

# Cardholder Handbook





## **Cardholder Handbook**

November 2006

Further information and copies of the Tasmanian Companion Card Cardholder Handbook are available from the Companion Card website at:  
**[www.companioncard.org.au](http://www.companioncard.org.au)**

Or telephone the Disability Bureau Enquiry Line:  
**1800 009 501**

Disability Bureau TTY (telephone typewriter):  
**1800 654 524**

National Relay Service: **13 36 77**

Speech-to-Speech Relay Service: **1800 555 727**  
and ask to be connected to the Disability Bureau Enquiry Line on **1800 009 501**.

Produced by the Disability Bureau  
Department of Premier and Cabinet  
GPO Box 123, Hobart, Tasmania 7001  
Phone: **1800 009 501**  
Email: **[disability@dpac.tas.gov.au](mailto:disability@dpac.tas.gov.au)**

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# Contents

About this handbook	<b>2</b>
Description of terms	<b>2</b>
Why was the Companion Card developed?	<b>3</b>
What is the Companion Card?	<b>4</b>
Where can I use the Companion Card?	<b>4</b>
Who is a companion?	<b>5</b>
Who is the Companion Card for?	<b>5</b>
How do I apply?	<b>6</b>
What if I do not qualify to receive a Companion Card?	<b>7</b>
Review process	<b>8</b>
Replacement cards	<b>8</b>
Change of address	<b>8</b>
Renewal of Companion Cards	<b>8</b>
Issues resolution	<b>9</b>
Cardholder Terms and Conditions	<b>9</b>
Getting more information about the Companion Card	<b>11</b>
- The Companion Card website	<b>11</b>
- The Disability Bureau Enquiry Line	<b>11</b>
- Information in other formats	<b>11</b>
- Information in other languages	<b>11</b>
Additional resources	<b>12</b>
- Further information regarding disability discrimination and your rights	<b>12</b>
Privacy	<b>13</b>

## About this handbook

This handbook is intended to assist you to understand how the Companion Card<sup>®</sup> program works. It may help you to decide if you should apply for a Companion Card.

The handbook provides details of your rights and responsibilities as a cardholder. In addition, the handbook explains how to access forms and additional information, and lists other resources that may be helpful.

You should read this handbook before completing the application form. It is recommended that you keep this handbook in case you need to refer to it later.

## Description of Terms

**“Cardholder”** – refers to 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”** – This program uses the term ‘companion’ to describe a paid or unpaid assistant or carer who provides attendant care support to a cardholder, to enable that person to participate at most community activities and events.

**“Affiliate”** – is used to describe organisations, businesses and outlets that charge an admission or participation fee, and have officially registered that they will accept the Companion Card. Tasmanian-based industries, including those with national operations or outlets, are eligible to become affiliates.

**“Companion Ticket”** – is a second ticket or admission issued for 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.

## Why was the Companion Card developed?

The introduction of the Companion Card program in Tasmania is an initiative under the Tasmanian Government's Disability Framework for Action, which aims to foster human rights by removing some of the barriers to participation in Tasmania's social, cultural and economic life for people with a disability. The program is run by the Disability Bureau, in the Department of Premier and Cabinet.

The Companion Card program began in Victoria in 2003. The Victorian Network on Recreation and Disability (VICNORD) developed the concept of a Companion Card in response to continued concern from people with a disability, who found the pricing policies of many entertainment, leisure and recreation venues/activities to be discriminatory. The Companion Card program is now running in several states around Australia and cardholders may use their cards interstate – visit the Companion Card website for updates on which states and organisations participate in the program.

People with a disability, who are unable to attend community venues and activities without attendant care support, 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 a disability who requires the assistance of a companion.

In the past, a person with a disability who needed attendant care support from a companion in order to participate at most venues/activities in the community, had been required to pay two admission and/or booking fees: one for themselves and one for their companion.

This practice is discriminatory because it has the effect of doubling the admission and/or booking price for the person who, due to their disability, requires a companion to participate.

