



Assistance Dogs  
Australia®



National Assistance Dogs Australia Centre\* *(working title)*  
**2020-21 PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION**





Link to fly-through  
video of the proposed  
National Assistance Dogs  
Australia Centre

[www.assistedogs.org.au/  
services/national-assistance-  
dogs-australia-centre](http://www.assistedogs.org.au/services/national-assistance-dogs-australia-centre)

## Who are we?

Established in 1996, Assistance Dogs Australia is a national charity that supports and empowers Australians living with disability by partnering them with specially trained dogs. Over 1,400 people access our leading programs annually, which support people living with a physical disability, autism or post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD). These core programs incorporate additional community engagement initiatives such as educational support, animal assisted therapy, courthouse dogs and our Queensland based pups in prison program. We currently have 123 active teams within communities across Australia that encompass individuals and their families, 16 schools and a courthouse. Our free to client Assistance Dogs provide greater independence and improved health and wellbeing - helping to build inclusive, diverse and resilient communities.

## What we've achieved so far



**400 dogs** changing lives across Australia, with a **96% training success rate** <sup>1</sup>



**25%** of our clients have now commenced paid or volunteer work <sup>1</sup>



**72%** of our clients with PTSD reduced the use of medication <sup>2</sup>



**\$65.8 million** in savings across the disability sector since Assistance Dogs Australia's inception <sup>1</sup>



Educational Support Dogs increase school attendance and facilitate improved learning outcomes, saving the government **\$153,317** over the working life of one dog <sup>2</sup>



**81%** of our clients are actively engaging in the community, with all clients finding it easier to leave their house <sup>1</sup>

1. 2019 Assistance Dogs Australia Client Questionnaire, Designed in consultation with University of Sydney faculty of Medicine and Health.
2. HLB Mann Judd Advisory and Accounting (2019), Impact Measurement Report – Assistance Dogs Australia Limited.
3. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2017), Australia's Welfare 2017, Australia's Welfare Series No. 13, Australian Government.
4. Autism Spectrum Australia (2018), Autism prevalence rate up by an estimated 40% to 1 in 70 people
5. Klapdor, M and Arthur, D (2016), Welfare – what does it cost?, Key Issues for the 45th Parliament, Commonwealth of Australia
6. Disability Support Pension, Historical and Projected Trends, Report No. 01/2018 (2018), Parliamentary Budget Office, Commonwealth of Australia
7. Mental Health Prevalence, Transition and Wellbeing Research Programme (2018), The Department of Veterans' Affairs, Commonwealth of Australia

# Alignment with Government Priorities

The services that Assistance Dogs Australia provides align with the goals and initiatives of the Australian Commonwealth Government's:

- [National Disability Strategy](#);
- [National Disability Insurance Scheme](#);
- [Autism Spectrum Australia](#); and
- [PTSD services](#) (Defence Health).

Following the Coalition's re-election in March 2019, Premier Berejiklian announced 14 new **Premier's Priorities** to focus the NSW Government on measuring and delivering in areas needing further improvement, by "tackling tough community challenges", "lift(ing) the quality of life for all citizens and "breaking the cycle of disadvantage". Assistance Dogs Australia is working to meet these priorities in conjunction with the **New South Wales** Government's [Disability Inclusion Plan](#), which has four focus areas:

1. Developing positive community attitudes and behaviours
2. Creating liveable communities
3. Supporting access to meaningful employment
4. Improving access to mainstream services through better systems and processes.

Assistance Dogs Australia's Mission is "giving freedom and independence to people living with disabilities", and enabling our clients to overcome these challenges by helping them to return to the workforce and reengage with their communities.

## Dedication to continuous improvement

Assistance Dogs Australia is dedicated to providing services of the highest quality. Clients are surveyed three months after placement to assess their satisfaction and to identify any areas where their Assistance Dog may require further training.



CGI of meeting space at the proposed National Assistance Dogs Australia Centre

## Ensuring the welfare of our animals

Our specialised staff use positive reinforcement training methods, and our extensive application process ensures that candidates' suitability for dog ownership is thoroughly assessed. We never acquire puppies from puppy farms and do not support puppy farming. Where suitable, we have adopted and trained dogs from rescue shelters for our programs.



CGI of kennel facilities at the proposed National Assistance Dogs Australia Centre

# The need



**1 in 5 Australians** are living with a disability. **2.1 million** of those are of working age<sup>3</sup>



Informal carers contribute an estimated **1.9 billion hours** of unpaid care<sup>3</sup>



The prevalence of Autism in Australia has increased **40%**, with **1 in 70** people now living with the condition<sup>4</sup>



NDIS estimated expenditure on disability services for 2019-20 is around **\$24.0 billion**<sup>5</sup>



Over **760,000** people receive the Disability Support Pension, costing the Government **\$16.3 billion/year**<sup>6</sup>



**25%** of returned Australian Defence Force members meet the criteria for PTSD <sup>7</sup>

It costs \$40,000 and takes two years to complete the training required for one internationally accredited Assistance Dog. As it stands, the demand is highly outweighing our capacity to meet the needs of all those seeking our help. With our waiting lists at full capacity, we have temporarily closed our waiting lists. Our clients currently wait up to two years to receive an Assistance Dog. It is our goal to reduce the waiting time to 6 months.

# The solution

**With Government support, we will build a world leading National Assistance Dogs Australia Centre (working title) in the heart of Western Sydney to meet community need, and expand our services into emerging areas within the disability sector.** Over the 8-10 year working life of one Assistance Dog, the disability sector saves \$165,000 from reduced care costs. Having successfully placed over 400 dogs across Australia to date, the overall savings equate to \$65.8 million. This figure demonstrates the level of impact our services are already having on the community, but more can be done.

