

Lifetime Care

Guidance on Assistance and Therapy Animals and Pets



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1. Background and Purpose

The Lifetime Care and Support Scheme (Lifetime Care) pays for treatment, rehabilitation and care for people who have been severely injured in a motor accident in NSW, under the *Motor Accidents (Lifetime Care and Support) Act 2006*.

Lifetime Care often receives requests and enquiries from participants relating to the care of animals, including pets and assistance and therapy animals. This guidance document outlines the scope of Lifetime Care funding related to animals, including the circumstances in which Lifetime Care may provide funding and guidance on the type of information Lifetime Care requires to support decision-making.

2. Scope

This guidance document applies to:

- all participants in the Lifetime Care and Support Scheme
- Lifetime Care staff and service providers engaged by Lifetime Care, who are supporting participants requesting funding related to animals
- Lifetime Care staff making decisions about funding requests related to animals

3. Definitions

For the purpose of this guide:

- **Assistance animal** – is an animal trained to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of that disability and that meets standards of hygiene and behaviour appropriate for an animal in a public place. Assistance animals are recognised and defined under the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*.¹ Examples of assistance animals include (but are not limited to) dog guides, hearing assistance animals, mobility assistance animals and psychiatric assistance animals.
- **Therapy animal** – is an animal used by a therapist to help their client connect with and be involved in their therapy. Therapy animals usually belong to the therapist or therapy organisation.
- **Pet** - refers to a common household domestic animal that, by nature of its temperament or appearance, is taken into care for the purpose of personal enjoyment, including but not limited to, caged birds, caged rodents or rabbits, cats, dogs, fish, farm animals, and non-poisonous indigenous reptiles. *This includes “emotional support” or “companion” animals, which are considered pets and are not defined under legislation.*

4. Assistance Animals

Lifetime Care may consider a request to purchase a fully qualified assistance animal for a participant where it is injury-related, recommended by a suitably qualified provider, has completed relevant training

¹ *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)* Section 9 (2)

For the purposes of this Act, an assistance animal is a dog or other animal:

- a) accredited under a law of a State or Territory that provides for the accreditation of animals trained to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability; or
- b) accredited by an animal training organisation prescribed by the regulations for the purposes of this paragraph; or
- c) trained:
 - i. to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability; and
 - ii. to meet standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for an animal in a public place

and assessment, and is the most reasonable and necessary option to meet a treatment and care need related to a participant's motor accident injury. Lifetime Care does not fund the training of an animal to become an Assistance Animal.

Lifetime Care considers Assistance Animals to be an Aid, as defined under Part 13: Equipment (Aids and appliances) of the *Lifetime Care and Support Guidelines*.

a) Information required to support a request to purchase an Assistance Animal

To support a request for an assistance animal, the following information is required:

- assessment and recommendations by a suitably qualified provider e.g. OT, Psychologist, Assistance Animal Provider, Mobility Instructor (visual)
- suitability assessment completed by an independent accredited assistance animal provider, who will assess whether the participant is suitable to get and use an assistance animal
- evidence that the assistance animal will be provided and trained by an accredited assistance animal provider. The provider must be able to show evidence they are accredited to train and qualify an assistance animal.
- evidence that the assistance animal has passed your state or territory's Public Access Test, which determines whether the animal is safe and effective in a public place. Your assistance animal provider will arrange this for you.
- information about what the provider will do if the animal is no longer suitable for the participant
- quote for buying the Assistance Animal from the accredited provider, including costs for initial training with the participant
- estimation of ongoing maintenance costs.

Lifetime Care may fund the assessment costs related to requests for assistance animals.

b) What will Lifetime Care consider when reviewing a request for an Assistance Animal?

When reviewing a request for an Assistance Animal, Lifetime Care will consider whether this meets the reasonable and necessary criteria as documented in Part 13 of the Guidelines. This includes:

- if the Assistance Animal is required as a result of the motor accident injury
- whether the Assistance Animal will complete at least 3 tasks that the participant cannot do because of their motor accident injury²
- if the assistance animal duplicates other funded supports
- understanding what other options have been considered, and if the Assistance Animal is determined to be the most appropriate option
- whether other supports or services are more effective at alleviating the impact of the participant's motor accident injury, including cost and outcomes
- whether the participant is able to provide basic care for the animal (feeding, exercise, etc.), as identified in the suitability assessment
- if the Assistance Animal is likely to cause harm to the participant or be a risk to others.

c) Contribution to the maintenance of an Assistance Animal

Lifetime Care will contribute up to \$3000 per annum to the maintenance costs for an Assistance Animal that has been funded by Lifetime Care for the purpose of vet bills, dog food, pet insurance, vaccinations, worming, essential grooming and other expenses deemed reasonable and necessary to sustain the animal for providing therapeutic benefits. This contribution is made for the working life of

² Key terms for animals in disability assistance roles, La Trobe University, 7 August 2019

the Assistance Animal.

Lifetime Care may fund reasonable and necessary annual reviews with the accredited assistance animal provider for training, suitability and welfare checks. Lifetime Care is unable to fund any costs associated with damage caused by the animal to people or property.

5. Therapy Animals and Pets

A therapy animal is a tool used by therapists to support the delivery of an intervention across multiple clients. As such, Lifetime Care will not fund the purchase or care of a therapy animal.

While Lifetime Care recognises the potential benefits of pet ownership, this benefit is universal. The cost of buying, training and caring for a pet is considered a day-to-day living expense that is not related to a motor accident injury. Lifetime Care is therefore unable to fund services related to caring for a pet where these are delivered by a provider that specialises in services for animals, for example animal grooming.

Lifetime Care may fund reasonable and necessary attendant care services to support a participant with tasks related to the care of a pet, subject to a satisfactory risk assessment completed by the attendant care provider.

Version	Date	Authors	Summary of changes
v0425	April 2025	Service Innovation and Excellence Team	New Guide