

Comitas Therapy Dogs

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Comitas Therapy Dogs are Bred, selected and trained by Comitas Labradors

Sometimes puppies may be sourced from other Registered Breeders to help meet placement requirements or if another breed would be more suitable for an individual due to allergies or size requirements.

COMITAS LABRADORS

Registered breeder with the Australian Canine Council. Dogs NSW #210056887

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Mission Statement

- To assist people in rural areas i.e. The Griffith and Murrumbidgee, and Leeton Shires to access companion dog therapy.
- Therapeutic animals for the purpose of 'Comitas Labradors' is to provide comfort and assist in daily living tasks. Specialising in Autism therapy dogs but also providing therapy dogs to assist with depression, isolation, anxiety and sensory needs to anyone of any age.
- Animals can assist children with Autism develop social skills, empathy skills, build relationships, encourage routines and stress management skills. The natural effect of the animals helps regulate behavioural responses in children.
- Working in partnership with the family to encourage positive relationships with the animals to maximise benefits.
- Therapeutic dogs are integrated with families as young dogs to help facilitate the dog's natural ability and instinct to pick up on their owner's emotional and physical needs.
- In consultation with the family to decide what animal and how that animal would benefit the family the most and thus a program is tailored to suit a family's individual needs.

*Disclaimer - Therapeutic dogs are not Assistance dogs. The distinguishing feature is that Assistance dogs are granted access to public places.

Children should not be left unsupervised with any dogs. Dogs are not baby sitters.

Outcomes will vary.

'Comitas Labradors' offers a unique program that aims to harness and nurture a reciprocal relationship between the child and the dog to assist emotional regulation thus calming the child in their daily lives and encourage modelling.

The best outcomes are achieved when the family works in unison with the trainer, this initially entails spending additional time encouraging the child and dog to bond and forms a lasting beneficial relationship.

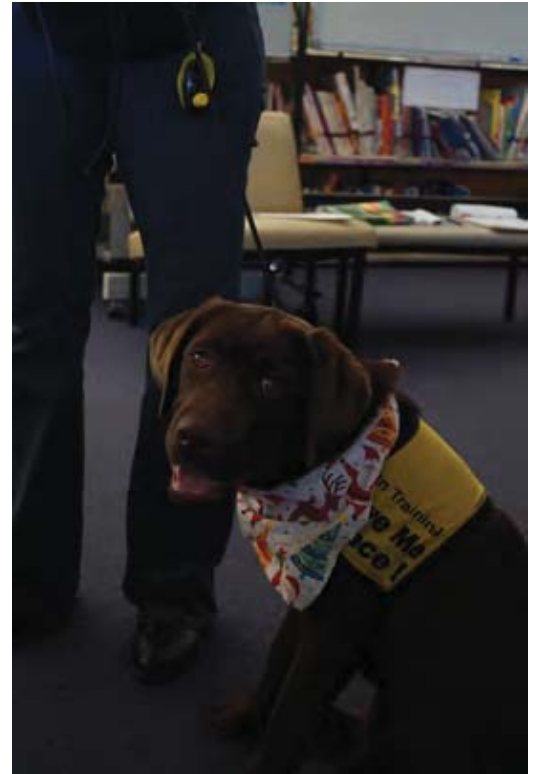
Benefits and Considerations

"Certainly, I found quite considerable success in linking those with Autism to dogs who have been specifically trained to provide support for those with an Autism Spectrum Disorder. I think this is a very wise decision of great benefit to all concerned."

Professor Tony Attwood

What are some of the benefits of pet ownership

- Providing a social conduit.
- Providing emotional regulation.
- Help to reduce anxiety.
- Increase a child's capital.
- Health Benefits. Not just for the child, but for the whole family.



Some Considerations

- Stress. For some, pets can lower stress and in others the additional responsibilities can be stressful.
- Time involved in training, especially initially to encourage the child and dog form a lasting beneficial relationship.
- Additional responsibility and costs.
- Difficulty traveling.
- Allergies. Can be countered with hypoallergenic breeds.

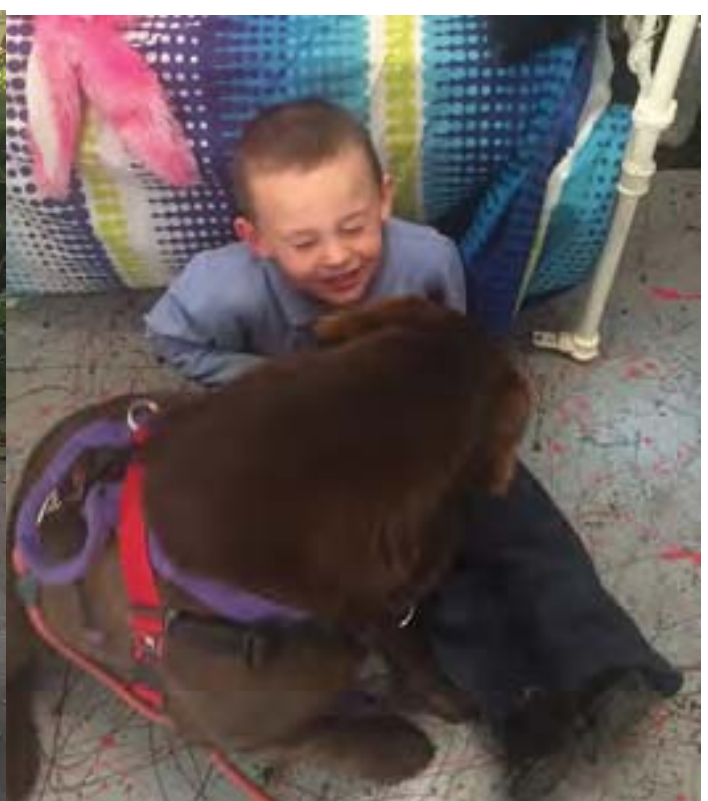


When applying for a Companion Therapy Dog, please consider and be prepared to answer the following.

