

Access News

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Access Audits Australia

disability access  advice  training

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AAA Access All Animals

NEW YORK (Associated Press) —

There's always a dog on the ferry that takes victims' families to the place where the World Trade Center once stood.

And there's always someone on the boat who needs to pat the dog.

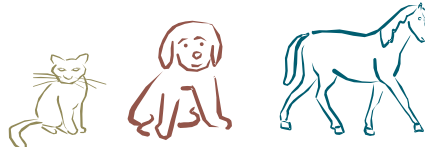
"You're so alive," murmured one mourner as she scooped up Annie, a small caramel-and-white dog, on the way to the site of so many deaths.

Annie is one of several dozen dogs who bring smiles to tear-streaked faces, comfort to stressed-out workers, and companionship to distressed children at a centre where victims of the World Trade Centre attacks still come for help.

A dog travels on the ferry on its twice-a-day journey from the centre to ground zero, about three miles down the Hudson River.

The dogs, leashed and accompanied by their handlers, also work in other areas near the family centre - the desks where death certificates are issued, a day care centre, the lines for rent and food money, the rooms where chaplains and psychologists offer counselling.

The animals provide a simple, happy antidote to grief and anxiety. If you pat a dog, the dog will like you; it's really that simple.



Family and friends are important supports for everyone, but pets and assistance animals can also play a crucial role in the lifestyles of many people, including people with disabilities or people who have experienced severe trauma or ill health.

A variety of animals all over the world are trained to provide support and companionship to many people and assist their owners with a variety of day to day tasks including dressing, shopping, alerting owners to the door bell or the phone as well as a range of other activities.

Many animals can be trained to undertake a wide range of tasks and the most familiar of course are **Guide Dogs**, that assist people who are blind or have vision impairment. They are wonderful mobility aids and allow their owners to travel independently and move safely through crowds and across streets as well as assisting in the home and workplace.

Access Audits Australia

provides the following range of services to support improved access to the built environment and to the provision of goods and services:

- t Disability access training
- t Community consultation
- t Development and Review of Disability Action Plans, Development Control Plans, policies and procedures
- t Access Audits, Evaluations and Design Advice
- t Advice on improved access to publications, communications and web sites

AAA is pleased to advise or assist you with any access issue. Contact

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[Access Audits Australia](http://www.accessaudits.com.au)

92 Old Eltham Road, Lower Plenty
Victoria, Australia. 3093

Telephone 03 9431 3472

Fax 03 9431 3046

AAA@hyp.com.au

Text only copy available

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Hearing Dogs are trained to provide assistance to people who are deaf or have a hearing impairment and are often recognised by a bright orange lead.

They assist their owners to identify different sounds such as someone knocking on the door, alarm clocks or smoke alarms and also to negotiate the environment. The dog communicates by touch and then leads the owner to the source of the sound. This provides the person with greater independence and confidence, more awareness of their environment as well as the joys of companionship.

Other **Assistance Animals** are trained to assist people with mobility difficulties to undertake a variety of tasks such as dressing or undressing, taking off socks, picking up dropped articles, turning on the lights and carrying shopping baskets.

Service Dogs for Victims of Assault was established in America to support people who have been assaulted, raped, stalked or otherwise harmed physically or psychologically. The dogs are given special training to meet the specific needs of each person. Service Dogs, like other assistance animals such as Guide Dogs and Hearing Dogs, can access a range of areas that other pets may be prohibited from such as restaurants and public transport.

Pets for Therapy is a worldwide program that provides 'home visits' of animals including, rabbits, birds, cats, dogs, and even reptiles to a variety of care facilities such as nursing homes, hostels and hospitals. These visits promote the human-animal bond that encourages relaxation, happiness and well being.



Animal Assisted Therapy is also a way that children with disabilities can experience the benefits of interaction with animals. Research has shown that the animals can become co-therapists assisting in breaking down the barriers that prevent a child with a disability from attending to and interacting with the environment.

The **Reading Education Assistance Dogs Program** allows dogs, certified in obedience and aptitude, to "read" with children in libraries and schools to enhance learning for children anxious about reading out loud. The dogs don't judge or snigger if the children get a word wrong. They are non judgmental and allow the children to relax and gain confidence in their reading.

The library sessions are called *Dog Day Afternoons*. Naturally, they're a big hit with young readers.

Finally, **Miniature Horses** are being trained in a similar way to Guide Dogs, to assist people who are blind. The horses are providing another option to people with vision impairment. It is reported they are calm in traffic and have evolved as an animal that always seeks out the safest, most direct path to get from point A to point B, as well as being very safety conscious.

Rural Access Project

The Rural Access project is an initiative of the Victorian State Government and is designed to help people with disabilities, their families and carers to more fully access all aspects of community life. This project assists community groups and services develop innovative solutions to barriers to community inclusion. Rural Access intends to achieve a seamless community with no barriers - physical, conceptual or cultural - for people with disabilities. Rural Access Project Officers are actively involved in a wide range of projects throughout rural areas.



