

Paw Prints

Guide
Dogs
WA/TAS



You are changing lives – thank you!

Spring Edition | 2026

Small Paws,
Big Future

Inside

- Introducing our new Puppy Scholarship and Partnership Program
- Join our growing volunteer community in WA and TAS
- Celebrating 75 years of Guide Dogs in WA
- **Plus more...**

Reflections from our CEO

Welcome to the spring edition of Paw Prints.

This spring is an especially exciting time for our community, as we celebrate important milestones, recognise the achievements and dedication of our volunteers, clients and dogs, and look ahead to two very special celebrations over the next 18 months.

In November, Guide Dogs WA will proudly celebrate 75 years of supporting Western Australians with low or no vision. As pioneers of Guide Dogs in Australia, our history stretches back to 1951, when the first Guide Dog training centre in Australia was established right here in Western Australia.

Over the past 75 years, our services have grown and evolved enormously, but our commitment to supporting people to live with greater independence, confidence and connection has remained at the heart of everything we do. We look forward to sharing more of this remarkable history with you and celebrating together through a number of very special events throughout November.

Next year is Tasmania's turn, as Guide Dogs Tasmania marks 70 years of service – another wonderful opportunity to recognise the generations of people, dogs, volunteers and supporters who have shaped our story on different sides of the country.

This year has already given us plenty to celebrate. In Western Australia, we were delighted to welcome the Honourable Hannah Beazley MLA for a special visit in July marking the birth of Whitney, the 250th puppy bred through our WA Breeding Program.

In June, we welcomed the new Tasmanian Governor, Her Excellency the Honourable Caroline Wells, as our new Patron in Tasmania whose first official duty as Patron was at the Tasmanian graduation ceremony in September.

Western Australia follows with a graduation ceremony in November with both special events providing a wonderful reminder of



the extraordinary partnerships that develop between our dogs and their handlers, and the independence and opportunities those partnerships go on to create.

Across Western Australia and Tasmania, our broader services continue to provide integrated, lifelong support for people living with low or no vision, disability or illness. None of this would be possible without our extraordinary community of volunteers, donors and supporters. Your generosity – whether through your time, your advocacy or your financial support – helps us continue to change lives and plan confidently for the future.

If you would like to become part of this community, you can find information about volunteering on the back page of this edition or use the enclosed donation form to support our work.

Thank you for continuing to be part of our journey. I hope you enjoy this spring edition of Paw Prints and the stories, achievements and milestones of our community.

Kind regards,

Anna Presser

Chief Executive Officer,
Guide Dogs WA/TAS and VisAbility

Thank you from the Dog Services Team

There has been plenty to celebrate across Dog Services at Guide Dogs WA/TAS

Our programs continue to grow, our teams continue to innovate, and our dogs continue to change lives in truly meaningful ways.

This year we celebrated more than 300 locally bred puppies born across WA and Tasmania. Since 2019, our dog colony has doubled in size, now including more than 200 dogs in Western Australia and more than 100 dogs in Tasmania. This includes our working Guide and Assistance Dogs, dogs in training, puppies in development, neonate pups and our breeding dogs.

Behind every one of these dogs is a remarkable community of people. Across both states, more than 430 volunteers help us breed, raise, care for and prepare our dogs for their future roles. Their generosity, patience and commitment are at the heart of everything we do.

Our continued expansion, means more opportunities to support people across the community, but it also means we need more volunteers to join us in this endeavour. If you know someone who may be interested in becoming part of our puppy raising or dog care communities in WA or Tasmania, we would be grateful if you could help spread the word.

Across WA and Tasmania in FY26, we were proud to place eight Guide Dogs, four Autism Assistance Dogs, four Facility Dogs and 27 Companion Dogs. Each placement represents a life-changing partnership and reflects the dedication of our staff, volunteers, donors and supporters who make this work possible.

Our teams have also continued to learn from and contribute to the wider international Guide and Assistance Dog community. Earlier this year, members of our team attended the International Guide Dog Federation and International Working Dog Breeding conferences in Japan.

These conferences provide valuable opportunities to share knowledge, explore emerging trends and strengthen collaboration with colleagues from around the world.

Key themes included the use of artificial intelligence to support clients, new training approaches for both dogs and clients, and ways organisations around the world adapt their training to meet different cultural needs.

