



Assistance Animals – Public access rights



ACT
Government

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CITYSERVICES.ACT.GOV.AU | 13 22 81

Assistance animals in the ACT

An assistance animal is defined in the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 as an animal that is trained to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability.

In the ACT an assistance animal handler has rights of access to public places, goods and services. The ACT Government is committed to ensuring these rights are understood and upheld.

The ACT Government recognises the important role assistance animals play in supporting a person with a disability to access services and be engaged in our community.

Accreditation

In the ACT, accreditation of assistance animals is through a registered organisation such as Guide Dogs NSW/ACT, or the ACT Assistance Animal Framework. The Framework is a voluntary scheme which promotes, protects and clarifies the rights of people who rely on an assistance animal. For more information scan the QR code below.



Reporting access refusals

Domestic Animal Services is the regulatory and enforcement body for the ACT's Domestic Animals Act 2000.

If you have been refused access to a public place with your assistance animal, you can lodge a complaint with Domestic Animal Services by:

- **phoning Access Canberra on 13 22 81**
- **emailing animalcontrol@act.gov.au**

If there is an immediate risk to your safety as a result of an access refusal, contact ACT Policing on 000.

Evidence to support and assist an investigation is helpful to the complaint process.

Useful evidence may include:

- **the name, identification number, or vehicle registration of the person refusing access**
- **name(s) and contact details of witnesses to the access refusal**
- **refusal or service cancellation notices**
- **recordings or copies of conversations with the person refusing access.**

These investigations can be complex and take time, particularly when collating evidence and speaking with involved parties.

You will receive an initial email advising you that your complaint is being investigated. If you have not received a response to your complaint within six weeks, you should contact Domestic Animal Services on **(02) 6207 2959**.



A person with an assistance animal has a right to access all public places that a person without an assistance animal can access.

This includes, but is not limited to:

- **cafes, restaurants and pubs**
- **public transport including buses, trams, taxi's and rideshare vehicles**
- **theatres, shopping centres and other entertainment venues**
- **supermarkets**
- **hospitals**
- **hotels.**

It is illegal to deny someone with an assistance animal access to a public place.

The maximum penalty for this offence under section 106E of the Domestic Animals Act 2000 is \$8,000 for an individual or \$40,500 for an organisation.

Refusing a person service because they have an assistance animal can be the basis for a complaint under the ACT Discrimination Act 1991.



Supporting organisations

In addition to Domestic Animal Services, there are a range of supporting organisations within the ACT Government which can investigate access refusal complaints. While these organisations do not have legislative powers to issue infringements or warnings, they can review access refusals and provide advice.



ACT Human Rights Commission

(02) 6205 2222

human.rights@act.gov.au

www.hrc.act.gov.au

For further information about assistance animals in the ACT visit

www.cityservices.act.gov.au