

PCT Therapy Dogs Information Pack

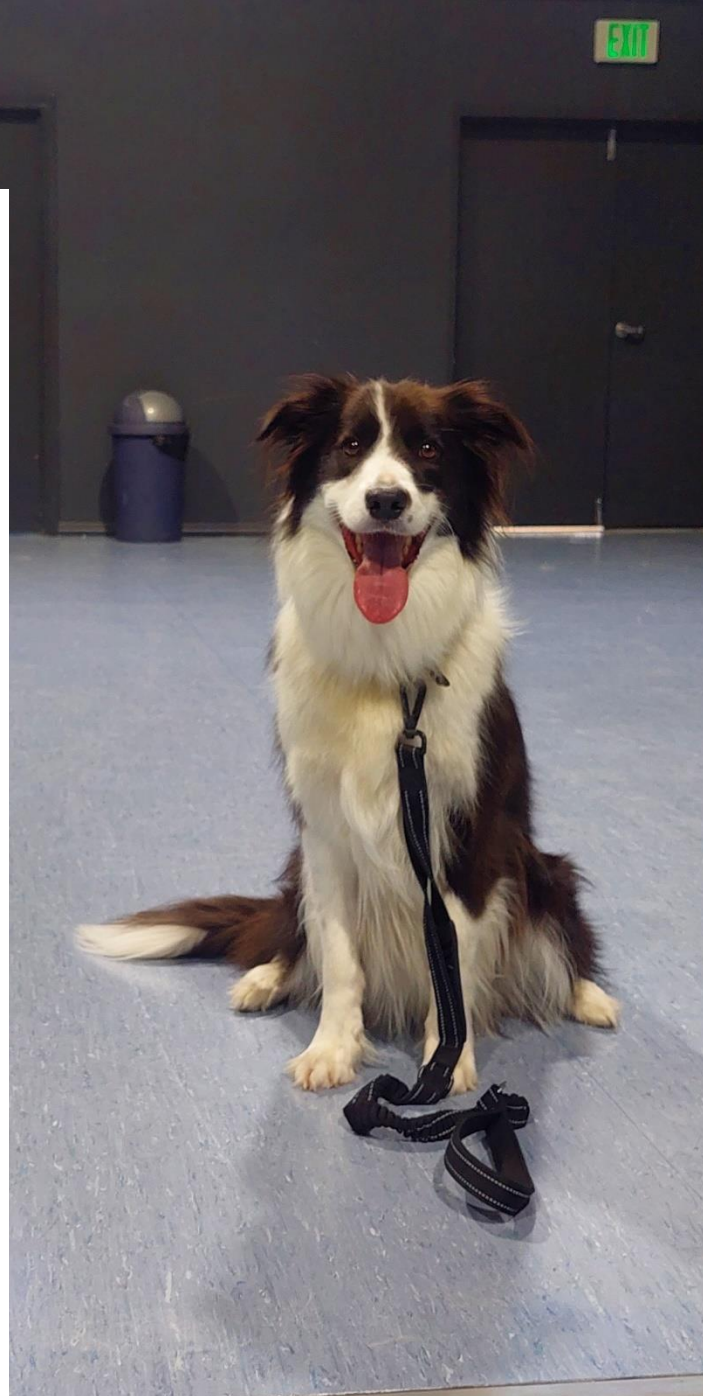
Included in this pack:

- Who Are We?
- What Are Therapy Dogs?
- Difference Between
Therapy Dogs And
Assistance Dogs
- Our Therapy Dog
Program
- How Do I Get Started?
- What's The Process?
- Program Rules
- FAQ

FOR TEAMS

Paws, Claws & Tails

www.pawsclawstails.com.au



Who Are We?

Learn all about Paws, Claws & Tails and our Therapy Dog Program.

Welcome to the PCT Therapy Dogs Program!

Therapy Dogs are a wonderful way to provide comfort, support and friendship to people in a range of Facilities including aged care, hospitals, schools, community and youth, and you can become a part of this whether you're a healthcare professional, educator, support organisation, a business or just an individual wanting to volunteer and give back to your community. PCT Therapy Dogs can assist you in achieving your Therapy Dog goals through our all-inclusive Therapy Dog Training and Certification program. We help you from start to finish, including placement into a Facility upon certification.

This information pack gives you all the information you need to get started. Please don't hesitate to contact us directly if you have any questions.

