



INDUSTRY HANDBOOK

November 2022

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Industry Handbook
November 2022

Contact the Companion Card Program

The Companion Card Program in Tasmania is administered by the Community Partnerships and Priorities Division in the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

Companion Card free call number:
1800 009 501 (during business hours)

If you are deaf, hearing-impaired or have complex communication needs, you can contact us through the **National Relay Service** on 133 677 and ask for the Companion Card Program number 1800 009 501:

- **TTY: 133 677**
- **Speak and Listen: 1300 555 727**
- **Internet relay:** connect to the NRS
www.relayservice.com.au

Email: companioncard@dpac.tas.gov.au

Website: www.companioncard.tas.gov.au

Produced by the Tasmanian Government
Department of Premier and Cabinet
Community Partnerships and Priorities Division
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Hobart TAS 7001
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EASY & FAIR

Fair ticketing for people with disability who require a companion carer.

An easy way for organisations to comply with some of their obligations under disability anti-discrimination legislation.

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Description of terms

CARDHOLDER refers to a person 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 who provides attendant care support to a cardholder, to enable them to participate in most community activities.

AFFILIATE refers to organisations, businesses and outlets that charge an admission or participation fee, and have officially registered that they will accept the Companion Card.

COMPANION TICKET is a second ticket or admission issued to a companion, at no charge, when it is essential for the cardholder to receive attendant care support in order to participate at a venue/activity.

What is the Companion Card for?

The Tasmanian Companion Card Program was introduced as an initiative of the Tasmanian Government's Disability Framework for Action 2005 - 2010. The Framework aims to foster human rights by removing some of the barriers to participation in Tasmania's social, cultural and economic life for people with disability. The program is run by the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

The Companion Card Program began in Victoria in 2003. It was developed in response to continued concern from people with disability, who found the pricing policies of many entertainment, leisure and recreation venues/activities to be discriminatory.

The Companion Card Program operates in all Australia states and territories, and cardholders can use their cards interstate. The Companion Card website provides information on organisations that participate in the program.

People who require attendant care support to participate at community venues and activities have a right to equal participation in the community.

This fundamental right is protected under Sections 14 and 15 of the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1998 (Tas)* and Section 8 of the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cwlth)*. Both Acts make it unlawful to discriminate against a person with disability who requires the assistance of a companion.

Previously, a person who needed attendant care support from a companion to participate at most venues/activities in the community was required to pay two admissions and/or booking fees: one for themselves and one for their companion.

This practice was discriminatory because it doubled the admission and/or booking price for the person with disability.

A number of venues/activities have attempted to address this inequity and have allowed free admission for companions. Before the introduction of the Companion Card, these organisations did not have a simple or consistent method of identifying who may legitimately require a companion.

The Companion Card was developed to promote access to support at community events and facilities to people with a disability.

It is not a new responsibility; nor is it a discount scheme, concession or benefit. It is intended to be a tool to assist the business and community sectors to identify people who require attendant care support from a companion.

The program was developed with the input and support of a number of businesses and peak industry bodies.

The Companion Card is a not-for-profit program. Administration of the program is funded by the Tasmanian Government through the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

What is the Companion Card?

The Companion Card is a wallet-sized card issued to some people with a disability.

The card has a photograph of the cardholder and identifies that person as someone who requires attendant care support from a companion to participate at venues/activities.

The Companion Card is presented when booking or purchasing a ticket only when the cardholder requires the assistance of a companion to access that particular venue or activity.

Participating (“affiliate”) organisations will recognise the Companion Card and will issue the cardholder with a second ticket for their companion at no charge.



The Companion Card promotes an existing right for people with significant, permanent disability to participate at venues/activities in the community, without incurring an additional cost because they require a companion to provide attendant care support. It is not a concession or discount scheme, nor does it give people with disability a benefit that others do not receive.

Removing barriers for people with a disability

While the Companion Card addresses some issues of discrimination against people with disability by enabling fairer ticketing practices, the overall responsibility for ensuring equal access to goods, services and facilities remains with venue and activity owners and operators.

Venue and activity owners and operators are already required to comply with existing disability anti-discrimination legislation, including the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1998 (Tas)* and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cwlth)*, and should be familiar with these provisions.

One way of identifying and addressing barriers that prevent the equal participation of people with disability is through the development of a Disability Action Plan.

Many government and non-government organisations have developed a Disability Action Plan and registered it with the Australian Human Rights Commission (AHRC). An organisation's Disability Action Plan is taken into account by the AHRC in the event of a complaint being lodged by a member of the public.

