

# Volunteer Guidelines



## 1 | Introduction

These Volunteer Guidelines are intended to provide general information about Guide Dogs Queensland (GDQ): what we do, how we operate, and the terms, conditions, responsibilities and benefits of working for our Association. We have produced these guidelines so that volunteers develop an understanding of GDQ, how it works and the part they play in its development and success.

The information in these guidelines is general and applies to Guide Dogs Queensland as a whole. It is important that volunteers take the time to become familiar with the contents. In all cases there is more detail to be found elsewhere, in other documents that set out specific policies, procedures, and instructions that apply to particular positions and processes.

These guidelines will be updated and revised from time to time. The Association has the right to change, at any time, the policies, procedures and details set out herein. Such information will be passed on to staff and volunteers.

These guidelines are important; reading and understanding the contents is a requirement of your volunteer employment.

## Welcome from Chief Executive Officer

Hello and welcome to Guide Dogs Queensland's Volunteer Program.

Your contribution of time and energy is vital to ensuring the Association continues to deliver life changing services to Queensland's blind and vision impaired community.

Established in 1960, Guide Dogs Queensland has a proud history of service and today offers a complete range of services including Guide Dogs, Orientation and Mobility, training in the White Cane and Electronic Travel aids, counselling, special programs for children and Low Vision clinics.

We receive less than seven per cent in government funding for some specific rehabilitation services and none for our Guide Dogs. It is through community support such as donations, sponsorship and volunteering that we are able to provide these services to our vision impaired clients.

Guide Dogs Queensland is committed to ensuring the well-being of Volunteers, Staff and Guide Dogs. To assist with this commitment, we have developed Volunteer guidelines. These guidelines provide an overview of policies and procedures applicable to Volunteers, and define the standards that apply to all Volunteers while carrying out their important responsibilities for Guide Dogs Queensland.

As well as providing important information for Volunteers, these guidelines demonstrate to clients accessing our services that we act with integrity and respect when conducting our work.

I encourage you to familiarise yourself with the content and ensure the provisions are observed.

Perhaps you know someone who is vision impaired, you identify with vision loss or you simply love Guide Dogs, whatever your motivation, we hope your journey with Guide Dogs Queensland is rewarding and you enjoy being a part of the team.

I take this opportunity to congratulate you and thank you for joining us.

Yours sincerely,

**Michael Kightley**  
**Chief Executive Officer**

## 2 | Guide Dogs Queensland

### History

Guide Dogs for the Blind Association of Queensland (GDBAQ) was formed in 1960 and incorporated in 1965. It began under the umbrella of the Royal Guide Dogs Associations of Australia with its original focus mainly on the provision of Guide Dog Mobility. A later program was developed to provide White Canes and teach orientation and mobility skills to Queenslanders who are blind or vision impaired.

In the beginning, there was only one central GDQ office located in Brisbane. The Association has since expanded its services by opening regional offices throughout the State, in Townsville, Rockhampton, Bundaberg, Toowoomba, Cairns and on the Gold and Sunshine coasts. The type of service provision has also been expanded to offer Guide Dog Mobility, Orientation and Mobility training and counselling.

At the end of 1993, with a view to improving the services offered to the people of Queensland who are blind or vision impaired, GDQ took the decision to become an autonomous Association and build our own training centre.

Land was acquired at Bald Hills and plans drawn up for the Guide Dog Breeding and Training Centre. Today the centre provides a residential facility for the training of clients and also a Guide Dog breeding and training facility.

This centre greatly enhances our aim to provide a full range of services to all Queenslanders, who are blind or vision impaired, free of charge.

## Mission Statement

Through partnership with our stakeholders, Guide Dogs Queensland will provide services, which reduce the disadvantage of vision impairment. Our services will assist our clients to achieve their optimal level of mobility.

## Training and Programs

The Association provides the following services statewide:

- Guide Dog Mobility
- Long Cane Training
- Electronic Travel Aid training
- Special Education transition
- School Holiday camps
- Young People's programs
- Counselling retreats
- Low Vision Support groups
- Low Vision clinics
- Community and Professional Workshops and Mobility expos

Services are free to residents of Queensland and are delivered through residential programs at the client residence in Brisbane and out in the community.

## Funding

Guide Dogs Queensland receives less than seven per cent in government funding. This helps pay for some specific fee-for-service programs, but the majority of our Rehabilitation and Guide Dog services are funded through the generous support of community and corporate organisations.

