



QUEENSLAND

Industry affiliate handbook

*Easy and
fair*



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About the Companion Card

Easy and fair ticketing

The Companion Card program supports people with a disability to have the same opportunities for participation and recreation as other community members.

It promotes fair ticketing for people with a disability who need the significant assistance of a companion to attend activities and venues in their communities. Cardholders present their card when purchasing tickets at participating businesses, pay for their ticket and are issued with a second 'companion' ticket at no charge. The companion ticket will also be exempt from all booking fees.

The program is not a discount scheme, concession or benefit.

Affiliating with the Companion Card program is a practical way for organisations to support the human and legal rights of people with a disability to participate in community life. It is also an easy way for organisations to meet some of their obligations under anti-discrimination legislation.

It is important to note that under existing anti-discrimination legislation the overall responsibility for ensuring equal access to goods, services and facilities remains with the venue and activity owners and operators.

The Companion Card program does not guarantee the physical accessibility of venues.

Removing a barrier to participation

The Companion Card program was introduced by the Victorian Government in 2003 as a response to concerns from people with a disability that the pricing policies of some entertainment, leisure and recreation venues were discriminatory.

It was considered unfair to require people with a disability to purchase two tickets — one for themselves and another for their companion — when, without the support of the companion, they would not be able to visit the venue or participate in the event. The Companion Card was developed to remove this barrier to participation.

The Queensland Government is committed to ensuring people with a disability participate equally in community life and has adopted the Companion Card program as a further way of upholding this right.

The program is also a practical way of supporting carers of people with a disability. It may assist carers when advocating on behalf of the person with a disability for the right to not incur the cost of an additional ticket. The Companion Card may also ease some of the additional costs incurred while undertaking their caring role.



The program is endorsed by the Australian Human Rights Commission (formerly the Human Rights and Equal Opportunity Commission) and the Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland.

The Companion Card is a sensible response to what has been an ongoing issue for many people with disabilities.

Until now, people with a disability who need personal support to participate in events and activities, have often had to pay for two tickets — one for themselves and one for their companion.

We all have responsibility for ensuring that everyone can be involved in activities and events. The provision of the Companion Card means that one of the barriers to participation is removed.

The Companion Card may assist in reaching new markets and generating significant goodwill. It is also an easy way for businesses and organisations to reduce the potential for complaints of discrimination.

I support the introduction of the Companion Card and look forward to the increased participation of people with a disability in events and activities throughout Queensland.

Susan Booth
Anti-Discrimination Commissioner Queensland
October 2008

The Queensland Companion Card program is operated by the state government under a licence agreement with the Victorian Government. The program is a key initiative of the Queensland Government Carer Action Plan 2006–10 and is administered by Disability Services Queensland in conjunction with the Department of Communities.

Who is eligible for the card?

A Companion Card is only issued to applicants who can demonstrate that they:

- are a lawful Australian resident living in Queensland; and
- have a disability; and
- because of the impact of the disability, are unable to participate at most community venues or activities without attendant care support; and
- need, or are likely to need, lifelong attendant care support.

Examples of situations where a person may not be eligible for a card include:

- when the person is experiencing temporary disability
- where the need for attendant care support is not lifelong
- when the person is affected by the inaccessibility of a particular venue.

It is the responsibility of the operators of venues and activities to consider all requests for companion tickets. If a person who does not hold a Companion Card requests a companion ticket, the operator should negotiate alternative methods to verify the person's need for attendant care support.

Application process

Applicants must complete a written application form, which includes:

- verification by a service provider or health professional of their need for significant lifelong attendant care support
- two verified passport photographs of themselves
- agreeing to the Companion Card terms and conditions for cardholders (see page 12).

There are no income or asset tests or fees associated with the application process.

Businesses can be confident that the need for lifelong attendant care support is genuine, as the Queensland Government undertakes a rigorous assessment of each application against the eligibility criteria.

Who is a companion?

A companion is any person who accompanies a cardholder for the purpose of providing significant attendant care support.

The cardholder's chosen companion may be a paid or unpaid assistant or carer, friend, family member or partner.

Attendant care support

Attendant care support includes significant assistance with mobility, communication, self-care or learning, where the use of aids, equipment or alternative strategies does not enable the person to carry out these tasks independently. The need for attendant care support must be, or likely to be, lifelong.

It does not include the companion providing only social company, reassurance or encouragement.

Card features and security

The Companion Card includes the cardholder's name, card number, card expiry date, as well as a photograph of the cardholder.



The card incorporates a number of security features that are provided to businesses affiliated with the program. Affiliates may be able to use these features to verify cardholder information when taking telephone bookings or issuing tickets.

Cardholders must also renew their cards periodically and confirm their ongoing eligibility. Cardholders must also advise the program of a change in their circumstances that may affect their eligibility to hold a card.

The Companion Card terms and conditions for cardholders provide full details about card use (see page 12).

Affiliation

Strong support from the business sector is vital to the success of the Companion Card program.

Any business or organisation that charges an admission or participation fee is encouraged to consider affiliating with the program.

Organisations that do not issue tickets directly may also affiliate with the program. For example, a venue owner or funding body may make it a condition that all venue users or funding recipients comply with Companion Card affiliate terms and conditions.

Benefits of affiliation

There are benefits for businesses that choose to affiliate with the program.

The Companion Card:

- provides a simple, consistent and reliable method of identifying people with a disability who require significant attendant care support to participate in activities and visit venues

- assists organisations to meet some obligations under anti-discrimination laws
- is an opportunity for organisations to demonstrate their commitment to social inclusion and community access for people with a disability and present a positive public image.