A number of venue/activity operators attempted to address this inequity and allowed free admission for companions. Until the introduction of the Companion Card, these organisations did not have a simple and consistent method to identify who may legitimately require a companion.

The Companion Card has been developed to promote the right of people with a disability to fair ticketing. It is not a discount scheme, concession or benefit.

The Companion Card is one easy way to demonstrate the requirement of a companion, and will assist industry to comply with relevant anti-discrimination legislation.

The Companion Card is a not-for-profit program. Administration of the program is funded by the Tasmanian Government through the Disability Bureau.



## What is the Companion Card?

The Companion Card identifies the cardholder as a person who requires attendant care support to participate at most community facilities and activities.

The card can be presented when booking or purchasing tickets. Participating (“affiliate”) businesses will accept the Companion Card and will issue the cardholder with a second ticket for their companion at no charge.

The Companion Card is a tool to assist organisations to comply with existing anti-discrimination legislation. Businesses that accept the Companion Card and issue a second companion ticket at no charge are not reimbursed for their participation.

## Where can I use the Companion Card?

A list of venues and events that have formally agreed to accept the Companion Card is available at the companion card website ([www.companioncard.org.au](http://www.companioncard.org.au)).

Look for the distinctive Companion Card logo displayed at the entrance of business premises or on promotional and advertising material. You can even use your card interstate.



Some venue and activity operators may not know about the Companion Card but may still accept your card if you show it to them or tell them about it. If there is a venue or activity that you wish to attend you should ask, at the time of booking your tickets, if they will accept your Companion Card.

The back of your card provides a website address and a telephone number for venue and activity operators to access more information about the Companion Card and to find out how to affiliate with the program.

## Who is a companion?

A companion may be a paid or unpaid person whose primary purpose for attending a venue or event is to provide attendant care support to enable the cardholder to participate in an activity or event. Cardholders can choose whom they wish to have as their companion, and this may vary depending on the activity and the occasion.

A person is not considered a companion if they are required for only reassurance, social company or encouragement.

## Who is the Companion Card for?

In summary, you can apply for a Tasmanian Companion Card if you can demonstrate all of the following.

1. You live in Tasmania; and
2. You have a disability; and
3. Due to the impact of your disability, you are unable to participate at most community venues or activities without attendant care support; and
4. Your need for this level of support will be lifelong.

## What is meant by attendant care?

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.

## I can access most places by myself but some venues are difficult because of the way they are physically built. Should I apply for a card to help me at these venues?

The Companion Card is issued to people who require attendant care support at most activities. The card was not developed to overcome or compensate for lack of accessibility, including the absence of ramps, lifts, accessible toilets, appropriate signage or captioning, etc. Responsibility for these access issues remains with venue and activity operators. You may be able to contact these operators directly to discuss your requirements.

## What if my condition is episodic?

The Disability Bureau will consider Companion Card applications from people whose conditions are episodic (for example, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy, schizophrenia, etc.). Cards will only be issued if the need for a companion is in most circumstances and cannot be managed by treatment, medication, aids or other developmental improvements.

The Companion Card will not be issued for infrequent or unexpected events such as allergic reactions, falls or medical emergencies.

### **My child is only four years old. Are there any age limits on who can apply for a Companion Card?**

Most community facilities and activities have ticketing policies that require children under a specific age to be supervised by an adult. While there are no age limits on who can receive a Companion Card, applicants must demonstrate that the need for attendant care is likely to be lifelong. If the applicant's condition is likely to improve and they may no longer need this level of support in the future, they will not be issued a Companion Card. In this case, it may still be possible to negotiate suitable ticketing arrangements directly with venue and activity operators.

### **I have recently sustained an injury and I now require attendant care support. I am undergoing treatment and therapy in the hope that I might become more independent in the future. Will I be issued a Companion Card?**

Companion Cards will not be issued if you may become independent in the future as a result of treatment, management, training, recovery or developmental improvements. Companion Cards can only be issued when a lifelong need for attendant care support can be demonstrated. It may be best to wait until you have completed your rehabilitation or recovery to see if you have an ongoing need for attendant care support.