Who To Contact

To get your questions answered, contact either:

- Your local PCT-Approved Therapy Dog Trainer (if you've been assigned one)
- Our Head of Program, Charlotte Bryan at charlotte@pawsclawstails.com.au, or
- Our Business Manager, Ashley at ashley@pawsclawstails.com.au.

Glossary

The following terms/phrases are used throughout this information pack:

- **Handler:** the person who is certified to accompany the Therapy Dog into the Pre-Approved Facility (PAF).
- **Certified Therapy Team (CTT):** refers to the certified dog and handler(s).
- **PCT-Approved Therapy Dog Trainer:** refers to a dog trainer who is part of the Paws, Claws & Tails Therapy Dog Program and is conducting your initial interview and training.
- **Registered Facility (RF):** refers to the facility which the Certified Therapy Team (CTT) visit.
- **Visit Recipients (VR):** refers to the patients or students in the Registered Facility (RF) being visited by the Certified Therapy Team (CTT).
- **Placement:** is the placement of a Certified Therapy Team (CTT) into a Registered Facility (RF).

What Are Therapy Dogs?

Learn all about Therapy Dogs including the difference between Therapy Dogs and Assistance Dogs.

Therapy Dogs are those who are trained and certified to visit (typically) educational and/or healthcare Facilities with the purpose of providing therapeutic support to residents and/or students.



Therapy Dogs are trained to work and interact with a wide range of different people, often in groups, and as a result they must be very calm and social with strangers. Therapy Dogs should be as "soundproof" as possible, meaning they should be able to adjust to loud noises and/or fast, sporadic movements. They should also maintain a certain level of impulse control, calmness and overall obedience training to ensure that they do not act in such a way as to cause alarm or concern to the people they are visiting or people nearby.

In order gain Therapy Dog Certification, pet dogs need to undergo adequate levels of training, be temperamentally suitable and pass our "Therapy Dog Assessment" in order to be certified.

What is the difference between Therapy Dogs and Assistance Dogs?

“Therapy Dogs” and “Assistance Dogs” are very different and should not be confused.

Therapy Dogs are trained to provide general support to many people (not the handler), often in groups. Therapy Dogs do not have public access rights (i.e. they cannot accompany their handler to general public areas).

Assistance Dogs (or “Service Dogs”) are specifically task-trained to assist their handler with a disability be it psychiatric (e.g., anxiety, depression or autism etc.) or physical (e.g., blind, deaf or mobility impaired) while out in public settings (and in their home). Assistance Dogs must be trained by a state government-approved dog trainer or organization and must pass a standardised Public Access Test (PAT) before they are allowed to accompany their handler into public places. Assistance Dogs are trained to avoid contact with anyone but their handler while they are “working”.

I want to take my dog to work with me? Can I get my dog certified as a Therapy Dog and then have them accompany me?

The answer to this is not clear cut. Therapy Dog Certification does not entitle you to take your dog just anywhere – that is an Assistance Dog – so your employer is not officially *required* to allow your dog onto the premises as a Therapy Dog. There must be an agreement between the Facility (business) and yourself – and PCT can help you with that process as part of our PLACEMENT service.

Why should I train and certify my dog as a Therapy Dog? Can't I just take my dog to a Facility?

Taking your dog into a Facility generally requires a prior agreement from the Facility themselves. Having a Certified Therapy Dog gives the Facility confidence that your dog is trained to a high standard and is less likely for the visit to have a negative outcome.

The PCT Therapy Dog Program

Learn all about the Paws, Claws & Tails Therapy Dog Program.

The Paws, Claws & Tails (PCT) Therapy Dog Program is for those who want to give back to their local community by volunteering their time with their pet to visit settings such as schools, universities, hospices, libraries, hospitals, nursing homes, aged care facilities, psychiatric wards or disaster areas. You may also be a healthcare professional looking to certify your own dog to provide extra support to your patients or a business wanting to have a permanent Therapy Dog onsite for your staff. Being a Certified Therapy Team is a very rewarding experience for both handler and dog.

The benefits to the Visit Recipients of a Therapy Dog Team are many-fold, but include:

- ✓ Decreased stress and anxiety
- ✓ Increased comfort in stressful situations
- ✓ Increased development of social skills through a non-judgmental “friend”
- ✓ Increased development of appropriate interpersonal skills including empathy
- ✓ Increased rapport between a professional and their patient or client

And more...

Are there any requirements for the Therapy Dog to enter the PCT Therapy Dogs Program?

