

## Help us celebrate International Guide Dog Day

International Guide Dog Day, held this year on Wednesday, 29 April and celebrated all over Australia, is day where we can celebrate the important role that Guide Dogs play in helping blind and vision impaired Victorians achieve safe and independent travel.

This year's theme, "Guide Dogs Can Go Anywhere" not only offers the community an opportunity to learn more about the role of Guide Dogs, but also access issues facing Guide Dog users.

Guide Dogs offer a dynamic form of independent mobility, enabling the handler to walk freely and feel confident knowing their Guide Dog will not only recognise obstacles but guide safely around them.

Most people are generous in providing open access to Guide Dogs, however not everyone appreciates just how integral the Guide Dog is for their vision impaired handler, or aren't fully aware of the laws protecting Guide Dog access and the fact that "Guide Dogs Can Go Anywhere". As a result, Guide Dog handlers in Victoria continue to face the distress of someone refusing them access into their restaurant or taxi etc. with their Guide Dog.

Guide Dogs Victoria's Guide Dog Services Manager, Stewart Blair says, "The community can support the work of Guide Dogs by remembering that Guide Dogs are legally allowed into all public places except zoos and operating theatres. It is a case of discrimination if a Guide Dog and its handler are refused access to any other public place including shops, restaurants, hotels and taxis."

Joan Smith, who is vision impaired and uses a Guide Dog herself, says "To be able to move around freely and feel you're part of the community is so important. That is what my Guide Dog allows me to do. When someone denies you access on the basis that you are accompanied by a Guide Dog, they strip you of the very independence a Guide Dog brings."

Guide Dogs are specially bred and trained to guide their vision impaired handler safely in any environment. Guide Dogs have undergone rigorous training to ensure they focus on the task. They are quiet, well behaved, non-aggressive and completely clean at all times.

Guide Dogs Victoria provides a range of mobility services to people who are blind or vision impaired, including Guide Dog Mobility, Children's Mobility and services for people whose vision loss results from an acquired brain injury such as stroke.

For more information on Guide Dogs Victoria or to make a donation, call toll free 1800 804 805 or visit [www.guidedogsvictoria.com.au](http://www.guidedogsvictoria.com.au)



## Pets encouraged to holiday in NSW

Having a pet back home is no longer a reason to cut your holiday in NSW short, thanks to a new Tourism New South Wales campaign highlighting petfriendly holiday destinations.

Tourism NSW Executive Director and General Manager Lyndel Gray said there were more than two million cats and dogs in NSW and more than six million in Australia, forcing many potential holiday makers to decide against taking a holiday break, because of the worry or additional expense of boarding a pet - resulting in missed tourism opportunities.

"NSW is home to almost 60 per cent of the nation's pets and owners are increasingly reluctant to leave them behind at holiday time," Ms Gray said. "But if just one in ten households with a cat or dog took their pet on holiday for an additional two nights in NSW, it could net the tourism industry about \$93 million."

Tourism NSW has seized on this fact and developed a promotion to encourage holiday-makers to take their pets with them and enjoy our State's pet-friendly facilities."

Ms Gray said Tourism NSW was promoting pet-friendly tourism through its [www.visitnsw.com](http://www.visitnsw.com) website, showing that the best of NSW - long stretches of beach, city life, green regional parks and reserves - can be shared with pets.

Visitors to the website will find information about pet friendly accommodation, beaches, parks and camping areas, dog walking and grooming services, tips for travelling with pets and maps of 'Sydney Pooch Trails' to download.

There is also a short film on the website, and YouTube, featuring a Border Collie named Sawyer that never gets to go on holidays while his lucky pal Archie, a Terrier, jets off with his owners.

Ms Gray said Sydney was a city for pet lovers, with many indoor and outdoor activities catering to the canine tourist and most local government areas offering dog exercise and off-leash facilities.

"We are also encouraging NSW holiday destinations to become more pet friendly and help pet owners discover those destinations," Ms Gray said.

"This is an opportunity for tourism operators, with pet owners more likely to stay longer in pet-friendly accommodation or at destinations with outdoor spaces such as parks and beaches where pets are welcome.

There are already an increasing number of hotels, resorts and other types of holiday accommodation offering special facilities for pets including special areas in restaurants and even room service for pets."

For more information on Tourism NSW's pet friendly tourism strategy go to [http://www.visitnsw.com/Pet\\_friendly\\_holidays\\_p3070.aspx](http://www.visitnsw.com/Pet_friendly_holidays_p3070.aspx)



## ENDAL 'DOG OF THE MILLENNIUM' DIES

13 March 2009: Allen and Sandra Parton have today announced the sad death of ENDAL, their beloved Labrador, who has died at the age of 13. Endal was voted 'Dog of the Millennium' and given both a PDSA Gold Award and a Gold Blue Peter badge for his devotion to wheelchair-bound Allen who was seriously injured while serving in the Gulf War. He became a media favorite after being photographed by a national newspaper helping Allen use a cashpoint machine.

The extraordinary story of how ENDAL came into Allen's life and gave him a reason to live again was told the night before Endal passed away in a Sky Real Lives documentary entitled 'The Dog That Saved Our Marriage' and in the book ENDAL published last month by HarperTrue. ENDAL made his last public appearance on Saturday at Crufts where he accompanied Allen and Sandra to a book signing.

Photo: Barbara A Lounsbury <[hollyloch@charter.net](mailto:hollyloch@charter.net)> USA