All Tasmanian Government departments have developed Disability Action Plans, consistent with the Disability Discrimination Act and the Tasmanian Government's successive (Disability Frameworks for Action), and all venue and activity owners and operators are strongly encouraged to do the same.

Where barriers to physical and social access exist in venues and activities, these need to be addressed by all venue/activity owners and operators providing ramps, lifts, accessible toilets, appropriate signage, captioning and Auslan (Australian sign language) interpreters. The development of a Disability Action Plan is an ideal way to begin to identify and resolve these issues.

More information on Disability Action Plans can be obtained from AHRC (see *Additional resources* on page 13).

Who will be issued a Companion Card?

The Companion Card is for people who, due to their disability, require lifelong attendant care support to participate at **most** community venues and activities.

Attendant care support includes significant assistance required with mobility, communication, self-care, or learning and planning, where the use of aids, equipment or alternative strategies does not enable the person to carry out these tasks independently. It does not include providing only reassurance, social company or encouragement.

Card applicants must meet strict criteria in order to be eligible. Each application must be signed by a relevant professional who can confirm the details provided by the applicant. It is an offence for either the applicant or the health care professional to provide false information in an application.

Applications are lodged with the Companion Card Program for verification. Applicants agree to the Companion Card Cardholder Terms and Conditions, which outline entitlements, obligations and appropriate use of the card.

In summary, Companion Cards will be issued to applicants who can demonstrate that:

- they live in Australia, or reside in Australia under a valid visa
- due to the impact of their disability they are unable to participate at most community venues or activities without attendant care support
- they will need attendant care support for the rest of their life.



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

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

In situations such as these, it is up to the individual and the venue/activity operators to negotiate an alternative method to verify the need for companion access.



What is industry affiliation?

Affiliates are organisations, events or activities that officially register to participate in the Companion Card program. In summary, affiliates agree to:

- issue a Companion Ticket at no charge to cardholders who require a companion to provide attendant care support to participate at their venue/activity
- display the Companion Card logo in a prominent position and/or in promotional material, where possible
- abide by the Companion Card Affiliate Terms and Conditions outlined in this handbook on page 10.

How much does it cost to affiliate?

Affiliation with the Companion Card Program is **free**. Administration of the program is funded by the Tasmanian Government through the Department of Premier and Cabinet.



Why should organisations affiliate?

Some of the benefits of affiliation include:

- Affiliation helps your organisation meet its legal obligations under the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1998 (Tas)* and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cwlth)*.
- 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 disability into your ticketing policies and practices.
- The Companion Card, if adopted by a venue/ activity, provides evidence that the organisation has removed some discriminatory policies or practices. (Note: it would assist organisations to demonstrate this by implementing a range of policies to ensure accessibility of their venues.)

Who should affiliate?

The Companion Card Program was developed with an initial focus on recreation, leisure, social and cultural venues and activities, but is open to participation by other industries.

The disability anti-discrimination legislation applies to all organisations, regardless of their size or the type of service provided. If you charge an admission or participation fee for your service, you should consider affiliating with the Companion Card Program.

It is important to remember that the disability anti-discrimination legislation applies to your organisation regardless of whether or not you are a registered affiliate of the Companion Card program.

Removing or reducing discrimination is a shared responsibility. It may be beneficial for organisations to affiliate with the Companion Card Program even if they are not directly involved in issuing tickets or monitoring admissions. For example, a venue owner may affiliate with the program and make it a condition of venue use that all service providers operating from the venue comply with Companion Card Affiliate Terms and Conditions. Similarly, a funding body may affiliate and make it a condition of funding that all grant recipients comply with Companion Card Affiliate Terms and Conditions.

How to affiliate

Join online on the website or complete the Industry Affiliation Form and post it to the Companion Card program. You will be officially registered as an affiliate on the Companion Card database, and you will be sent a range of promotional materials and details regarding the Companion Card security features. You can join as an affiliate:

- by downloading the affiliate form from the website or by joining online at www.companioncard.tas.gov.au
- by telephoning the Companion Card Program on **1800 009 501** for a form to be posted to you.

You can describe the range of services provided by the affiliating organisation and/or list specific services on the affiliation form. It is recommended that you specifically list high-profile services or venues that are not easy to identify as part of your organisation. Any service or venue listed on your Industry Affiliation Form will be recorded in the Companion Card affiliate database.

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

Promotional material

When you register with the Companion Card Program you will be sent a range of promotional material (such as logos and point-of-sale materials). Where possible, affiliates are requested to display the Companion Card logo in a prominent position at ticketing outlets or business premises and/or on promotional material.

You can also create a link from your organisation's website to the Companion Card website to provide information about the program to your customers.

