

Organisation and Business Affiliates Handbook

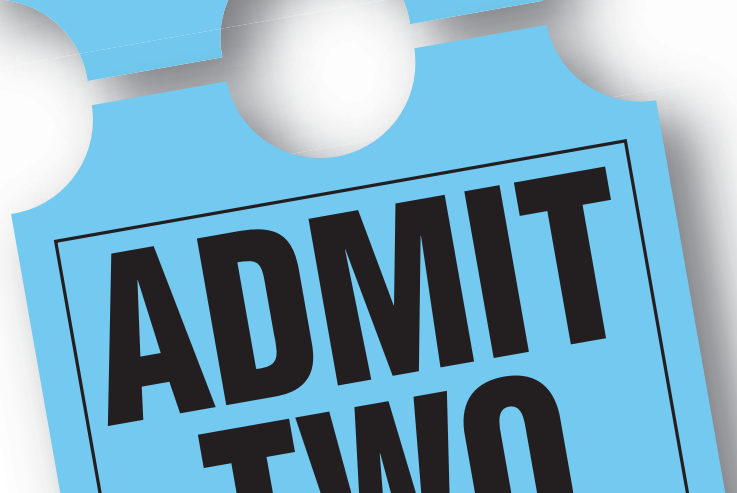


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Easy & FAIR

The Companion Card provides fair ticketing for people with a disability who require a companion, and an easy way for organisations and businesses to comply with some of their obligations under disability anti-discrimination legislation.

Further information and copies of the Western Australian Organisation and Business Affiliates Handbook are available from;

The Companion Card website:
www.companioncard.org.au

The Western Australian Companion Card Information Line:
1800 617 337

TTY: (08) 9443 3107

National Relay Service: 13 36 77

Speech to Speech Relay Service:
1300 555 727

Supported by the State Government of Western Australia through the Disability Services Commission.

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Why has the Companion Card been developed?

The Companion Card has been developed to promote the existing right of people with a disability to fair ticketing. It is not a discount scheme, concession or benefit, nor is it a new responsibility.

People with a disability, who are unable to attend community venues and activities without attendant care support, have a right to participate equally in the community. This fundamental right is protected under the Western Australian Equal Opportunity Act (1984), and the Australian Government's Disability Discrimination Act (1992). These Acts makes it unlawful to discriminate against a person who requires the assistance of a companion.

In the past, a person with a disability who has needed attendant care support to participate at venues and activities, has sometimes been required to pay an admission price for both themselves and their companion.

This practice is discriminatory because it increases the financial burden on the person with the disability.

A number of venue and activity operators have attempted to address this inequity and have allowed free admission for companions. To date, there has been no simple or consistent method of identifying who may legitimately require a companion.

The Companion Card is an easy way to demonstrate that a person with a significant permanent disability requires a companion, and will assist organisations to comply with relevant anti-discrimination legislation.

What is the Companion Card?

The Companion Card is a wallet-sized card issued to some people with disabilities. The card has a photograph of the cardholder and identifies that person as someone who requires attendant care support from a companion.

The Companion Card is presented when booking or purchasing a ticket when the cardholder requires the assistance of a companion in order to attend that particular venue or activity. Participating (affiliate) organisations and businesses will recognise the Companion Card and issue the cardholder with a second ticket for their companion at no extra charge.

While the Companion Card addresses some ticketing issues for some people with a disability, the responsibility for providing access to facilities, information and services remains the responsibility of venue and event owners, operators and managers.



Who will Companion Cards be issued to?

Companion Cards are for people with significant and permanent disabilities (including disabilities related to ageing and psychiatric illness), who need a companion to participate at community venues and activities, for the rest of their lives.

Attendant care support includes significant assistance with mobility, communication, self-care, or learning, planning and thinking, where the use of aids, equipment or alternative strategies do not enable the person to carry out these tasks independently.

Attendant care support does not include providing only reassurance, social company or encouragement nor does it include requiring support to deal with infrequent, unexpected or unpredictable events.

Companion Cards cannot be issued if the applicant has a chance to become independent in the future as a result of treatment or management, training, recovery or developmental improvements.



Description of Terms

“Cardholder” – is a person with a disability, whose application for a Companion Card has been successful, and whose photograph and details appear on a Companion Card.

“Companion” – is used to describe a paid or unpaid assistant or carer, or a family carer who provides attendant care support to a cardholder, which enables them to participate in most community activities.

“Affiliate” – is used to describe an organisation, business or outlets that charge an admission or participation fee, and have officially registered with the Companion Card program by completing the Organisation and Business Affiliation Form.

“Attendant Care Support” – this includes significant assistance with mobility, communication, self-care, or learning, planning and thinking where the use of aids, equipment or alternative strategies do not enable the person to carry out these tasks independently.