- Will you be able to commit to a program that has mutually been decided on by both yourself & Comitas Labradors?
- Will you have the required time to put in to care for a dog?
- Will you be able to meet the costs, including feeding & any vet bills, planned or unplanned?
- Will you be able to seek veterinary care in a timely manner when needed?
- If the dog is for a child, will you, or a responsible person be able to provide supervision while they are with the dog?

Program Overview

- By consultation with the family or client to listen and ascertain what support they need and want, along with their expected outcomes, and thus a mutual program is tailored to suit their individual needs.
Not all clients will be suitable for a dog placement, but will still benefit from the program, they will be given the use of facility dogs to use in the group programs.
- Puppies will be very carefully selected to match each client based on their temperament & the clients needs. Which are then integrated into the clients homes at individual paces.
- The first 2 years will include intensive support to cover the integration, implementation of the program, monitoring participation & progress of the program, dog training, educating the client in responsible pet ownership & dog safety, and empower clients to take an active role in the training to raise self-esteem, to form a lasting beneficial relationship with their dog (becoming an active team) & lower dependence on the support needed.
- After the first 2 years, the intensity of the support will be tapered to the monitoring of the effectiveness of the team, and modify the program if any of the clients needs change.
Clients will also be encouraged to continue to participate in the group activities.
- Group activities will also provide opportunities for clients/parents to talk with others on the program.
Also a safe environment to encourage children with poor social skills or with little to no friends to engage with other members and develop friendships.



What type of dog is required?

- **Home Companion Therapy dog (HCTD)**

Do you require a dog to suit your or your child's needs? To be a constant companion to provide unconditional love? To be unjudgemental and always there for you? To have a dog placed & trained to meet individual needs? To have a program individually tailored to help meet your needs & to have long term support on an individual basis? Do you only require a dog to support you in the home or in other places that dogs are normally allowed? A **Home Companion Therapy dog** maybe what you're requiring. The responsibility for these dogs will be with the applicant or the agreed person.

- **Community Therapy Dog (CTD)**

Are you unable to keep a dog where you live or unable to meet the commitments required to own a dog? Are you unsure if you or your child would benefit from having a dog or only have weekends available? Then a **Community Therapy Dog** maybe the option for you. A CTD will be selected to suit working with more than one person in community program groups organised & run by Comitas Labradors. The responsibility for these dogs will be with Comitas Labradors.

- Assistance dog

Do you require that the dog can assist you or your child not just in the home, but also in public places that dogs are not normally permitted such as supermarkets, work or school? Then an Assistance dog maybe what you're requiring. They are granted the same rights & access as Guide Dogs. We do not offer Assistance or Guide Dogs, but there are many great Organisations in Australia that do like Guide Dogs. We suggest talking to your case worker if you have one to assist in connecting you with one, or you're welcome to contact us for some general information & we will assist where we can to connect you to a service that can provide assistance dogs. N.B. Organisations offering Assistance Dogs will each have their own requirements to access their services.



APPLICATION PROCESS

1. *Consideration stage* - Acquire an information kit - Available to download or print from the Comitas Labradors website.
2. Read through the contents of the kit - Discuss it with a family member or a friend.
3. Contact Comitas Labradors to make an appointment to ask any question you may have after reading through the kit.
4. *Pre-application stage* - Contact Comitas Labradors for an initial consultation to determine suitability of an offered program.
5. *Application stage* - Contact Comitas Labradors for an application form (or download via website) to fill out and submit.

Program Prerequisites

Read the contents of this information kit
Attend an initial consult to determine suitability of offered Programs

Dog Placement Conditions

Must have a secure place to house a dog.
Commitment to the program.
Never leave a child unsupervised with the dog.
Maintaining of the dogs health & well being.
Respect the dogs feelings, be watchful of signs of stress & act to relieve or reduce stress.

Due to any circumstances that a dog placed by Comitas Labradors can no longer be kept, we ask that it is not to be sold or given away, instead that you ask Comitas Labradors for assistance in re-homing or re-placement as it may well be suited to someone else on the program waiting for a dog placement.



Planned Costs

Dog \$1200

Equipment \$Varies on needs

Dog food per month \$20-50

Vet checks \$65 per consult

Worming from \$3 every 3 months

Vaccinations \$85 each

Desexing \$165 males, \$275 females <15kg

Council Registration by 6mths \$188, \$51 if desexed or \$20 pensioner (must be desexed). Prices as of March 2015



Optional Costs

Grooming \$50

Pet insurance from \$14.73 per fortnight



The Five Freedoms

In their 2006 essay, "Welfare considerations in Therapy and Assistance Animals," James A. Serpell, Raymond Coppinger and Aubrey H. Fine (2006) employ the concept that there are "five freedoms" that animals in our care are entitled to.

1. Freedom from thirst, hunger and malnutrition by ready access to fresh water and diet to maintain full health and vigor.
2. Freedom from discomfort by providing a suitable environment including shelter and comfortable resting area.
3. Freedom from pain, injury and disease by prevention and/or rapid diagnosis and treatment.
4. Freedom from fear and distress by ensuring conditions that avoid mental suffering.
5. Freedom to express most normal behaviour by providing sufficient space, proper facilities and the company of the animal's own kind.

(p.455)

Please refer to the Office of Local Government website for information on responsibilities for dog owners in NSW.

<https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/public/dogs-and-cats>

