

Annual Report  
Psychiatric Service Dog Association NSW Incorporated  
2017 - 2018

This was a difficult year for the organisation. Resources have been stretched, cash flow was difficult due to the restriction on applications and Meredith Hellicar, our Patron, was unable to source significant donors.

#### A New Model

This was a major change for mindDog. We no longer simply assess and certify owner trained dogs. We now assess teams for suitability, have more onerous team reporting, and require teams to work with a mindDog trainer. We also have far greater contact with teams throughout their first year.

This change was necessary to meet the requirements for authorisation under the QLD Guide Hearing and Assistance Dog Act. While the federal law does not require mindDog to have such authorisation, client access to travel and bureaucracies will be enhanced by having it.

#### The New Process

This has become more complex and exacting. All teams must now have a First Visit from an Assessor before being issued with a vest and ID card. This is to ensure the suitability of the team and reduce potential risk to the organisation. Teams are now required to work with a mindDog trainer and must submit three, six and nine monthly training records. Trainers must submit records for captured behavior leading to trained tasks. Assessors make a Second Visit at six months.

This has substantially increased the cost of a mindDog, both for the client and the organization. It means greater record keeping and supervision of teams.

#### Survey

This was an opportunity to inform clients about the more complex process needed to meet QLD GHADA requirements and to ask for their responses. The new model was contrasted with the old and clients were simply asked for an "old" or "new" response. Of 205 responses, 148 voted for "new".

See Appendix 1

#### Staff

We formalised contracts with Maylene Dacey and Marylene Whitely (the M&M's). Maylene now answers the phone three days a week and Marylene maintains the data base. Maylene's fees are paid by a dedicated donation.

As is the case with Gayl O'Grady, they are on three monthly contracts

#### NSW Public Transport

In May NSW transport invited us to discuss mindDog's ministerial acceptance for travel on trains, buses and ferries. The meeting was successful and a proposal has been put to the Minister. This is a major indicator of mindDog's increasing profile and acceptance in the public sphere.

#### Assessors' workshop

This was held in May and was an introduction for new assessors and revision for existing contractors. We now have 25 assessors working across the country. This has dramatically reduced the amount of interstate travel required.

#### Trainers

Gayl O'Grady is now maintaining a database of mindDog trainers. The majority of these have been sourced through the clients or from enquiries. They are nearly all Delta Certificate IVs, have had phone interviews with Gayl and been sent a mindDog Trainer's Book. There were 60 at 30 June.

#### Numbers

At 30 June we had 894 teams enrolled.

#### Conclusion

The future will bring further changes to the organisation. Stressors associated with increased access demands, increased cost burdens on both mindDog and clients and the organic change that comes with growth will push and pull at us.

We may struggle to stay true to our original aims and goals — the provision of an accessible service for people with mental health disorders and their dogs. Through everything we do we must remember — always be kind.

Cath Phillips

Chairman 28.09.18

Appendix 1

mindDog is at a crossroads

01.05.18

When we first started mindDog the plan was to simply certify owner trained psychiatric assistance dogs.

We weren't going to be involved in training or selecting dogs. It was going to be cheap and easy.

However, as demand grew rapidly so did external bureaucratic requirements. State transport organisations wanted our clients to have passes, airlines wanted copies of Public Access Tests, some Councils wanted Assistance Dogs International (ADI) membership.

And Queensland was a whole different situation altogether. Because of the QLD Guide Hearing and Assistance Dog Act we had to impose a different regimen on our QLD clients.

In QLD we must be a member of ADI to apply for authorisation. While we do have a couple of individual trainers authorised in QLD, because of our model mindDog itself is not. Nor are we members of ADI — this requires changes in how we work. I know a number of Queensland clients are bewildered at the moment and think the law has changed. It hasn't. But mindDog has and the reasons are set out below.

**So I thought we should ask you what you wanted** — the original simple cheap mindDog or the mindDog that is involved in training and meets bureaucratic requirements.

The pros and cons of each model.

**With the original idea**, it was cheap. Owners trained their own dogs and we just tested them. Whilst this is legal under the Federal Disability Discrimination Act, it doesn't meet "industry" standards. This means a lot of access has been denied. It was hard to get our dogs on planes and the amount of support we could offer you was limited. Queensland was difficult. Demand was rapidly out stripping our resources.

**With the model that meets industry norms** and allows us to get membership of ADI and QLD authorisation, we have to do much more.

We have to become involved in training and set up a national network of mindDog trainers and assessors.

We have to keep extensive training records. We have to assess the suitability of individual clients' dogs. This all comes with higher costs which we are determined to NOT pass on to you. And a limited intake each year.

Those are the cons of this model. The pros are thus:

Greater and easier access to things like airlines, public transport, free council registration, medical services and private hospitals. Body Corporates could no longer attempt to refuse accommodation. Queenslanders would have no more difficulty meeting standards than clients in the rest of the country.

While the organisation has to work harder and better, life for you would be easier.

**So, which is it to be? The old model or the new.**

Rather than having an endless and heated discussion about this I would like you to do **ONE** thing.

Just write **Old** or **New** for the model you think we should follow. Please don't give reasons or try to explain why you choose one or the other — there is nothing you can say that the Board hasn't already

thought of.

Thank you

Cath Phillips

Chairman