

A guide to

## Navigating Assistance Animal Requests:

Completing Effective Occupational Therapy Assessments and NDIS Applications for Assistance Animals

**Expressions of Interest Sought  
Online (over 2 x 3 hour sessions)  
Semester 1, 2025**

Internationally, 'assistance animal' is the umbrella term for guide, hearing, or psychiatric, medical alert, mobility and autism assistance animals who are trained to do specific tasks which mitigate the effects of a person's disability. While the support provided by an assistance animal may assist with improving a person's function, therefore reducing their need for alternative forms of support (e.g. support workers), the process to obtain, train and maintain an assistance animal is complex and multifaceted and often expensive; requiring long-term input and commitment from the individual (their family), the Occupational Therapist and the assistance animal trainer.

Training and accreditation/certification of assistance animals in Australia requires dedication, expertise and adherence to established legislation and standards to ensure the animal (most often dogs) can demonstrate the behaviour and skills to effectively support the person in their daily occupations. Ongoing training and reinforcement of skills are also required throughout the dog's life to maintain proficiency in assistance tasks and behaviours.

Occupational therapists that are tasked with supporting clients on the journey to complete the necessary assessments and applications for an assistance animal need to have sound clinical reasoning for recommending when an assistance animal is an appropriate support for their client, an understanding of the roles and training requirements of different assistance animals, as well as the ability to work collaboratively with clients and training organisations to ensure positive outcomes for clients. Where individuals are also seeking funding (e.g. NDIS) to support the training and/or placement of an assistance dog, the supporting occupational therapists also requires a comprehensive understanding of the funding framework, eligibility criteria, and documentation requirements specific to assistance animal applications.

This workshop is designed to support occupational therapists in ensuring they have the essential knowledge and practical skills needed to navigate the assessment and application processes for assistance animals.

### Workshop Aims/Objectives

- Presentation of a clinical reasoning framework that to support the decision-making process for recommending an assistance animal to support the ascertainment of goals for individual participants
- A detailed overview of the roles and training requirements of different assistance animals.
- A detailed overview of the legislation protecting the rights and responsibilities of assistance dog handlers.
- An overview of the pathways for acquiring an assistance animal (i.e. organisation trained vs owner acquired/trained)
- A detailed overview of the NDIS Requirements - a comprehensive understanding of the NDIS framework, eligibility criteria, and documentation requirements specific to assistance animals.

Through the use of extensive case studies, participants will be able to utilise templates to produce effective applications that clearly demonstrate the benefits and necessity of an assistance animal for clients.

This workshop is suitable for occupational therapists

## Workshop Delivery

Participants will be expected to complete the workshop requirements via an integrated system of pre-workshop reading material and online workshops. The online sessions will use a mixture of information presentation, case studies and practical small group activities.

- **Self-study** - Participants will need to allocate **1 -1.5 hours** prior to each of the online group sessions to complete pre-reading and case study preparation tasks.
- **Workshop Manuals** - participants will be mailed a hard copy of the workshop manual which will include presentation notes, covering the online presentation content as well as the case studies used in the self-study and interactive components of the presentation sessions.
- **On line presentation** – using Zoom videoconferencing, participants will have the opportunity to link into two presentation sessions (with 30 min break mid-session). Sessions will also include interactive components (ie group discussions, case studies and Q&A sessions) to assist with integrating participants newly acquired knowledge and skills. Participants will be emailed the link (including password) to the workshop presentation sessions.

Participants will need to have access to internet facilities including Zoom and webcam to ensure that they are able to download and view workshop content, as well as actively participate in the on line group tutorials and agree to the [online T&C](#). To fully participate in the interactive components of the group tutorial sessions, participants are encouraged to log on using a tablet, laptop or desk top computer. While utilising a mobile phone to access these sessions is possible, the functionality of the device may limit participants ability to fully engage in the interactive components of the session.

**Workshop Recording** - Please note to safeguard the copyright of material presented, maintain the confidentiality of case discussions and the privacy of participants, **this workshop WILL NOT be recorded.**

## Workshop Presenters



**Dr Jessica Hill, Lecturer in Occupational Therapy, The University of Queensland** - Jessica (Jess) is the Deputy-Director of the UQ Animal-Assisted Intervention Alliance. Jess completed her PhD, which explored the effectiveness of canine-assisted occupational therapy in supporting the therapy motivation and engagement of autistic children. Since completing her PhD Jess has continued her research into the impact of human-animal interaction to human and animal health and wellbeing resulting in several journal publications. Jess has extensive clinical experience in working with children and their families. She has attended formal Animal-Assisted Therapy training. Jess currently works with her canine-assistant, Loki to teach occupational therapy students about the field of animal-assisted services.



**Claire Dickson, Occupational Therapist**, Claire is an occupational therapist who has spent most of her career working with young people. She has experience training assistance dogs and supporting people to integrate their assistance dog into their lives to increase access, participation and fulfilment. Claire has been a provider of animal assisted occupational therapy and has been involved in the advancement of the animal assisted services sector nationally and internationally.

**Expressions of Interest** for this workshop are now being sought. Please email [info@zimei.com.au](mailto:info@zimei.com.au) to register your interest. Further workshop enquires can be directed to Zi Mei Events on [info@zimei.com.au](mailto:info@zimei.com.au) or (07) 3358 3689.