“Companion Ticket” – is a second ticket or admission issued for a companion, free-of-charge, when it is essential for the cardholder to receive attendant care support in order to participate at a venue or activity.

Eligibility for the card

The card will only be issued to people who meet all the criteria for the program. There may be circumstances whereby a person may require a companion, but may not qualify to receive a Companion Card. Examples include:

- a person experiencing a temporary impairment;
- a person whose expected development or recovery may mean that they will not require a companion in the future; and
- a person who is affected by the specific inaccessibility of a particular venue.

Applications for Companion Cards are not subject to income or assets tests and people may apply irrespective of their employment status or nationality.

It is the responsibility of the organisation to consider all requests for Companion Tickets and negotiate alternative methods with individuals who do not hold a Companion Card to verify the need for attendant care. Further information can be obtained from the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission and the Equal Opportunity Commission.

(See Additional Resources on pages 11 and 12).

What is industry affiliation?

Affiliates are organisations, events or activities that officially register to participate in the Companion Card program. Affiliates agree to;

- issue a Companion Ticket at no charge to cardholders from any Australian State or Territory who require a companion to provide attendant care support to participate at their venue or activity;
- display the Companion Card logo in a prominent position and/or in promotional material, where possible; and
- abide by the Companion Card Affiliate Terms and Conditions outlined in this handbook.



How much does it cost to affiliate?

Affiliation with the Companion Card program is free.

Why should organisations affiliate?

Some of the benefits of affiliation are:

- affiliation will present a positive public image for your organisation;
- you will be meeting your social responsibility by incorporating the human rights of people with a disability into your ticketing policies and practices;
- you will have access to an additional, untapped target market of people with a disability deciding to pay for your services due to your acceptance of the Companion Card;
- the Companion Card, provides evidence that an organisation has taken steps to remove discriminatory policies or practices. (For more information about access, go to the Disability Services Commission website www.dsc.wa.gov.au); and
- becoming an affiliate is an easy way to help you prevent complaints of discrimination lodged against you.

Tips to help you complete the Affiliation Form

Space has been provided on the Organisation and Business Affiliation Form to describe the range of services provided by the affiliating organisation or business, to list their specific services. It is recommended that you specifically list high profile services or venues that are not easy to identify as a part of your organisation. Any service or venue listed on your Affiliation Form will be recorded in the Companion Card affiliate database.

It is not necessary for organisations and businesses with multiple outlets or locations that trade under the same name (e.g. a cinema chain), to list every location on the Affiliation Form.



Promotional materials

Once you have returned your Affiliation Form you will be sent an Affiliation Kit. This kit includes a range of promotional materials to assist your organisation in implementing and communicating your acceptance of the Companion Card, such as;

- 'Companion Card Accepted Here' stickers;
- brochures and counter stands;
- A4 posters; and
- a "security features" flyer which outlines how you can validate card authenticity when sighting the card or taking phone bookings.

Where possible, affiliates are requested to display the Companion Card promotional materials and logo in a prominent position at ticketing outlets or business premises, and/or on promotional material.

Telephone the Companion Card Information Line on 1800 617 337 for information on the resources available, and for additional promotional materials.



What if an organisation chooses not to affiliate?

Organisations are not obliged to affiliate with the Companion Card program. They do, however, need to be mindful of their obligations under the Western Australian Equal Opportunity Act 1984 and the Australian Government's Disability Discrimination Act 1992, and develop strategies to comply with the relevant legislation.

The Companion Card is a tool that can be easily adopted by venues and activities to assist with compliance.

"Choosing not to implement change strategies and processes that allow for equality of opportunity and equitable access may well be far more expensive than the change process.

This is particularly so if one factors in that both product image and company reputation are at stake as well as legal fees and possible compensatory damages.

Some think about the Companion Card as "losing one seat", but with out it the new client wouldn't otherwise be there, occupying a seat."

Susan Halliday

Acting Federal Disability Discrimination Commissioner 1999–2000

*Companion Card Venue Forum
6th December 2000*

More tips to help you implement and communicate your organisations acceptance of the Companion Card. For example;

- Create a link from your organisation's website to the Western Australian Companion Card website, to provide information about the program to your customers. Go to the Companion Card website www.companioncard.org.au and follow the instructions under 'Link to this site';
- Display the 'Companion Card Accepted Here' sticker at entrances and ticket windows;
- Provide ticketing information on print material and websites;
- Include the requirement to accept Companion Cards in your contracts with ticketing agents and incorporate acceptance of the card into staff training;
- Develop a policy regarding how your organisation will respond to requests for a Companion Ticket for individuals that do not hold a Companion Card;
- If your organisation hires out any venues that you own or manage, include the acceptance of the Companion Card in your 'Venue Terms and Conditions of Hire'; and
- If your organisation provides funding for any venues or events that charge an admission or participation fee, include the acceptance of the Companion Card in your 'Terms and Conditions of Funding or Grants'.