Looking ahead, we are excited to continue building on this momentum expanding our Assistance Dog services and further strengthening our breeding program, managed by Dion Humber, to help meet the growing demand for our highly trained dogs. We are also delighted that Guide Dogs Tasmania has been awarded the Derek Freeman Scholarship, supporting a collaborative project with the Japan Guide Dog Association to explore enhanced brood care before and after whelping.

Stay tuned for further news and updates.



The Guide Dogs WA/TAS team in Japan

Scholarship and Partnership Program

From Puppy to Purpose

Every working dog begins life as a playful puppy with endless potential. No-one knows exactly where their journey will lead, but with the right care, training and support, that path can change lives.

Over two years, each puppy is carefully nurtured by a remarkable community of breeders, veterinary professionals, volunteers and trainers who help them develop the skills, confidence and temperament needed for their future role.

As they grow, their unique strengths begin to shine. Some will become Guide Dogs, helping people with low or no vision navigate the world with greater independence. Others may support children and families, assist people rebuilding their lives after trauma, work alongside community organisations, or contribute to future generations of life-changing working dogs.

What makes every pathway special is the same commitment to ensuring each dog is matched to the role where they can make the greatest difference.

Our new Puppy Scholarship and Working Dog Partnership Program offers supporters the opportunity to become part of that development. Through a range of partnership opportunities, donors can help develop and place highly trained working dogs while following their progress from puppyhood through to graduation and beyond.

It is a chance to witness something truly extraordinary: a puppy discovering its purpose, a partnership taking shape, and a life being changed.

To learn more about partnership opportunities and how you can be part of the journey, contact our team at

partnerships@guidedogswa.com.au



Partnership opportunities include supporting:

- **Puppy Scholarships:** helping fund the two-year progression from birth through to training and career selection.
- **Guide Dogs:** creating life-changing partnerships for people with low or no vision.
- **Assistance Dogs:** supporting individuals, children and families with disability and illness to build confidence, participation and connection.
- **Psychological Assistance Dogs:** helping people living with the impacts of trauma reconnect with everyday life.
- **Companion Dogs:** providing confidence, routine and companionship to people who would benefit from ongoing support.
- **Community Partnership Dogs:** working alongside schools, hospitals, justice services and community organisations to support vulnerable people.
- **Future Generations:** strengthening the breeding program that makes future working dog partnerships possible.

Meet Our Team

Jordan Bush

Assistive Technology Specialist, Hobart, Tas

Helping people build confidence through assistive technology.

Based in Hobart, Jordan works as an Assistive Technology Specialist and Mentor, assisting clients across Tasmania through face-to-face appointments, telehealth and regional outreach.

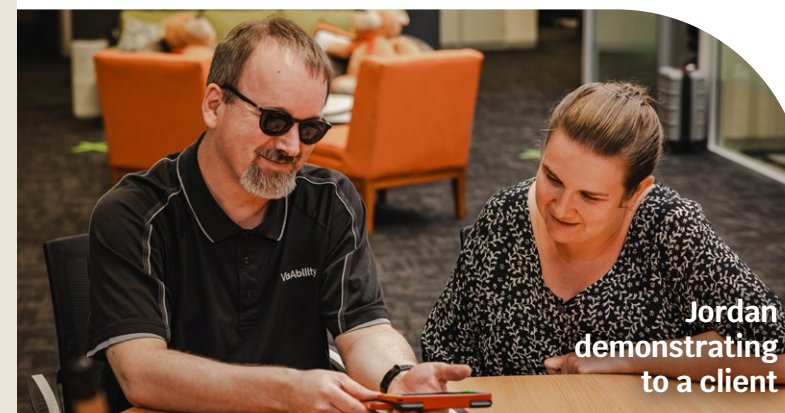
Jordan helps people build confidence using technology to support their goals, independence and everyday life. For Jordan, assistive technology is about opening up practical possibilities by integrating daily living aids, electronic magnifiers, accessibility software, smart devices, wearable technology and other tools to help his clients stay connected and move through the world more safely and confidently.

Jordan's approach is centred on the person, not just the device. Support begins with understanding each client's goals, challenges and environments, then exploring the best options together.

Jordan also supports clients in regional areas, with Therapy Assistants providing on-the-ground help while Jordan offers specialist guidance remotely.

"One of the most rewarding parts of my work is seeing the difference the right help can make. For someone who has developed vision impairment over time, learning there are tools and strategies available that can bring relief, confidence and renewed choice."

"Everyday tasks, such as sending a message, making a phone call, reading information or using a mobile phone independently, can have a profound effect on quality of life."