The Association is only able to provide services free of charge thanks to people who give donations; leave gifts in their Will; support our fundraising efforts; and volunteer their time.

# 3 | Volunteer program structure

Volunteers add diversity and first-hand community knowledge to the skill set of Guide Dogs Queensland and in return receive the opportunity to invest in and contribute to the community in which they live.

Our programs are structured on the basis of operational need and may change from time to time.

No matter how you volunteer your time and skills, Guide Dogs Queensland is committed to structuring our programs so that volunteers have support from other staff and are provided with relevant information to ensure successful completion of volunteer assignments.

## Your Manager/Supervisor

All volunteers have a designated manager (a paid employee) and an on the job supervisor (another volunteer or paid employee). Supervisors may vary dependent on location and volunteer role. Supervisors are responsible for organising rosters, the daily supervision of volunteers and initial and ongoing training and support. Please make a note of your supervisor and do not hesitate to ask any questions about the performance of your duties.

The majority of our volunteers in our varied programs will be required to complete a "Record of Hours" or sign-in sheet at each activity for authorisation by your supervisor/manager. This requirement will be discussed with you on the job.

If you want to discuss any aspect of your volunteer engagement, talk over any thoughts you have about your career path with the Association, or raise any other issues or concerns, please contact your supervisor/manager or the Human Resources (HR) department for support.

## GDQ's Human Resources Department

Our volunteer programs and policies are designed by our HR team in consultation with significant stakeholders. Our HR team ensures that the integrity of the Association's volunteer programs are supported and maintained in line with Association goals.

The Human Resources department is responsible for fostering the employment relationship between the Association and its employees and volunteers, helping to provide a positive environment in which all staff can work effectively to achieve their goals.

Our HR department is there to support you in your role with GDQ.

## Policies and Procedures – Our commitment to our volunteers

### What you need to know...

GDQ management provides workforce management policies that support clear, consistent and transparent organisational practices.

GDQ aims to ensure all volunteers are familiar with policies relating to their involvement. Volunteers should address any concerns or lack of understanding regarding policies to their direct supervisor.

Our staff will advise you on particular policies and procedures you need to know in order to carry out your volunteer assignments.

## Induction

A list of current policies as they apply to volunteers is provided to volunteers during our induction programs or is available from your supervisor or local GDQ office. At induction, volunteers are required to sign a Policy and Procedure Acknowledgement Form to ensure your understanding of our policies and procedures. It is also a time for clarification on any policy matters that you may have. Please note that all Association policies are reviewed and developed on a regular basis and that policies and procedures may change from time to time.

**It is your responsibility to familiarise yourself with the GDQ Policy and Procedures Manual which is located at the workplace.**

Please ask your Supervisor for access, direction and/or clarification on any GDQ policy or procedure.

## Training

GDQ is committed to ensuring that all volunteers have the necessary skills, experience and knowledge to undertake their work safely and effectively, through the provision of relevant and compulsory training and development programs.

When you start volunteering you will receive training/orientation for the role. Some positions will need volunteers with specific experience, while others will provide an opportunity to learn new skills. Training and orientation is provided to ensure volunteers have the skills, knowledge and understanding necessary for the volunteer tasks and role.

**Apart from initial training at the start of volunteering you may be invited to attend other training sessions or information meetings as required by Guide Dogs Queensland. Attendance at training sessions is an important part of developing your skills and expanding your knowledge of GDQ which will enhance your opportunity to become involved in various volunteer programs we offer.**

## Relationship between paid staff and volunteers

Paid staff and volunteers work together as a team. Whether voluntary or paid, each person has the right to be respected and treated fairly. It is the responsibility of all people to create a pleasant and respectful working environment for others. For each volunteer role there will be a staff coordinator/supervisor who will be able to answer your questions and provide support.

# 4 | Code of Conduct

All employees and volunteers of Guide Dogs Queensland are required to comply with the following Code of Conduct at all times.

To help us achieve our mission, we have developed clear standards of conduct that promote a culture of fair and ethical behaviour. These will assist us to ensure we do the right thing, at the right time, for the right reasons.

This code provides all employees and volunteers with a clear understanding of the standard of conduct expected by Guide Dogs Queensland.

While it is not possible to provide a comprehensive set of rules to cover every conceivable situation, this Code of Conduct provides guiding principles and standards that should assist you in determining acceptable standards of conduct.

Successful implementation of these standards will also promote a professional, positive image of Guide Dogs Queensland.