Telephone the Companion Card Program on **1800 009 501** for details of the range of resources available or to request additional promotional material.



What if an organisation chooses not to affiliate?

Organisations are not obliged to affiliate with the Companion Card program. However, they do need to be mindful of their obligations under the *Anti-Discrimination Act 1998 (Tas)* and the *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cwlth)*.

The Companion Card is a tool that can be easily adopted by venues and activities to assist with compliance. However, organisations may prefer to implement their own strategy to comply with the relevant legislation.

Withdrawing your affiliation

There is no expiry date for affiliation; it is ongoing. If a venue or activity operator decides, after affiliating with the program, that they no longer wish to accept the Companion Card, they should advise the Companion Card Program of their intention to withdraw their affiliation. The organisation will then be removed from the Companion Card affiliate database.

It is important to remember that the disability anti-discrimination legislation applies to your organisation regardless of whether or not you are a registered affiliate.

Misuse of the Companion Card

The potential for misuse of the Companion Card has been minimised by a robust application process that ensures the Companion Card reaches its intended target group.

Some features of the process include:

1. All applicants must have a health professional or disability service provider sign their application form to declare that the information on the application form is correct. The professionals who can sign a Companion Card Application Form are either:
 - Specialist health professions which are specified in the Companion Card Cardholder Application Form.
 - Managers of disability services providers that have eligibility requirements matching those of the Companion Card program.
2. It is an offence for the applicant or professional to provide false or misleading information in an application.
3. All applications are verified.
4. Cardholders are required to renew their Companion Card every 5 years for children and every 10 years for adults.

This renewal period is based on:

- the physical life expectancy (wear and tear) of the card.
- the requirement for photographs to remain current.
- the potential for change in the support requirements of 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 card has been designed with a number of other security features. Affiliates can 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 are provided to organisations when they affiliate.

Complaints/grievances

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 or 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 with the Companion Card Program, which will investigate the report.



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 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, etc. 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 reapply.
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.



Getting more information about the Companion Card

The Companion Card website

www.companioncard.tas.gov.au

This website provides more information about the Companion Card Program, answers to frequently asked questions, and links to other useful websites.

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

The Companion Card free call number

The Companion Card Program staff are available during business hours to respond to queries regarding the program.

Copies of this handbook, the Industry Affiliation Form and a range of other Companion Card forms can be obtained by contacting the Companion Card Program on **1800 009 501**.

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- **Speak and Listen:** 1300 555 727
- **Internet relay:** connect to the NRS www.relayservice.com.au

Email: companioncard@dpac.tas.gov.au

Website: www.companioncard.tas.gov.au

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 Tasmania

Equal Opportunity Tasmania (the Office of the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner) aims to promote the Act in a positive way, so that the principles and practices it embodies are readily understood, recognising people's diverse backgrounds, education, training or geographical location.

Office address: Level 1, 54 Victoria Street, Hobart TAS 7000

Postal address: GPO Box 197, Hobart TAS 7001

Statewide local call: 1300 305 062

Text: 0409 401 083

TTY: users phone 13 36 77 then ask for 1300 305 062

Email: office@equalopportunity.tas.gov.au

Website: www.equalopportunity.tas.gov.au

Australian Human Rights Commission

everyone, everywhere, everyday

Human rights education and increasing public awareness are the core statutory responsibilities of the Commission, along with resolving discrimination and human rights complaints, human rights compliance and policy and legislative development.

Postal address: GPO Box 5218, Sydney NSW 2001

General enquiries and publications: 1300 369 711

National Information Service: 1300 656 419

Complaints: humanrights.gov.au/complaints

Website: www.humanrights.gov.au

Peak Industry bodies

The peak or governing body for your industry may be able to provide support or advice including information on how to access further training in providing services to people who have disability.

Privacy

All information collected by the Companion Card Program throughout your application process will be recorded and stored in a database and used solely for the purposes of administering the Companion Card and, where consent is given, for evaluation purposes.

The information will not be shared, used or disclosed to anyone who is not involved in the administration or implementation of the program.

The information collected can be accessed via written request to the Companion Card Program.

The information supplied will be handled in accordance with the privacy principles contained in the *Personal Information Protection Act 2004 (Tas)*.

For more information about privacy, you can refer to the Tasmanian Ombudsman.

Office address: NAB House, Level 6, 86 Collins Street, Hobart TAS 7000

Postal address: GPO Box 960, Hobart TAS 7001

Telephone: 1800 001 170

Email: ombudsman@ombudsman.tas.gov.au

Website: www.ombudsman.tas.gov.au



Companion Card freecall telephone

1800 009 501

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