How to affiliate

1. A copy of the Affiliation Form can be found at the back of this Handbook.

Additional copies of the Industry Handbook and Affiliation Form can be obtained by;

- phoning the Companion Card Information Line on 1800 617 337 to request copies to be posted to you; or,
- downloading the form from the Companion Card web site www.companioncard.org.au and go to the Western Australian link.

2. Complete the Affiliation Form.

- Companion Card Information Line staff are available during business hours to respond to your queries regarding affiliation and assist you in completing the form. You can contact the Information Line on 1800 617 337, or you can also email your questions or requests to: companioncard@acrod.org.au

3. Return the form in the Reply Paid envelope or post to;
Companion Card Program, PO Box 1595,
Osborne Park BC 6916.

Companion Card Affiliate Terms and Conditions

1. Affiliates understand that the Companion Card will only be used when the cardholder requires the assistance of a companion to participate at a particular venue/activity.
2. The minimum expectation of Companion Card affiliates is that they will issue cardholders from any Australian State or Territory with one Companion Ticket, or admission, at no extra charge. This ticket will be exempt from all booking fees.
3. Where a cardholder needs more than one companion to provide the attendant care support, the cardholder will negotiate this with the venue/activity operator at the time of booking.
4. The Companion Card can be used to obtain a Companion Ticket for any programs, services and sessions run by affiliated venue/activity operators. This will be subject to the usual admission availability and conditions.
5. Booking and ticket distribution practices for Companion Tickets should not be more difficult than the standard ticketing practices of the affiliated venue/activity.
6. The Companion Card can be used in conjunction with any recognised concession cards.
7. The venue/activity must ensure cardholders are able to be seated or located physically close to their companions. Companions will remain close to cardholders to assist them as required. Cardholders with specific seating requirements will inform the venue/activity at the time of booking.
8. Some venue/activity operators may charge for participation over and above general admission costs (e.g. a fee for rides in addition to an entry fee at a fun park). Affiliated venue/activity operators must issue a Companion Ticket for both admission, and for additional components such as rides if the cardholder requires assistance in order to participate.
9. Companion Cards may be used to purchase a package deal for the cardholder that combines admission costs with ancillary components such as meals etc. When taking a booking for a package deal, affiliates should provide details of what is included with the Companion Ticket. It is essential that the companion's support to the cardholder is not disrupted if the ancillary components are not included in the Companion Ticket. For example, if meals are not included, the companion must be able to bring or access food in a manner that enables them to provide continual support to the cardholder.
10. Affiliated venues/activities agree to, where possible, display the Companion Card logo in a prominent position at their business premises or ticketing outlet, and in promotional material.
11. Only the person whose photograph and details appear on the Companion Card can use the card.
12. Companion Tickets cannot be used without the Companion Card cardholder being present.
13. Companion Card cardholders must inform the venue/activity of their requirement for a Companion Ticket at the time they book or purchase their own ticket.
14. Acceptance of the Companion Card does not indicate that the venue/activity is accessible. Cardholders will be advised to check accessibility with the venue/activity before booking tickets.
15. Cardholders must provide their Companion Card details when making telephone bookings, and must present their valid card during ticket collection and at any time when asked during the activity. If cardholders cannot present their card, they may be charged for the Companion Ticket.
16. If a venue/activity suspects a Companion Card is being misused, they can report this to the Companion Card program, which will investigate the report. Proven misuse of the Companion Card may result in card cancellation, and the cardholder being ineligible to re-apply.
17. It is understood that venue/activity operators and organisations agree to and accept the Companion Card Affiliate Terms and Conditions when they submit the Industry Affiliation Form.

**ADMIT
TWO**



**ADMIT
TWO**

Protecting Affiliates

The potential for misuse of the Companion Card has been minimised by a robust application process that ensures Companion Cards are used by the people that need it the most.

Some features of this process include:

1. All applicants must have a relevant professional sign their application form to declare that the information on the application form is correct;
2. It is an offence under The Western Australian Criminal Code, for the applicant or professional to provide false or misleading information in an application;
3. All applications are required to be verified;
4. Companion Cards are printed with an expiry date on the bottom right hand corner. After this period the cardholder will need to renew their card. The renewal period is based on;
 - the physical life expectancy (wear and tear) of the card;
 - the requirement for photographs to remain reflective of the cardholder's appearance; and
 - the potential for change in the support requirements for some cardholders.

The Companion Card incorporates the same polymer technology that is used to produce Australia's 'plastic' banknotes. This makes the card virtually impossible to accurately reproduce. The Companion Card program is the first in Australia to utilise this technology to provide advanced forgery protection for a card that is intended for public circulation.