All employees and volunteers must familiarise themselves with this Code and ensure that its provisions are observed. As well as helping you in your role, the Code of Conduct demonstrates to clients that we act with integrity and respect when conducting our work.

## Overview

At Guide Dogs Queensland we abide by shared values that are the moral principles guiding us to do the right thing. This applies to our relationships with each other within GDQ and to all we come in contact with as part of our work. It also applies to the way we carry out our business.

**Values** are defined as the moral principles or accepted standards of a person or group. They are used to determine the acceptability of certain behaviours or conduct. In line with our Code of Conduct, we act in accordance with the following values:

- **Respect for persons**

All GDQ employees and volunteers should treat colleagues, clients and members of the public fairly, politely and compassionately, with proper regard for their rights and obligations.

- **Integrity and Honesty**

All GDQ employees and volunteers:

- Should not improperly use his or her official powers or position;
- Should ensure that any conflict that may arise between their personal interests and official duties is resolved in favour of the public interest; and
- Should disclose fraud, misconduct and maladministration of which they become aware.

- **Diligence and Commitment**

In the performance of their duties, GDQ employees and volunteers should exercise proper diligence, care and attention.

- **Economy and efficiency**

In performing their duties, GDQ employees and volunteers should ensure that resources provided for by donated funds and grants are not wasted, abused or used improperly or extravagantly.

- **Accountability and Responsibility**

All employees are responsible for their actions and accountable for the consequences of these actions.

## Public Comment

GDQ welcomes interest from the media and has authorised representatives to ensure consistent and up-to-date messages are provided.

If as a volunteer you are contacted by a media representative to comment on behalf of the organisation, you should politely decline and instead refer the media representative to your Manager/Supervisor or a member of the Marketing Team via the general reception phone number (ph. 07 3500 9001).

Volunteers have the right to make public comment in their private capacity and enter their own voice into public debate on political, community and social issues. Where a public comment is made in a private capacity, you should ensure that it is clearly identified as your own comment, and not an official comment or made in an official capacity on behalf of GDQ.

## Lawful Directions

**Employees and volunteers are to obey any lawful direction; instruction or order given by another person authorised to do so.**

## Conflict of Interest

Employees and volunteers are to arrange their private affairs in a manner that will prevent any actual or apparent conflict of interest from arising. Employees and volunteers are expected to perform their duties in such a manner that the integrity, objectivity and impartiality of the Association are preserved.

During the course of their duties, employees and volunteers should not give preference to any person, organisation or interest as a result of any Association with that person, organisation or interest. Immediately on becoming aware that a conflict of interest between private interests and Association duty, real or perceived, has arisen or may arise, employees or volunteers must discuss the matter with their Department Manager, and may be required to detail the specifics of the real or perceived conflict of interest in writing to the Chief Executive Officer.

## Gifts and Benefits

Employees and volunteers are not to accept any personal or other benefit in relation to or arising from the performance of their duties, unless authorised by the Chief Executive Officer.

## Personal Conduct

At all times, employees and volunteers are to act and be seen to act properly and in accordance with the terms of this Code of Conduct. Employees or volunteers are not to act in a manner which will adversely reflect on Guide Dogs Queensland.

## Standard of Dress/Dress Code

**All employees and volunteers are to maintain a standard of personal and dress presentation appropriate to their work environment and which reflects well upon the Association.**

Employees and volunteers who may be issued with uniforms are required to wear them when they are likely to come in contact with the public and/or clients. Uniforms must be maintained in a neat and tidy condition. Uniforms are not to be worn outside official work duties. Other uniform items such as those items of apparel issued in the interests of Workplace Health and Safety must be worn in accordance with the appropriate policies and procedures issued at the workplace.

## Improper Access or Use of Information and Confidentiality

A number of GDQ employees and volunteers (staff) have access to private, sensitive and/or confidential information.

The following procedures and protocols must be followed when dealing with sensitive, confidential information on clients or commercially sensitive/confidential information:

1. Staff members are expected to exercise commonsense and discretion when managing information, which is, or might reasonably be considered confidential, personal, sensitive or commercial. Staff must not:
  - discuss any information about GDQ business with any person other than those GDQ staff who have a genuine need for the information to achieve outcomes in the course of their normal work;
  - discuss any GDQ business in an open environment, where the conversation might reasonably be overheard by others (other staff, volunteers, clients, members of the public); or
  - leave documents, files, case notes etc unattended or unsecured when not in use.
2. All GDQ staff are required to sign a Confidentiality Agreement Form as part of their employment conditions. Some staff also operate under professional group codes of practices.
3. Clients have a right to be informed about our practices concerning confidential documents and information in general. Clients have a right to access all documents relating specifically to them personally.
4. All material produced by staff in the course of their work with GDQ is the property of GDQ. This includes case notes, client records and other documents.