National Assistance Dogs Australia Centre	
Key features of the facility	Key outcomes
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Industry leading education and training facilities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Reduced client waiting times, resulting in reduced carer hours and payments</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Environmentally sustainable building design</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Ability to place 120 dogs with clients in need every year (currently up to 40 dogs)</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Five double bedroom units, accommodating 10 people</li> <li>State of the art kennel facilities based on the Royal Dutch Guide Dogs design</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Increased ability to offer ONSITE support and services to community, clients and their families</li> <li>✓ Save funds currently expended on client hotel accommodation and taxis for training</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Client interaction areas, including a café</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ 60 additional jobs within the Mulgoa electorate</li> <li>✓ 500 volunteers actively engaged in the greater Western Sydney community</li> </ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Located on two hectares of land, enabling future expansion</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>✓ Development of additional world leading and innovative programs</li> </ul>

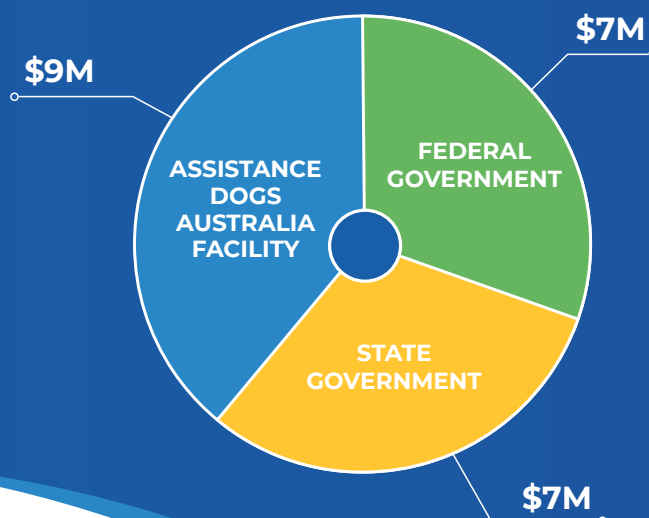
# What are we seeking from the Government?

**TARGET \$23Million**

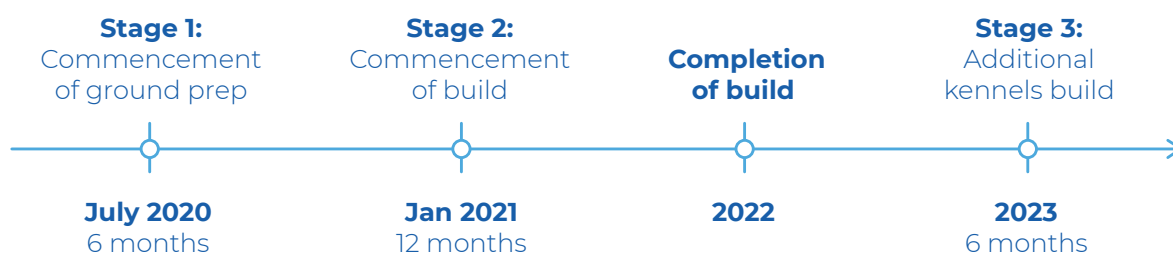
Assistance Dogs Australia seeks \$7M from State Government and \$7M from Federal Government (totalling \$14M), to add to our investment of \$9M:

- **\$2.2M** in secured land;
- **\$3M** in reserves; and
- **\$3.8M** in community fundraising.

Our National Assistance Dogs Australia Centre has been approved by the Penrith Council for all development applications.



## Timeline



## Justification for Government support

Assistance Dogs Australia has established a large presence within the community, creating a strong support network of over 250 volunteers. Our 20+ years of experience makes us world leaders within the field of disability support. We continue to set new benchmarks of success in training and placement, and our dedication to excellence enables us to be a trailblazer with the services we provide. We have been actively involved in research projects, by partnering with leading Universities across Australia, to produce evidence-based data that supports the impact of our work.

The value of our services is increasingly being recognised by Government, as supported by our Animal Assisted Therapy program now being an eligible expense under the NDIS. In addition, we continue to build a strong base of financial support from our generous donors. The reason we receive this level of ongoing support from the community is because Assistance Dogs Australia is the only organisation in the country offering the range of services that we provide. With a team of dedicated and expertly trained staff, including Occupational Therapists and Mental Health professionals, the only barrier to our growth and continued development of world leading programs is space. By securing Government funding we can overcome this one barrier, and help many more people who are waiting for support.





## Sarah Jane & Cozie

[Featured on cover]

"Waking up and realising you are quadriplegic is exceptionally traumatising. I thought about ending it all, which would have left my son without a mum. Then Cozie came into my life."

– **Sarah Jane (SJ)**

It was meant to be a low-risk surgery to stop nerve pain – instead, SJ woke up with quadriplegia. She felt like she had lost everything. Cozie the Assistance Dog has helped SJ regain her independence and will to live. Find out more about SJ and Cozie's story by reading the "Assistance Dogs for People Living with Physical Disability" case study.

"I think the fact that a dog is undemanding but always there and always connecting with you, that must be great comfort to somebody who sometimes feels alienated from the rest of society.

Their loyalty will be unconditional and they will help break the ice in social situations. If we all had an Assistance Dog, the world would be a better place"

– **Sir Peter Cosgrove**

### Contact information

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