In order to be eligible for inclusion into our program, all participating dogs must be fully health checked by their vet, regularly bathed and groomed, fully vaccinated and regularly treated for fleas and worms. Dogs must be at least 12 months of age and under 10 years at the time of the Assessment. After 10 years of age, our certified Therapy Dogs must be annually vet checked by a fully licensed and practicing Veterinarian to ensure they are still fit for duty.

Are there any requirements for the Therapy Dog Handler to enter the PCT Therapy Dogs Program?

At Paws, Claws & Tails our goal is to ensure that handlers are friendly, responsible, capable and above all respectful, patient and kind. Prior to a CTT being certified, handlers (as well as dogs) will undergo an Assessment.

We require that all Therapy Dog Handlers are over 18 years old and are of fit mind and body. Handlers must not have a criminal record and must have a blue card if wanting to visit/work with children.

In addition, only those who can commit to regular visits will be accepted into our program. We often find that for some residents/patients, meeting with the dog at the same time each week, fortnight or month is incredibly exciting and an event to look forward to, and we don't want to disappoint.

Importantly, only the Handler who conducted the Therapy Dog Assessment with the dog is allowed to accompany the dog to their assigned placement. For those wishing to have more than one handler assigned to the Therapy Dog, an "Additional Therapy Dog Handler" form must be filled out at the time of the Therapy Dog Assessment.

What are PCT's two types of Therapy Dogs?

There are two types of Therapy Dogs that Paws, Claws & Tails trains and certifies:

- General Visitation Therapy Dogs (GVTDs), and
- Resident Therapy Dogs (RTDs)

General Visitation Therapy Dogs are dogs who visit Facilities at regular intervals (e.g. weekly or every fortnight) and provide general support and comfort to anyone they meet. E.g. a dog who visits a hospital each week and who comforts patients.

Resident Therapy Dogs (also called **Facility Therapy Dogs**) are dogs who are owned by someone who lives or works at a Facility and who visit as much as possible. E.g. a dog who goes to work with a nurse each day to provide comfort to people the nurse interacts with, or a business who wants a Therapy Dog full time.

What are PCT's three environment levels?

We've developed a three-level system that defines the "intensity" or the "distraction level" of different businesses/Facilities and thus how highly your dog must be trained to enter these environments. For instance, a hospital is a "more intense" environment than a retirement village as it is potentially noisier, busier and more distracting for the dog.

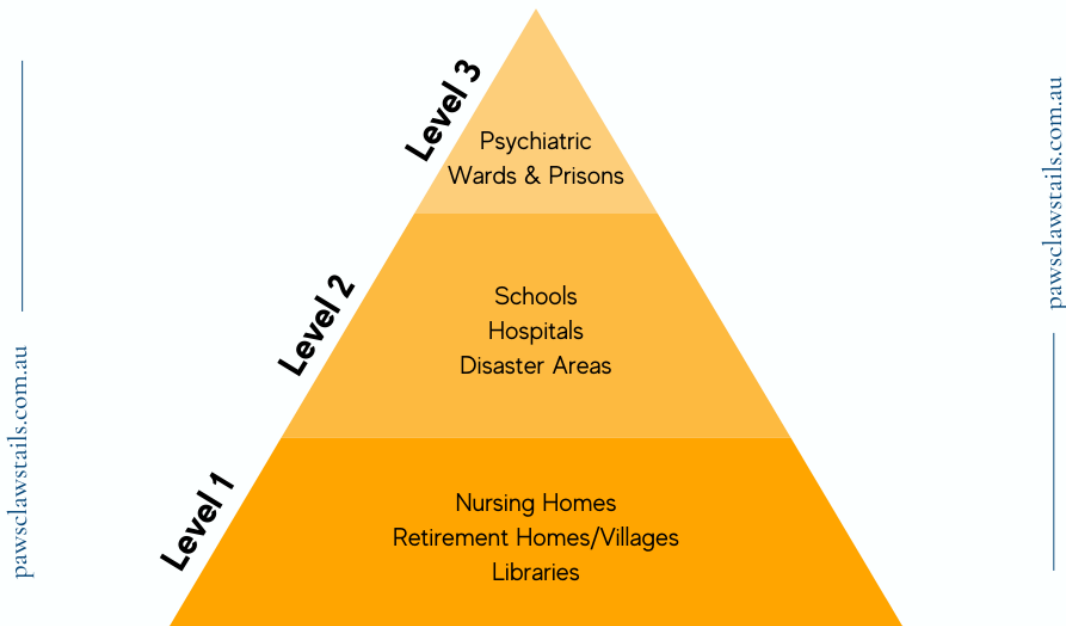
During the Assessment, the Therapy Dog Assessor will decide on which "level" your dog will be certified for depending on their temperament, resilience, and confidence. This gives you and your dog approval to provide therapeutic support to residents/patients in Facilities at that level (or at lower levels). Importantly, this "level pass" doesn't enable you to visit just anywhere. You still need to

work with PCT to find a suitable placement. In cases where you have a preference for a particular business/Facility, we will do our best to accommodate you.