Jordan demonstrating to a client



Aaron with VisAbility staff member Manny and dog in training Elliot.

Aaron Shirk

Assistance Dog Instructor, Vic Park, WA

For Aaron, working with Assistance Dogs has been part of life for as long as he can remember.

Growing up in the United States, his mother founded an Assistance Dog organisation more than 30 years ago, meaning Aaron's childhood was filled with puppies, trainers and dogs learning the skills that would one day change lives.

During school holidays, Aaron would help the organisation's search and rescue teams by playing the role of a missing child in training exercises. What felt like hide and seek at the time became the foundation for a career spent training dogs to assist people, families and communities.

Today, Aaron brings that lifelong experience to his role as Assistance Dog Instructor, helping dogs develop from curious puppies into confident working partners. He says the path from training to placement takes patience, understanding and time, with many people playing a role along the way. "We often say it takes a village to get our dogs from point A to point B, and that is absolutely true," Aaron said.

While the process is extensive, Aaron says it is also important to give each dog time to mature, have fun and grow into their own personality.

"For the people they go on to support, the impact can be life changing. I've seen firsthand how Assistance and Guide Dogs can help people access everyday moments many others take for granted, from meeting friends for coffee to catching transport, going to the movies or moving more confidently through the community."

Puppy Raising

with Varcha and Dave

Raising a Guide Dog puppy from an adorable eight-week-old pup to a confident canine hero in harness is an undertaking like no other, according to veteran puppy raiser Varcha and partner Dave.

"For our family, it has been an eleven-year journey, and we have had the privilege of watching 'our pups' graduate to become the life-changing dogs that all the work, patience and love have helped make possible," Varcha said.

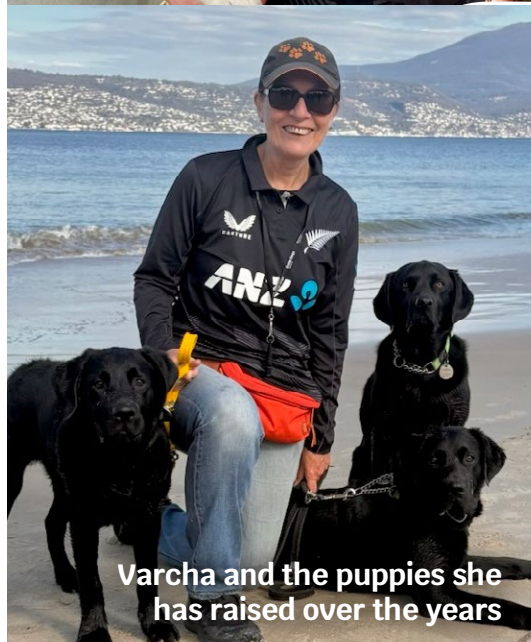
"Puppy raising with Guide Dogs Tasmania means being part of an incredible team of people and being supported through every stage of a pup's development and training. If it takes 'a village to raise a child', it certainly takes a dedicated community to raise a Guide Dog."

"From the moment we welcome a tiny pup into our home, the development team is there, providing practical support to help us shape that cute little bundle into a fully trained working dog."

"All their health needs and food are taken care of, and if we need to go away or take a break, there is always a Guide Dog boarder ready to look after the pup. From regular training sessions for us and the pups, including the popular 'café training' where we socialise together and the dogs learn excellent manners, to free runs on the beach, concerts and movies, bus training and more, we get to experience life alongside our eager trainee."

"For us, one of the most powerful moments is the 'blindfold walk', when the dog we have raised from a silly pup confidently guides us in harness along a busy street. This is when everything comes together. Handing this dog back means giving someone else a new level of independence, which is an incredibly rewarding feeling."

If you have ever wondered what it would be like to raise a future Guide or Assistance Dog, now is a wonderful time to find out more. Puppy raising is a rewarding way to make a lasting difference, with full support provided every step of the way. To learn more about becoming a puppy raiser in Western Australia or Tasmania, please reach out to our team today on 1800 847 466 in WA and 1800 371 104 in Tasmania.



Varcha and the puppies she has raised over the years

A Day in the life with trainee puppy Baloo

Training a puppy comes with some tribulations according to Baloo's puppy raisers Pam and George Prince.

Initially, the morning started at 4.30am for Baloo.

After a few adjustments, including a midnight walk around the block, Baloo began to settle into his daily routine with his family.