One Person's View

Paul Larcombe leads a busy and interesting life. In his role as National Coordinator of the DDA Standards Project he travels to meetings and undertakes presentations throughout Australia, but never travels alone. In addition to these duties he is involved in a number of other roles, including being a board member of the Queensland Guide Dog Association, and the FACS Funded Employment Service, a contract quality assurance auditor and Vice President of the Blind Citizens Association, Queensland.

While fulfilling these varied responsibilities, Paul has a constant companion. His name is Pascoe; he is four years old and is a jet-black Labrador. Pascoe is Paul's Guide Dog, his assistance animal. He came to Paul in October 2000 after he had Norris, his first Guide Dog, for nine years. Pascoe was trained at the Guide Dog Association in Queensland, which provides about 70 Guide Dogs a year to assist people with a range of vision impairments.

Pascoe assists Paul in safely negotiating his way through interior and exterior environments, travelling in trains, planes and cars and in his range of daily living and social activities. Pascoe does not like people to interrupt him when he is on duty by talking to him, feeding him or touching him. Such actions only tend to distract him from his role assisting Paul, who constantly relies on Pascoe to enable him to achieve his daily round of tasks.

Paul finds that he can move faster by relying on Pascoe to lead the way rather than using a cane for wayfinding, especially when using unknown environments, running between appointments, finding taxi ranks and when dodging that thoughtlessly placed flower box or pole. Pascoe knows his way around every airport in Australia, but gets particularly excited when he arrives at Brisbane, because he knows that he is not far from home.

Issues that Paul experiences with Pascoe include trying to find toilet facilities for him. The last thing some hotel designers seem to think about is including grass as part of a landscape. Recently Paul had to walk three blocks to find some grass for Pascoe to use. He also has to consider Pascoe's daily needs such as regular feeding and provision of water to ensure he does not become stressed, especially in warm weather or during times of high activity. People who consider Pascoe to be cute or want to talk to him can also stress Pascoe, who may be attempting to interpret a whole range of access and safety issues as part of his working role.

Paul suggests that if someone needs to communicate with a person using a Guide Dog then they should speak to the person, not the dog and if necessary, walk beside the person without interrupting their movement or communication flow.

Benefits of Pets and Companion Animals



Many people experience the health benefits of interacting with a pet or companion animal. In recent years it has been estimated that Australian cats and dogs have saved \$2.227 billion in expenditure on national health programs.

Compared to non pet owners:

- People who own pets typically visit the doctor less often and use less medication.
- Pet owners on average have lower cholesterol and lower blood pressure.
- Pet owners recover more quickly from illness and surgery.
- Pet owners deal better with stressful situations.
- Pet owners are less likely to report feeling lonely.

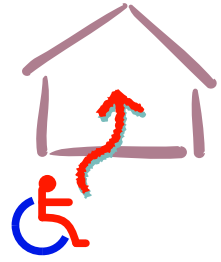


Did you know ?

- That older persons and people with vision impairment often cannot effectively interpret printed words or graphics, in a whole range of print media, because those creating the designs did not fully consider the needs of all of their readers.
- That the Australian Federal Attorneys-General has recently advised that legislation has been passed to correct a drafting error which cast doubt on enforcement of the DDA (and other federal discrimination laws) against State government organisations.
- That the fastest speed a car has been driven by a blind person is 210.82 kilometres per hour.
- That epilepsy is the most common serious brain disorder in every country in the world and that 3% of the Australian population will have epilepsy, during their lifetime.
- That increasing numbers of operators in the tourism industry are actively marketing a range of accessible tourism options, in an effort to capture the expanding travel and accommodation market of people with disabilities and older persons, including the *baby boomer* generation.

Wheelchair Accessible Housing

Recently the suburb of Naperville, USA, west of Chicago became one of the first two municipalities in the United States to require that all new private homes be built with 32-inch (810mm) wide ground floor doorways and other elements of wheelchair accessible design.



Naperville was joined by Pima County, Arizona, which voted recently to approve a similar measure, one that took the additional step of mandating that all new homes be built with at least one entrance that can be used by wheelchairs.

The votes are a victory for the 15-year-old “visitability” movement, which wants provisions of the Americans With Disabilities Act that now apply to public places and apartment buildings to be extended to private homes as well.

Already, several cities, including Chicago, Atlanta, Austin, Texas, and Urbana, Illinois have passed similar laws pertaining to housing built with public funds. But by placing these design restrictions on a market that is entirely private, the Naperville and Pima County ordinances traverse new territory, with local governments taking building codes beyond issues of safety or aesthetics.

This issue is of interest in other countries. Action over a number of years in the United Kingdom has resulted in Part M of their building regulations requiring “visitability” provisions. Various individuals and groups in Australia have also been encouraging government and building authorities to recognise the importance of these issues.

Winter Paralympics

Congratulations to Michael Milton and Bart Bunting for their outstanding performances in the recent Paralympics in Salt Lake City.

Information contained in **Access News** is intended to highlight the importance of improving access for every person.

Disclaimer: Every effort has been made to ensure information contained in this newsletter is accurate. AAA does not accept any responsibility for action taken as a result of any advice or information contained herein.