Some examples of Facilities or settings at each level, include:

- ✓ **Level 1** (“Easiest Level”) – Nursing Homes, Retirement Villages/Homes, Libraries, GP Offices, Dentist Offices, Psychologist Offices etc.
- ✓ **Level 2** – Hospitals, Schools, Disaster areas/shelters etc.
- ✓ **Level 3** (“Hardest Level”) – Psychiatric wards, Prisons etc.

3 FACILITY LEVELS



www.pawsclawstails.com.au

Typically, Level 3 is reserved for dogs that have incredibly sound, easy-going temperaments and are (as we like to say) “essentially bombproof”.

Our goal is always to ensure that the dogs in our program do not get stressed and that’s why we have three levels – we want both dogs and handlers to enjoy going out and helping other people. This in turn ensures the recipients of the visit also have the best possible experience with the Therapy Dog.

How Do I Get Started?

Learn how to get started with the Paws, Claws & Tails Therapy Dog Program.

The first step is to get in touch with Charlotte Bryan (head of our program) directly via her email at charlotte@pawsclawstails.com.au. Charlotte will answer any questions you might have and will help you get started.

The Therapy Dog Training & Certification process has 4 stages:

Stage 1 - The Initial Interview

Stage 2 - Training

Stage 3 - The Assessment

Stage 4 – Certification, Placement & Renewal

The Initial Interview (Stage 1)

The initial interview is designed to help us understand what you want to get out of joining our Therapy Dog Program and to pre-assess your dog. You will be assigned a PCT-Approved Therapy Dog Trainer who will remain with you for the duration of your work through our program. As part of the initial interview, your PCT-Approved Therapy Dog Trainer will ask you all about yourself and your dog, placing a large emphasis on your dog's temperament. During this interview, your trainer will discuss our program rules with you, will run through the Assessment, and determine the suitability of your dog for acceptance into our program (i.e. temperament, level of training) and identify any additional requirements such as additional training. This is the time to outline any goals you have – for instance, if you wish to certify more than one handler for your dog.

You'll also need to sign off on our Program Rules and our Terms & Conditions and other paperwork.

Training (Stage 2)

It is required that you and your dog complete a minimum of 5 hours of training with your PCT-Approved Therapy Dog Trainer prior to sitting the Assessment. Of course, more hours can be booked if required. You can book the required bundle of 5 hours training via our website www.pawsclawstails.com.au. Here you can also book additional hours should your PCT-Approved Therapy Dog Trainer suggest it and depending on your dog's level of training.

The Assessment (Stage 3)

Paws, Claws & Tails has a standardised Assessment that all trainee Therapy Dogs in our program must undergo. The purpose of this test is to ensure that your dog is temperamentally sound, confident and resilient, and will assess a number of aspects of your dog's training, behaviour, temperament and cleanliness as well as handler competence.

The Assessment is a checklist with over 12 exercises (or "scenarios") to test you and your dog. For each scenario you will be graded either a 0, 1, 2 or 3. These scores directly correspond with the aforementioned "3 Facility levels" to help the Evaluator determine the level of environment intensity to which your dog is most suited. For instance, if your dog receives grades of 1 for most exercises, they will likely be most suited for Level 1 Facilities. If your dog receives a grade of 0, this is equivalent to a fail for that exercise. The Assessment must be carried out by a PCT-certified Therapy Dog Evaluator.

What will the Assessment cover?