### **I work full-time and earn a good income. Does this prevent me from receiving a Companion Card?**

There are no income or asset tests applied to applications for a Companion Card, and people may apply irrespective of their employment status.

### **I provide attendant care on a regular basis. Can I apply for a Companion Card?**

Companion Cards are issued only in the name of the person who has a disability. This enables the cardholder to choose their companion in each instance. Cards are not issued to facilities, organisations or companions.

### **I live outside Tasmania. Can I still apply for a card?**

The Disability Bureau will only process applications from Tasmanian residents. The program does operate in a number of states and territories. Visit [www.companioncard.org.au](http://www.companioncard.org.au) for more information on the Companion Card in your home state. Tasmanian Companion Card affiliates will accept Companion Cards from any state and vice versa.

## **How do I apply?**

An application form must be completed and submitted to the Disability Bureau. Application forms can be downloaded from [www.companioncard.org.au](http://www.companioncard.org.au), or telephone 1800 009 501 for a form to be posted to you. Please do not use a photocopied application form.

You will be asked to provide some personal details as well as information about your diagnosis and the specific attendant care that you require. You will be required to attach photographs to your application and have both your photos and your form signed by a service provider or health professional.

Read the application form carefully and follow the prompts that have been provided on the form. You should complete your application as thoroughly as possible.

If you have any questions about the application form or process, please telephone the Disability Bureau Enquiry Line on 1800 009 501.

If the Disability Bureau does not have enough information to decide if you are eligible for a Companion Card, we may seek further information about your need for attendant care in the following ways:

- A written “Request for Further Information” may be sent to you or your agent.
- A follow-up telephone call may be made to any of the health professionals or service providers indicated on your application to clarify your eligibility for a Companion Card.
- Information held in databases by government departments and agencies that is relevant to assessing or verifying your eligibility for a Companion Card may be obtained.

You will be notified of the outcome of your application in writing.

## **What if I do not qualify to receive a Companion Card?**

The Companion Card is not for every person who has a disability. It will only be issued to people who are able to demonstrate that they will require attendant care for the rest of their life. There may be circumstances whereby a person may use the support of a companion but will not qualify to receive a Companion Card. Some examples may include:

- a person whose expected development, management or recovery may mean that they will not require attendant care at most venues for the rest of their life
- a person experiencing a temporary impairment
- a person who is affected by the specific inaccessibility of a particular venue
- a person who chooses to have a companion to provide social support or reassurance, etc
- a person who chooses to have a companion rather than use available aids, equipment or alternative strategies to access an event without attendant care
- a person whose requirement for attendant care is infrequent.

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

## Review process

If your circumstances change and/or you are able to provide new information that clearly demonstrates you meet the Companion Card criteria, you may wish to request a review of your application. It is not necessary to complete a new application form.

Please notify the Disability Bureau of your request for a review in writing and provide the additional information to:

Companion Card Applications  
Disability Bureau  
Department of Premier and Cabinet  
GPO Box 123  
Hobart, Tasmania 7001

You must have one of the health professionals listed on the application form sign any new information and provide their contact details for verification. Please note that original documents cannot be returned to you.

Any new information you provide, along with the information obtained in your original application, will be considered as part of the review process. Applicants are notified of the outcome of their review in writing.

## Replacement cards

You can request a replacement card if:

- you lose your Companion Card
- your Companion Card is stolen or damaged
- you change your name
- your photograph needs to be updated.

To request a replacement card, you will need to complete a Replacement/Change of Details form and submit this to the Disability Bureau.

Copies of this form are available from our website or by telephoning the Disability Bureau Enquiry Line.

## Change of address

If you wish to update your mailing address, you can advise the Disability Bureau by completing a Replacement/Change of Details form. A replacement card will not be issued for a change of address, as it does not affect the details on the card.

## Renewal of Companion Cards

Companion Cards are printed with an expiry date. After this period all cardholders 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
- the potential for change in the support requirements of some cardholders.