Following his breakfast and first walk of the day, he was rewarded with plenty of cuddles and playtime with his puppy trainers.

After Baloo's morning nap, training would start with an outing to various places such as shops, hairdressers, or doctors to do some distraction work, socialisation and learning to help settle him into lots of different environments.

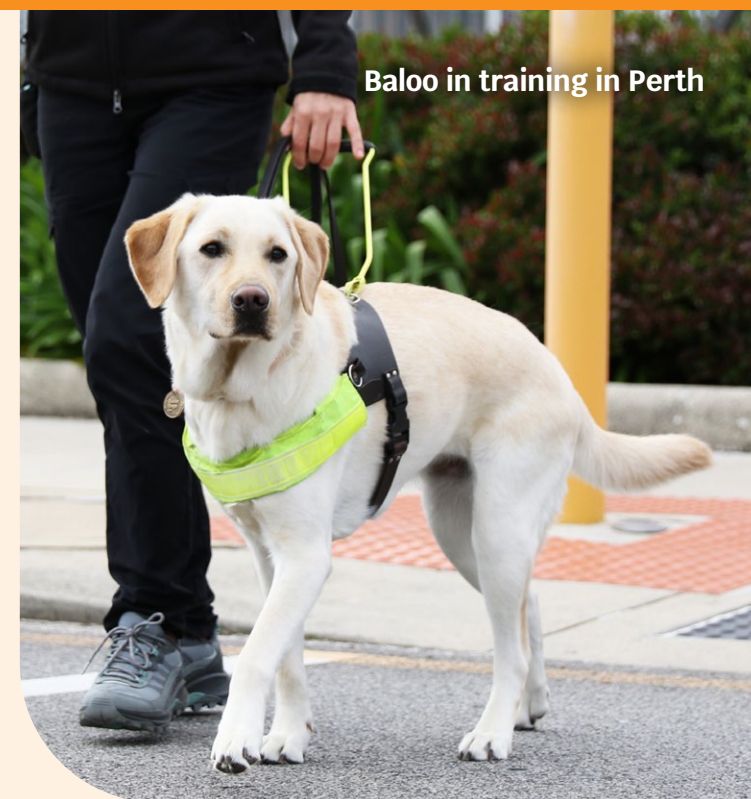
"At the end of the day there was a relaxing walk around the neighbourhood, a final meal and settling down for an evening of well-deserved rest and free time for us to enjoy with Baloo."

"Puppy raising is a rewarding experience. To see the development of Baloo growing in trust and confidence, and gaining unique skills, it gives us pride in seeing him move to the next level of training."

"As difficult as it was with Baloo leaving us, it gives us comfort that he will provide a life-changing opportunity for someone else to gain their independence."

Baloo is now in formal training as a Guide Dog in Western Australia.

Pam and George Prince, Perth.



Baloo in training in Perth



Puppy Development Information Sessions

TAS

- Thu, 17 September 2pm - 3:30pm AEST
- Fri, 16 October 10am - 11:30am AEDT
- Mon, 16 November 12pm - 1:30pm AEDT
- Tue, 15 December 2pm - 3:30pm AEDT

WA

- Wed, 30 September 4pm - 5pm AWST
- Thu, 29 October 4pm - 5pm AWST
- Wed, 25 November 4pm - 5pm AWST



Because of you, we can help Patrick and other children like him... *Thank you.*

Patrick captured our hearts earlier this year with his unique energy, personality and love of music.

Born at just 28 weeks' gestation, eight-year-old Patrick has low vision and complex disabilities that require specialist ongoing assistance. Thanks to your generosity, our 2026 Tax appeal raised more than \$450,000 so that Patrick can continue to thrive with life-changing support and services from VisAbility, part of the EverAbility Group.

With your generous donations we can help change the lives of more people across Western Australia and Tasmania living with low or no vision. If you'd like to facilitate the incredible work of VisAbility and Guide Dogs WA/TAS, please look out for our Christmas appeal in November featuring the inspiring story of Joanne Lello and her family.

At just 56 years old, Joanne experienced sudden vision loss due to complications following eye surgery. After a rewarding 29-year career as a science teacher, Jo discovered new abilities and adapted to huge changes in both her personal and professional life thanks to help from VisAbility. We can't wait for you to meet Jo and her family and to read more about her inspiring story.



Joanne Lello and family

Partnerships that make a difference

It's been a busy few months for the Partnerships and Community Team engaging with corporate partners, supporters and local networks to help strengthen the work we do across Western Australia and Tasmania.