Below is a list of *some* of the aspects that the Therapy Dog Assessment assesses:

- ✓ Accepting a gentle pat from strangers when either aware or unaware of stranger's approach
- ✓ Accepting a vigorous pat from strangers when either aware or unaware of stranger's approach
- ✓ Accepting a restraining hug (or being picked up if a small dog) by a stranger
- ✓ Accepting a grooming inspection by a stranger
- ✓ Walking by the handler's side on a loose leash
- ✓ Walking comfortably through a crowd and around unfamiliar or loud objects
- ✓ Reaction to distraction or reaction when startled – we want your dog to be able to recover quickly when startled and not get too nervous
- ✓ Basic Obedience – sit, down, stay, staying calm when handler is out of sight, recall when distracted, leave food/items on the ground, not rushing up to people
- ✓ Confidence around individuals with unfamiliar walking gaits or speech patterns
- ✓ Impulse control when being patted by several people at once
- ✓ Impulse control around children
- ✓ Taking treats gently from a stranger's hand
- ✓ Ability to walk past other dogs with nothing more than a passing glance

You can take the Assessment as many times as you want – but bear in mind that there is a cost for each attempt.

You'll be required to be reassessed every 12 months to ensure that you and your dog's standard of training and sociability is maintained.

Should you wish to certify more than one handler for your dog, you'll need to fill out the Additional Handler form and have the secondary handler sign off on our Terms & Conditions and Program Rules.

Certification, Placement & Renewal (Stage 4)

Once you've passed your Assessment you are certified as a PCT-Registered Therapy Team.

Your dog will be measured for their Therapy vest & your ID card will be ordered. Please note, you cannot start your placement until you have received both of those. You will receive your digital certification and be provided with your Therapy Team Identification Number (TTIN) upon passing the Assessment.



Your PCT Therapy Dog Certification only entitles you to visit PCT-Registered Facilities. It is not valid for any other Facility or Use.

Placement

You'll be placed in a Facility to start your work as a Therapy Dog Team. If there's a Facility in particular that you would like to be placed in, let us know during the Initial Interview. Please be aware that if you are wanting a specific Facility that doesn't already have a Therapy Dog Team, we will approach and talk to them but there is no guarantee that they will say yes. There will be a fee for the Facility to become registered with us.

Once we find a Facility interested in having you for regular visits, you, the Facility & PCT will sign a Facility Agreement form and will decide on designated days/times for your visit. We *require* that a team be available for placement for at least 6 months and that they can commit to the agreed upon days/times. Should you be unable to attend one of your designated visits, you must notify the Facility and Paws, Claws & Tails at least 24 hours beforehand. When you have been matched with a Facility, you may then begin your Therapy work as a team.

Annual Renewal

We require that all our CTT's undergo annual renewal and reassessment to ensure that training, sociability and standards are maintained.

Program Costs

Learn all about our Therapy Dog Program costs.

There is a base cost for all Therapy Dog Teams. All prospective Teams must complete the Initial Interview, a minimum of 5 training sessions with a PCT-Approved Therapy Dog Trainer and the final Therapy Dog Assessment. Upon completing the initial interview, your PCT-Approved Therapy Dog Trainer may suggest that you need to complete more training sessions than the required five (5) before attempting your final Assessment. These can be bought in Bundles from the PCT website.

The base price for training General Visitation Dogs is **\$1300**.

Cost Breakdown

Initial Interview = \$200

5 x Training Sessions = \$150 x 5

Final Assessment = \$350

Total = \$1300 (minimum)

The base price for training Resident Therapy Dogs is **\$1700**.

Cost Breakdown

Initial Interview = \$250

5 x Training Sessions = \$200 x 5

Final Assessment = \$450

Total = \$1700 (minimum)

****For Resident Therapy Dogs Only - At least one of your training sessions must be conducted in the Facility where the Team is to be placed. A risk assessment will be conducted during this session to ensure the welfare of the Team is maintained.***

All additional training sessions can be purchased at \$150 each. Additional Handlers incur a fee of \$150 each. Annual re-assessments cost \$250 per General Visitation Therapy Dog and \$350 per Resident Therapy Dog each year.

General Program Rules

Please read through our program rules. You must agree to each rule prior to being certified .

1. Dogs must only enter Pre-Approved PCT-Registered Facilities at the pre-approved dates and times. This is to ensure that all Facilities understand and agree that there will be a working dog in their premises at those specific times. Any changes to times/days must be approved by both the Facility and Paws, Claws & Tails.
2. Dogs must wear their therapy vests at all times while working and the handler must be carrying the team's official ID card.
3. Only the certified handler (who underwent the Assessment with the dog) is allowed to accompany the dog into their pre-approved Facility. If you wish to certify more than one handler, an Additional Therapy Dog Handler form must be filled out and approved by Paws, Claws & Tails.
4. If unable to make a scheduled visit, the handler must contact the Facility directly to let them know and also notify Paws, Claws & Tails.
5. The dog must be bathed and groomed prior to each visit and must be up to date on all flea/worm treatments. Proof will be required.
6. The handler must be friendly, approachable, patient and well-groomed at each visit.
7. The dog must wear a flat collar and leash – no harnesses, haltis, prong collars or check chains etc. are allowed during the Assessment or while working.
8. The dog must be trained using a positive approach.
9. The handler must be observing their dog at all times while working so as to prevent stress in either the dog or the Visit Recipients.
10. The handler is not allowed to use their Therapy Dog's vest or ID card to enter any Facility that has not been previously approved by Paws, Claws & Tails, any public premises or to present their dog as an Assistance Dog.