Unauthorised, improper or unlawful access or use of any official or confidential information is viewed as misconduct and will not be tolerated. Where an employee or volunteer breaches this provision, the Association will initiate action to mitigate the damage and/or undertake appropriate disciplinary proceedings.

## Performance of Official Duties

In the performance of their duties, employees and volunteers are to:

- Demonstrate high standards of professional integrity and honesty;
- Perform any duties associated with their position diligently and to the best of their ability;
- Set and maintain standards of conduct that are consistent with Association goals and policies, and be seen at all times to act in support of the goals and policies;
- Promote and encourage others under their supervision to exercise high standards of personal and professional conduct;
- Act with fairness and compassion;
- Provide conscientious, effective, efficient and courteous service to all Association clients and members of the public; and
- Actively contribute to the achievement of the Association's mission and goals.

## Conduct Toward Others

In the course of their duties, employees and volunteers are to:

- Treat all persons with respect and dignity and in a reasonable, equitable and fair manner;
- Not intimidate, engage in sexual or other forms of harassment, unlawfully discriminate or otherwise abuse any person;
- Observe merit in recruitment, promotion and other selection processes;
- Adhere to management principles and practices which foster the rights and well-being of members; and
- Not induce others to breach this Code.

*Please also refer to GDQ's Terms of Engagement Policy.*

## Conduct Toward Animals

In the course of their duties, employees and volunteers are to observe the following rights of breeding stock, puppies, Guide Dogs-in-training and Guide Dogs (qualified, reclassified, and retired):

- To be well treated at all times and never mistreated, ill treated or cruelly treated;
- To protection from physical and other attack;
- To positive and considerate training techniques;
- To quality food, water and shelter;
- To proper veterinary care;
- To adequate periods of rest and play;
- To retire when recommended by Guide Dogs Queensland and/or its consultant veterinarian.

## Thinking It Through – Resolving Dilemmas

While it is not possible to have a rule for every situation, the following points should be used as a guide to help make the 'right' decision:

- Discuss the situation with your supervisor, manager or other people in your team.
- Imagine changing places and being on the receiving end of your decision.
- Ask yourself what others would do in the same situation.
- Would you like your situation published by the media? Imagine how other people and the media would react if the situation became generally known and whether you could comfortably defend your actions to your family, your supervisor, and the media.
- Think about what obligations you may face or what expectations could arise should you go ahead.
- Think about who will benefit – is it fair to the Association, the client, those who donate to us, your co-workers, and yourself?
- If you still have any doubts about the right thing to do, talk to your manager for advice.

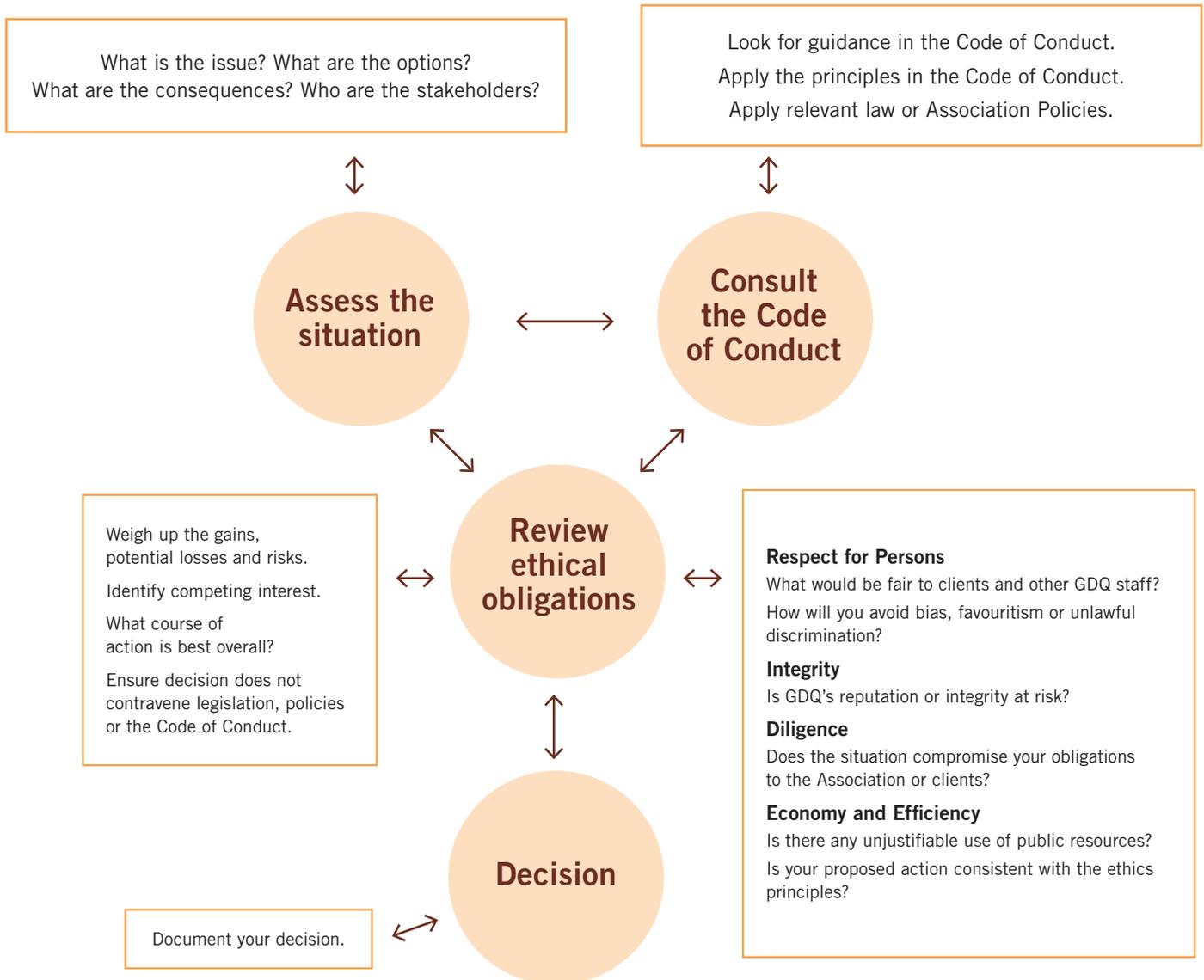
## Reporting of Non-compliance

All employees and volunteers are encouraged to report any corrupt practices, breaches of the law and any matter detrimental to the Association or its reputation. Reporting of non-compliance with the Association's Code of Conduct may be carried out anonymously if desired.

## Consequences of Non-compliance

The Association assumes and expects that staff want to act ethically. **Nevertheless, all employees and volunteers are accountable for their actions.** Any alleged breach of this Code of Conduct by an employee/volunteer will be investigated and addressed in line with the GDQ's Discipline Policy.

# Thinking it Through - Resolving Dilemmas



## 5 | Safety

### Workplace Health and Safety

Guide Dogs Queensland holds in high regard the health and safety of employees, visitors, contractors and neighbours. The Association is committed to the elimination of hazards and factors that could contribute to accidents, where practical.

All accidents, incidents and near misses must be reported to management as soon as possible following any of these situations.

A full list of Workplace Health and Safety policies and procedures is available in the Policy and Procedures Manual at each workplace. These policies and procedures will be updated from time to time and new procedures will be added to the manual as required.

#### Your Obligations:

- Follow all reasonable, lawful instructions for the health and safety of yourselves and others.

#### Staff (Including Volunteers) Must Not:

- Wilfully or recklessly interfere with or misuse anything provided in the interests of safety.
- Wilfully place at risk the health and safety of any person in the workplace.

## Workplace Health and Safety (WHS) Committee

A Safety Committee has been established in accordance with prevailing safety legislation, comprising safety representatives from each area of Guide Dogs Queensland. The role of the WHS Committee is to:

- Represent the safety concerns raised in the representative's area/department
- Be the first point of contact for employees to raise safety concerns and issues
- To advise the Association of safety concerns and issues

As a volunteer, we welcome any suggestion on safety you may have. You can advise your supervisor/manager about your safety concerns or any member of the Workplace Health and Safety team (as identified on site).

## Vaccination for At Risk Tasks

Appropriate immunisation will be offered to staff and volunteers where they engage at the Association's direction in 'at risk' activities or employment. 'At risk' activities and employment is defined as:

- Animal handlers/personnel working with animals;
- Gardeners and maintenance staff;
- Employees involved with used clothing and bric a brac sorting and collection; and
- Staff required to travel to developing countries

An employee/volunteer will be advised by management to seek vaccination/s considered appropriate for the activities they perform.

Relevant health information concerning vaccination will be provided to employees/volunteers along with the GDQ Vaccination Request Form.

Evidence of immunisation should then be provided by the employee/volunteer to their manager. GDQ will meet immunisation costs incurred by staff.

All immunisation records will be kept confidential by Human Resources.

There will be some situations where staff are unwilling or unable to be vaccinated for a variety of reasons. Acknowledgement of Declined Vaccination forms must be completed and retained for anyone who declines to be immunised.

Restricting those employees/volunteers from duties relevant to the vaccination may be required.

## Vehicles

Only employees of GDQ are authorised to drive Association vehicles unless otherwise authorised by the Chief Executive. As a volunteer if you have permission from management to drive an Association vehicle, you must:

- Provide a copy of your current driver's licence which will be held by our HR Department.
- Where permission is given for volunteer/s or any person for private use of an Association vehicle, petrol and other costs (including vehicle recovery and insurance excess, should an accident occur at that time), are the responsibility of that person.
- All drivers are responsible for all costs involved in traffic violations and offences.
- Unless otherwise arranged all vehicles to be returned to the workplace.
- NO alcohol or drugs to be consumed or taken while in charge of an Association vehicle.
- Exterior and interior of vehicle must be kept clean and in good order at all times.
- Vehicle mileage must be given and shown on all fuel and service docketts.
- Driver log sheets must be completed at each journey and handed in weekly.

Your manager is to be advised as soon as possible after ANY incident involving an Association vehicle.

All accidents and near misses must be reported to the Workplace Health and Safety Officer.

# 6 | Important Information

## Acceptance and Appointment

Volunteers are not able to begin their volunteer duties until they have been officially informed of their placement and have completed all necessary screening and paperwork.

## Absenteeism

Some roles require volunteers to commit to a regular time for their volunteer activities. Volunteers who are unable to attend or will be late should notify their supervisor prior to their scheduled start time to enable a replacement to be found where necessary.

Continued absenteeism adversely affects GDQ's ability to provide services and coordinate community events and may result in a review of the volunteer's work assignment.

## Managing Volunteer Performance and Behaviour

As a matter of policy, GDQ seeks to resolve conduct and performance issues using the Association's professional performance management system which may incorporate interviews, written warnings and additional training and supervision. However, in some instances, such as when a volunteer breaches policy or engages in unacceptable behaviour as a representative of GDQ, disciplinary action, including termination, may be necessary.

## Smoking

Smoking is not permitted in any GDQ office or building or in any GDQ vehicle by staff, volunteers or clients. However, at some locations there may be designated areas where smoking is permitted.

## Identification

All volunteers will be issued with an appropriate Identification Tag which must be worn at all times whilst representing the Association and carrying out volunteer duties. All identification must be returned when the volunteer's service with GDQ ends.

## Guide Dogs Property/Personal Property

All property, stock and assets used to conduct GDQ business belongs to Guide Dogs Queensland. GDQ assumes no liability for volunteers personal property brought into the workplace or at any GDQ work site.

## Reimbursement of Expenses

Volunteers may be eligible for reimbursement of reasonable, approved out-of-pocket expenses incurred while undertaking work for GDQ. Volunteers should check with their supervisor regarding reimbursement for specific items. Prior approval must always be sought for any expenditure.

## Leaving Guide Dogs Queensland

A volunteer may resign from their position at any time and for any reason by giving written notice to their supervisor/manager.

Volunteers are obliged to return all GDQ property prior to leaving.

In all instances, volunteer positions and roles will be reviewed at intervals by GDQ Management.

GDQ Management reserves the right to terminate any volunteer position based on operational need.

## Volunteer records

GDQ maintains personnel records of each volunteer which remain the property of GDQ and are treated as confidential documents. It is the responsibility of the volunteer to inform their supervisor of any changes to their personal details or changes to circumstances that may effect their work.

## Volunteer Recognition

Service by volunteers to Guide Dogs Queensland is greatly appreciated by members of Guide Dogs Queensland's Board of Management, the Chief Executive and staff.

Specific awards for years of service and involvement in various programs are presented on an annual basis.

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••• 07 3500 9001  
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••• **SUNSHINE COAST**  
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