Recent highlights include meetings with Water Corporation, GDI Property Group, Vetnostics, Lotterywest, Perth Airport and Vivian's Real Estate in Western Australia.

In Tasmania, the team has met with RACT, Aurora Energy and the Tasmanian Community Fund to share more about the impact of our services and the key role partnerships can play in supporting them.

These important conversations help build understanding and raise awareness of the work we do across our organisation and explore practical ways businesses can contribute - whether through workplace giving, sponsorship, staff engagement, volunteering or tailored community initiatives.

If your workplace, community group or organisation would like to find out more about how you can partner with us, we would love to start the conversation. Please contact Strategic Partnership Manager, Sarah Taylor, on 0422 609 997 or email sarah.taylor@everabilitygroup.org.au



Albert's Journey

– making a lasting impact

When a generous supporter named Albert chose to leave a gift in his Will, he created a legacy that would continue helping others long into the future.

Today, that legacy lives on through another Albert, an Assistance Dog already making a life-changing difference to his young handler, Runa, and her family.

Runa, who has autism, has formed a strong and immediate bond with Albert. His calm presence is helping her feel safer, more settled and more confident in daily life.

Assistance Dogs support children with autism by improving safety, building independence and encouraging social inclusion. For families, the impact can be profound.

Before Albert arrived, Runa often wanted to retreat to her darkened room. Now, with Albert by her side, she is spending more time out and about, engaging in activities she would previously have avoided — including happily playing outside with him.

Family outings have changed too. Eating out was once extremely difficult and something the family attempted only a couple of times a year.

Since Albert arrived, they have been able to go out more regularly, with Albert helping Runa remain calm and comfortable.



Runa and her Assistance Dog, Albert

"We took the kids out for dinner last night and brought Albert along with us. It was a real success. Our daughter not only sat at the table instead of hiding, but she was also able to eat alongside her family. Albert kept her very calm," Runa's mum, Cora, said.

Cora has also noticed broader changes in Runa's wellbeing. Runa is happier and calmer, her communication has improved, and the difficult moments that once happened daily are now far less frequent.

Albert's story is a powerful reminder of the lasting impact a gift in Will can have. These special gifts help support the training and placement of Guide and Assistance Dogs, providing life-changing support, greater independence and connection for people across our community. We are incredibly grateful to supporters who choose to leave a lasting legacy. Their generosity helps make journeys like Albert's possible - and continues to make a meaningful difference well into the future.

Leave a legacy that truly makes a lasting difference.

If you would like further information on how to leave a gift in your Will to Guide Dogs WA or Tasmania, please contact Alisa Guillory for a confidential chat on (08) 6222 4938 or email giftsinwills@guidedogswa.com.au

Celebrating 75 years of Guide Dogs Western Australia

75 YEARS
Guide Dogs WA



This November, Guide Dogs WA will proudly celebrate 75 years.

Over those 75 years, generations of extraordinary Guide Dogs have been trained and matched with Western Australians, creating partnerships that have opened up new opportunities for those living with low or no vision to gain independence and mobility and to participate fully in everyday life.

Today, our work extends well beyond Guide Dog mobility. As part of EverAbility Group, we provide a range of services designed to support people throughout different stages of their lives, with our highly trained dogs graduating to a range of career paths including Assistance, Facility and Companion Dogs.

Throughout November, we'll be marking this significant milestone with a number of special celebrations bringing together clients, dogs, staff, volunteers, supporters and members of our community.

Among those who have played a role in our 75-year journey in WA, is 87-year-old Brian Muhling, who volunteered with Guide Dogs WA as a budding young 15-year-old cinematographer.

Brian shared his memories with our team recently, recalling Elsie Mead — the first person to be matched with a guide dog trained in Australia — directing her faithful guide dog Beau to take her “to the butcher” or “to the post office” in her local suburb of Maylands purely by voice command. You can read more about Brian's story in our commemorative book to be launched in November.

This anniversary is an opportunity to recognise the people who have made this very special journey possible. From our earliest supporters to today's puppy raisers, volunteers, donors, clients, employees and community partners, Guide Dogs WA has been shaped by an extraordinary community of people.

As we celebrate 75 years, we're also looking ahead with excitement to the next chapter — and to continuing to be by the side of Western Australians for many years to come.

Please visit our website www.guidedogswa.com.au or follow us on our socials to find out more about our anniversary celebrations and keep a look out for a specially designed range of birthday merchandise arriving soon!

Brian Muhling,
a volunteer when
it all began.

Guide Dogs Tasmania welcomes a new Patron!

Guide Dogs Tasmania was delighted to welcome Her Excellency the Honourable Caroline Wells, Governor of Tasmania, as our new Patron in June.

Her Excellency was sworn in as Tasmania's thirtieth Governor on 17 June, bringing to the role a long history of service to the Tasmanian community across the health, public and not-for-profit sectors.

The Governor began her career as a nurse and went on to hold senior leadership and governance positions at both state and national levels with Diabetes Tasmania and the Royal Flying Doctor Service of Tasmania.

The Governor's commitment to community service makes her patronage particularly meaningful for Guide Dogs Tasmania and the people we support.

As the Patron, she provides an opportunity to raise awareness of the important work we do with Tasmanians living with low vision, disability and illness.

We are honoured to have Her Excellency's support and warmly welcome her to the Guide Dogs Tasmania community.



Her Excellency the Honourable Caroline Wells

Celebrating Whitney!

Guide Dogs Western Australia celebrated the birth of its 250th locally bred puppy in July, marking five years since the establishment of its breeding program in October 2021.

Whitney was born to brood (mum) Rikki on June 10, one of a litter of five females and three males, four black and four yellow pups.

Whitney's arrival represents a significant step forward in terms of Western Australia's capacity to produce world-class Guide and Assistance Dogs locally, facilitated by the WA State Government's \$5m investment and matched by generous donations from the community.

Guide Dogs WA/TAS CEO Anna Presser described reaching the 250th puppy milestone as a testament to the dedication of the volunteers and the skilled breeding team and the incredible support of the Western Australian community.

“Whitney and her siblings represent the next generation of locally born and bred life-changing dogs who will go on to support people living with low or no vision and those facing disability, illness and other life challenges,” Anna said.

We look forward to sharing news and updates on Whitney's journey and those of her seven siblings in the months and years to come.

Help support

those living with low or
no vision to live with greater
**independence,
confidence and hope!**



Thank you for your
support in helping to change
lives and make
a lasting difference!

MY DETAILS

Title: _____ First name: _____ Surname: _____

Address: _____

Suburb: _____ State: _____ Postcode: _____

Email address: _____

Tel: _____ DOB: ____ / ____ / ____

My monthly gift: ☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 **My choice:** ☐ \$

One-off donation: ☐ \$25 ☐ \$50 ☐ \$100 **My choice:** ☐ \$

PAYMENT DETAILS

Please debit the nominated amount from my debit/credit card:

☐ **VISA** ☐ **MasterCard**

Card number:

Cardholder's name: _____

Expiry date: ____ / ____ Cardholder's signature: _____

- ☐ I would be interested to learn more about leaving a gift in Will.
- ☐ I have already included a gift in my Will.
- ☐ Yes, I give permission for my name to be publicly acknowledged in recognition of my support, including in communications and acknowledgements such as our Annual Report, Impact Statement,

Please return form via post to your state PO Box address as stated at the bottom of this page.

EverAbility Limited is committed to protecting your privacy and is bound by the Privacy Act 1988 and Australian Privacy Principles.

Our privacy policy can be viewed at www.everabilitygroup.org.au/privacy-policy/.

If you would like to update your communication preferences please contact us at donorcare@everabilitygroup.org.au

What's On in WA and TAS

- **September 29** Guide Dog Graduation (Hobart, TAS)
- **October 10-11** Tasmanian Fashion Festival (Hobart, TAS)
- **October 25** Studio and Guide Dogs TAS Community Pilates (Launceston, TAS)
- **November 5** Guide Dog Graduation (Perth, WA)
- **November 7 & 8** Source Kids Expo WA (Perth, WA)
- **November 10** Community Open Day (Perth, WA)
- **November 10** In Conversation with Wendy Morrow
- The true history of Guide Dogs WA (Perth, WA)
- **November 10** Guided Tours – EverAbility Over the Years (Perth, WA)
- **November 11** Volunteer Open Day (Perth, WA)
- **November 11** Volunteer Thank You Event (Perth, WA)
- **November 12** EverAbility Services Open Day (Perth, WA)
- **November 27 & 28** Perth Disability Connection Expo (Perth, WA)

Guide Dogs WA

The Perron Centre, 61 Kitchener Avenue, Victoria Park WA 6100 | PO Box 31, Victoria Park WA 6979



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