-
11. Paws, Claws & Tails is not liable for any damages or injury to any property or person or animal as part of your visit to a Facility. You are responsible for your dog.
 12. Paws, Claws & Tails' insurance does not cover the Therapy Team once certified and recommends that the handler has their own insurance.
 13. The Handler/s must familiarise themselves with our Therapy Dog Terms & Conditions which you will be required to sign at the time of the Assessment, prior to being certified.
 14. Upon completing this program, you are not allowed to start up your own Therapy Dog Training & Certification program for five (5) years following Certification.

Breach of any of these rules may result in loss of certification or expulsion from our program.

FAQ

Read our frequently asked questions about our Therapy Dog Program here.

How long does the Assessment go for?

The Assessment is typically 1-2 hours.

How much is the Assessment?

The cost of the initial Assessment is \$350 per attempt (you can have unlimited attempts at passing). Annual re-assessments cost \$250 per General Visitation Therapy Dog and \$350 per Resident Therapy Dog each year.

Can I certify 2 dogs?

Yes, it is possible to certify more than 1 dog – if you are wanting to take both dogs to the same visit, special permission is required and a very high level of training is required for both dogs.

What are the most common breeds that get certified as Therapy Dogs?

While any dog has the potential to be accepted into our Therapy Dog Program, the most common breeds we see are Golden Retrievers, Labrador Retrievers, King Charles Cavalier Spaniels and Poodle crosses due to their calm, stable natures. However, any dog is welcome as long as they pass the Assessment and all requirements.

Are there any breeds that will not be allowed into the program?

Any dog that has been declared a “dangerous dog” or a “menacing dog” by their local government will not be permitted into the program - neither will restricted breeds including the Pit Bull Terrier and the Perro de Presa Canario (or any crosses of said breeds).

Can I choose where I get placed?

Yes, you can choose where you get placed. If we already have therapy teams at your Facility of choice then we can arrange placement for you as well. If you are looking at a Facility who doesn't already have a team in place, we will contact them but there is no guarantee that you will be placed there.

Do I need my own insurance?

While Paws, Claws & Tails will train and certify you as a Therapy Team in our program, we do not cover you from an insurance perspective. Having insurance is not compulsory for acceptance into our therapy program, we strongly recommend you have it before starting your placement.

If my dog bites or scares someone, who is responsible?

We do everything we can to ensure that all dogs accepted into our program are confident, resilient and temperamentally sound. But ultimately, it is up to you the handler to ensure that your dog isn't getting stressed during a visit – the responsibility falls on you.

How long does it take to get accepted in the PCT Therapy Dog Program?

This can vary depending on how much training your dog has previously had, your dog's temperament and the time that you dedicate to training. This can range from a few days to a couple of months.

My dog is certified as a Therapy Dog, can I take them to public places such as the mall or the shops?

No, Therapy Dogs do not have public access rights and aren't allowed to enter businesses unless pre-approved by the Facility and Paws, Claws & Tails.

My dog is already highly trained? Can I skip straight to the Assessment?

No, all dogs must undergo a minimum of 5 hours of training with us prior to attempting the Assessment.

What happens if something comes up and I can't make one of my scheduled visits?

It's important that you contact the Facility at least 6 hours beforehand (ideally the day before) to explain why – and notify Paws, Claws & Tails.

I have more questions, who do I contact?

You can contact Charlotte directly via email at charlotte@pawsclawstails.com.au with any specific questions you may have.

Where is the Assessment conducted?

The Assessment is conducted by Charlotte Bryan at a location local to you. Location to be advised in the lead up to your Assessment.

Where is training conducted?

The location of your training will be decided between you and your PCT-Approved Therapy Dog Trainer.

How long is the training?

The training is conducted over a minimum of 5 hours. Maximum 1 hour at any one time. E.g. the most common training schedule is one hour per week over 5 weeks.