The safest and easiest way to protect your organisation from accusations of discrimination is to provide an additional ticket at no extra cost to the holder of a Companion Card.

Australian Entertainment Industry Association (AEIA)
Companion Card and Discrimination
Guidelines for AEIA Members
28 August 2002

Support for affiliates

When joining the Companion Card program, businesses will be provided with:

- card security features to validate card authenticity
- Companion Card 'Accepted Here' stickers
- access to the program's electronic marketing logos.



Details of affiliates are also published online on the national Companion Card website. This provides an easy way for cardholders to locate venues and activities where the card is accepted.

Affiliates agree to display the Companion Card logo in a prominent position at their premises, ticketing outlets or on promotional material where possible. Businesses may also create a link from their website to the national Companion Card website to provide information to cardholders.

Staff at the Companion Card program can assist with general enquiries, provide promotional materials and advise on any issues that may arise. The team can also assist with staff awareness and training needs.

Affiliation process

Businesses can register to affiliate with the program by completing the Industry affiliation form.

Affiliation with the program is free, and the costs associated with providing a companion ticket are absorbed by the business or organisation.

Affiliates agree to:

- issue a minimum of one companion ticket at no charge to cardholders
- accept a Companion Card issued in any Australian state or territory
- have their business details listed on the national Companion Card website
- abide by the Companion Card affiliate terms and conditions (see page 11).

Affiliation forms are available from the national Companion Card website or by calling the general information line on 13 13 04.

Withdrawing affiliation

Affiliation with the program is ongoing. An affiliated business or organisation is requested to advise the Companion Card program if a venue or activity is no longer offered as part of the program. Affiliates are requested to advise the Companion Card program of any changes to their contact details.

Affiliated businesses must provide notice of their intention to withdraw from the program in writing to the Queensland Companion Card program.

Affiliate concerns

Affiliates concerned about alleged misuse of a Companion Card should note the card details (if possible) and raise their concerns with the Queensland Companion Card program.

Misuse by a Companion Card holder may result in the cancellation of their card and the cardholder will not be able to reapply.

Cardholders who have a complaint about recognition of their Companion Card are encouraged to resolve the issue with the venue or activity management in the first instance before contacting the Queensland Companion Card program.

It is recommended that affiliates develop their own complaints procedure to manage issues relating to the 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 can 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.

Cardholder terms and conditions

1. The Companion Card must only be used when the cardholder requires the assistance of a companion to participate at a particular venue/activity.
2. Only the person whose photograph and details appear on the Companion Card can use the card.
3. Companion Tickets cannot be used without the Companion Card cardholder being present.
4. Companion Card cardholders must inform the venue/activity operator of their requirement for a Companion Ticket at the time they book or purchase their own ticket.
5. Acceptance of the Companion Card does not indicate that a venue/activity is accessible. Cardholders are advised to check accessibility with the venue/activity operator before booking tickets.
6. The minimum expectation of Companion Card affiliates is that they will issue cardholders, who require assistance to participate, with one Companion Ticket or admission, at no charge. This ticket will be exempt from all booking fees.
7. Where a cardholder has a requirement for more than one companion, the cardholder must negotiate this with the venue/activity operator at the time of booking.
8. The Companion Card can be used to obtain admission for any programs, services and sessions run by affiliated venue/activity operators. This will be subject to the usual admission availability and conditions.
9. The Companion Card can be used in conjunction with any recognised concession cards.
10. 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.
11. Affiliated venues/activities must ensure cardholders are able to be located physically close to their companions. Companions must remain close to cardholders to assist them as required. Cardholders with specific seating requirements must inform the venue/activity operator at the time of booking.
12. 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 venues/activities 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.
13. 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 booking a package deal, cardholders must check with the venue/activity operator, 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.
14. Booking and ticket distribution practices for Companion Tickets should not be more difficult than the standard ticketing practices of the affiliated venue/activity.
15. If an affiliated venue/activity operator suspects that a Companion Card is being misused, they can report this to the Companion Card program. Proven misuse of the Companion Card may result in the card being cancelled, and the cardholder will be ineligible to reapply.
16. It is understood that the applicant accepts the Companion Card Cardholder Terms and Conditions when they submit a Cardholder Application Form.

Privacy

Disability Services Queensland and the Department of Communities have responsibility for delivering the Companion Card program. Each agency will respect and protect privacy and collect, store, use, and disclose personal information responsibly and transparently when administering the Companion Card program.

Each department collects, stores, uses, and discloses personal information in accordance with the information privacy principles identified in Information Standard No. 42 – Information Privacy. For further information about each department's Privacy Plan visit www.qld.gov.au or call 13 13 04 to request a copy.

Key contacts

Queensland Companion Card Program

Phone: (07) 3404 3516 (Monday to Friday, 9.00 am – 5.00 pm)

Fax: (07) 3404 3045

Email: cardservices@smartservice.qld.gov.au

Address: GPO Box 52, Brisbane QLD 4001

General information

Phone: 13 13 04 (Monday to Friday, 8.00 am – 6.00 pm)

Companion Card website

www.companioncard.asn.au

Australian Human Rights Commission

Phone: (02) 9284 9600 or 1300 369 711

Complaints: 1300 656 419

TTY: 1800 620 241

Website: www.humanrights.gov.au

Anti-Discrimination Commission Queensland

Phone: 1300 130 670

TTY: 1300 130 680

Email: info@adcq.qld.gov.au

Website: www.adcq.qld.gov.au

Key policy and legal resources

Anti-Discrimination Act 1991 (Queensland)

Disability Services Act 2006 (Queensland)

Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Commonwealth)

Queensland Government Carer Action Plan 2006-10

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities