Dog Guide Schools with the purpose of two-way communication on such things as:

1. Creating opportunities for DGHA members to advance the agenda on systemic advocacy, for example, advocating for a national ID card and broader awareness campaigning
2. Implementing self-advocacy training within schools
3. A structured way of giving feedback from the broader Handler community to reduce the need for surveys and schools gathering information
4. Sharing information with schools about the existence of DGHA for schools to communicate with Clients to grow our membership
5. Allowing the schools to share information with DGHA membership

There are already some plans in the pipeline for collaboration with schools, and we hope to report on more of this in 2024.

## Members’ meeting with Sydney Airport on Wednesday 15 November

On Wednesday 15 November a small group of DGHA members met with Kate Bonder, Customer Experience Manager at Sydney Airport, and her colleagues Henri and Ihab. Henri and Ihab are responsible for graphics and wayfinding and working on the accessible design of new accessible assistance dog toilets at all three terminals at Sydney Airport. They were keen to hear from our members about practical ways the airport can improve accessibility for those with low vision or blindness who travel through the airport.

We're looking forward to a continuing relationship with Sydney Airport as they progress in making the airport more accessible. The feedback provided by members at the meeting was insightful and articulate.

Topics discussed included:

* Sydney Airport is keen to hear feedback from our membership on the accessibility of their [website](https://www.sydneyairport.com.au/), mainly their website accessibility tool, Recite, located at the top of the website under ‘Accessibility’. Please return any feedback to the [dgha@dgha.org.au](mailto:dgha@dgha.org.au) email address and we’ll share with Sydney Airport.
* They have partnered with Google Maps, which provides an indoor live view for wayfinding navigation to help you move through the airport with an audio function that can tell you the location-based pathway you should follow to your airport destination. They’re also looking at [BindiMaps](https://bindimaps.com/) as another option and are part of the global [HIdden Disability Sunflower Network.](https://hdsunflower.com/au/)
* They aim to make the journey through the airport as intuitive as possible for people with vision, mobility and other requirements. They're keen to know what will be impactful regarding wayfinding and signage beyond the statutory requirements.
* They aim to provide Assistance Dog Toilets in centralised locations at all three terminals for use by Dog Guides, Assistance Dogs and other working dogs at the airport, such as sniffer dogs. They are considering questions such as: Should they be on the air or land side? What signage is appropriate?

## AACTRS update

The Assistance Dogs Advisory Committee – Taxi and Rideshare Services (AACTRS) continues to meet regularly. The team consists of Guide Dogs Australia, Assistance Dogs Australia, DGHA, Blind Citizens Australia and TravelPaws. We are working on our strategic direction and codesigning with the Victorian Department of Transport & Planning's (DTP) Assistance Animals Refusals Working Group. In consultation with stakeholders, this working group seeks to develop options and potential solutions to submit to DTP's Executive Accessibility Committee (EAC) for endorsement.

AACTRS's approach is sector-wide and systemic so that it will take time. In the meantime, we know you are all facing refusals daily, which is not OK.

## Oh Crap partnership

We want to remind members and their friends, families and networks that DGHA has established a partnership with Oh Crap Poop Bags. When you [purchase Oh Crap products through this link](https://www.ohcrap.com.au/?ref=dgha&utm_source=partner), you receive a discount, and DGHA gets a small percentage of the payment as well. Thank you to those who have already purchased with the link.

## Happy holidays, Merry Christmas and ho-ho-ho

The DGHA committee would like to wish our members and community happy holidays, a merry Christmas and a hearty ho ho ho. We hope you and your hard-working canine companions have had a successful and productive 2023, and we look forward to connecting with you via email, Facebook or Zoom in 2024.

## DGHA information

### How to Join DGHA

By becoming a financial member of DGHA, you are supporting a volunteer-run, peer-led, national and independent voice for people with low vision or blindness who use Dog Guides for mobility. The small membership fee we ask for helps us maintain our website and our Zoom account and covers administrative costs. By joining, you support our volunteer work by providing an email communication list, quarterly newsletters, members' meetings, advocacy work, and our Facebook community.

There are two categories of DGHA memberships. Full membership: $20.00. Any Australian who is blind or vision impaired and a Dog Guide Handler Associate Membership: $10.00. 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 and fill out the accessible membership form. We welcome full memberships for Dog Guide handlers and associate memberships from Dog Guide trainers, puppy raisers, friends, and family of Dog Guide handlers. [The joining page on our website is here.](http://dgha.org.au/dgha/membership/)

### 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) by reply email or to dgha@dgha.org.au. 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 email Stephanie at newsletter@dgha.org.au to discuss your contribution.

### Dog Guide Handlers Australia

Email: <dgha@dgha.org.au>

Website: <www.dgha.org.au>

**\*\*Disclaimer:**

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