The card has been designed with a number of other security features. Affiliates will be able to use these to verify cardholder information when taking telephone bookings and distributing tickets. Organisations can choose if, or how they wish to incorporate these security features into their ticketing policies and practices. Full details of these features will be provided to organisations when they affiliate.

Issues Resolution

It is recommended that affiliates develop their own complaints procedure to deal with issues relating to the Companion Card. If appropriate, the organisation's existing complaints handling procedure may be applied.

Cardholders who have a complaint about the recognition of their Companion Card at a venue or activity are directed to attempt to resolve the issue with the venue/activity management in the first instance.

If affiliates have a complaint regarding alleged misuse of a Companion Card, they should note the card details, if possible, and lodge the complaint directly with the Companion Card program, which will investigate the report.



Getting more information about the Companion Card

The Companion Card Web Site

www.companioncard.org.au

The Companion Card website provides information about the Western Australian Companion Card program, answers to frequently asked questions, and links to other useful websites.

Copies of this handbook, the application form, and a range of other Companion Card forms can also be downloaded from the website.

The Companion Card Information Line

The Companion Card Information Line staff are available during business hours to respond to queries regarding the Companion Card program and can also assist you with questions regarding the Industry Affiliation Form.

Copies of this handbook, the Industry Affiliation Form, and a range of other Companion Card forms can be obtained by contacting the

- Companion Card Information Line on **1800 617 337**.

If you are Deaf, have a hearing impairment, or have complex communication needs, and you would like to access the Companion Card Information Line, please telephone:

- the Companion Card TTY on **(08) 443 3107**, or
- the National Relay Service on **13 36 77**, or
- the Speech-to-Speech Relay Service on **1300 555 727**.

Ask to be connected to the Companion Card Information Line on **1800 617 337**.

Additional Resources

Disability discrimination is unlawful under various state and federal laws. The following resources may be useful if you are unsure of what may or may not be considered discriminatory, or you require other information regarding disabilities or industry policy and practices.

Equal Opportunity Commission Western Australia

EOCWA provides information about equal opportunity rights and responsibilities through its Advice Line and helps people resolve complaints of unlawful discrimination or harassment through its conciliation service. These services are impartial, confidential and free.

EOCWA also offers a wide range of general and tailored education courses to help businesses and organisations ensure they are better equipped to deal with their responsibilities under equal opportunity laws.

General Enquiries (9am - 4pm): (08) 9216 3900
Fax: (08) 9216 3960
Country Callers: 1800 198 149 (free call)
TTY: (08) 9216 3936

Email: eoc@eoc.wa.gov.au
Website: www.equalopportunity.wa.gov.au

Level 2, 141 St George's Terrace
Perth WA 6000

Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission

Human rights education is one of the core responsibilities of the Commission along with the investigation and attempted resolution of complaints about breaches of human rights and anti-discrimination legislation.

General enquiries and publications:
1300 369 711
Fax: (02) 9284 9611
TTY: 1800 620 241

Complaints Infoline: 1300 656 419 or
complaintsinfo@humanrights.gov.au

Telephone: (02) 9284 9600
Website: www.humanrights.gov.au

Disability Services Commission

The vision of the Disability Services Commission is that all people live in welcoming communities which facilitate citizenship, friendship, mutual support and a fair go for everyone.

The Commission funds and provides a range of specialist disability services. It also promotes access and inclusion for people with disabilities through community education, information, publications and other support mechanisms.

General Enquiries: (08) 9426 9200
Community Access
and Information Branch: (08) 9426 9384
Country callers: 1800 998 214 (free call)
TTY: (08) 9426 9315

Email: dsc@dsc.wa.gov.au
Website: www.dsc.wa.gov.au
Consumer Liaison Service: (08) 9426 9244

146-160 Colin Street, West Perth WA 6005
PO Box 441, West Perth WA 6872

ACROD

ACROD is the National Industry Association for Disability Services and provides an independent voice to governments – Federal, State and Territory – on behalf of disability services. ACROD is working to increase the capacity of its member organisations to operate effectively and efficiently and to influence public policy to be responsive to the needs of people with disabilities.

General Enquiries: (08) 9242 5544
Fax: (08) 9242 5044

Email: acrodwa@acrod.org.au
Website: www.acrod.org.au

1/59 Walters Drive
Osborne Park WA 6017
PO Box 1248
Osborne Park WA 6916

Privacy

The information supplied to the Companion Card program will be recorded and stored in a database and used for the purposes of administering the Companion Card program and, where consent is given, for evaluation purposes. Information collected can be accessed via a Freedom Of Information request.

You will not be sent any material that is not directly related to the Companion Card program. The information will not be shared, used or disclosed to anyone who is not involved in the administration, implementation or evaluation of the program.



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