You can apply for a renewal card up to six months before your existing card is due to expire.

Contact the Disability Bureau Enquiry Line to request information about how to renew your card.

## Issues resolution

If you have a complaint about recognition of your Companion Card, or issues regarding access or unfair treatment at venues/activities, you should seek to resolve the issue with the venue/activity management in the first instance.

If you are not satisfied with the response you receive from the venue/activity, you may like to contact one of the support agencies listed in this handbook under “Additional resources”.

If you have a grievance regarding the outcome of your Companion Card application, you can request a review. See the “Review” section on page 8 for details on how to do this.



## 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 the 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 needs more than one companion to provide attendant care support, the cardholder must negotiate this with the venue/activity operator at the time of booking.

8. 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.
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 that combines admission costs with ancillary components such as meals, etc. When booking a package deal, cardholders must check with the venue/activity operator about 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 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.

## Getting more information about the Companion Card

### The Companion Card website

[www.companioncard.org.au](http://www.companioncard.org.au)

This website provides a range of information about the Companion Card program, translations of key information, 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 Disability Bureau Enquiry Line

Disability Bureau Enquiry Line staff are available during business hours to respond to queries regarding the Companion Card program and can also answer questions regarding the application form.

Copies of this handbook, the application form and a range of other Companion Card forms can be obtained by contacting the Disability Bureau Enquiry Line on **1800 009 501**.

If you are deaf, have a hearing impairment or have complex communication needs, and you would like to access the Disability Bureau Enquiry Line, please telephone:

- The Disability Bureau TTY (telephone typewriter) on **1800 654 524** or

- The National Relay Service on **13 36 77** or
- The Speech-to-Speech Relay Service on **1800 555 727** and ask to be connected to the Disability Bureau Enquiry Line on **1800 009 501**.

### Information in other formats

This handbook is available in Braille, large print and audio formats.

To obtain a copy in the format you require, visit the Companion Card website or telephone the Disability Bureau Enquiry Line.

### Information in other languages

This handbook is available in various languages.

To obtain a copy in the language that you require, visit the Companion Card website or telephone the Disability Bureau Enquiry Line.

## Additional resources

### Further information regarding disability discrimination and your rights

Disability discrimination is unlawful under state and federal laws. If you feel that you have been discriminated against, you may be able to get further information and advice from the following areas:

#### Office of the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner

The Office of the Anti-Discrimination Commissioner provides information about anti-discrimination legislation and helps people resolve complaints of unlawful discrimination or harassment through its investigation and conciliation service. These services are impartial, confidential and free.

Statewide local call: **1300 305 062**

Fax: **(03) 6233 5333**

TTY (Telephone typewriter):  
**(03) 6233 3122**

Email:  
**AntiDiscrimination@justice.tas.gov.au**

Website:  
**www.antidiscrimination.tas.gov.au**

#### 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**

Complaints Infoline: **1300 656 419**

Fax: **(02) 9284 9611**

TTY (Telephone typewriter): **1800 620 241**

Telephone: **(02) 9284 9600**

Email:  
**complaintsinfo@humanrights.gov.au**

Website: **www.humanrights.gov.au**

#### Legal Aid Commission of Tasmania

The Commission provides free legal advice and can represent you in court if you are eligible for legal aid.

Telephone Advice Service: **1300 366 611**

Website: **www.legalaid.tas.gov.au**

## Privacy

All information collected by the Disability Bureau 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. For verification purposes, the information may be shared with individuals nominated by you in this application.

The information collected can be accessed via written request to the Disability Bureau.

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:

Telephone: **1300 766 725**

Fax: **(03) 6233 8966**

Email: **[ombudsman@justice.tas.gov.au](mailto:ombudsman@justice.tas.gov.au)**

Website: **[www.ombudsman.tas.gov.au](http://www.ombudsman.tas.gov.au)**



Disability Bureau Enquiry Line

Telephone: **1800 009 501**

[www.companioncard.org.au](http://www.companioncard.org.au)

