



QUEENSLAND

Cardholder handbook

Easy and fair



Contents

About the Companion Card	3
Easy and fair ticketing.....	3
Removing a barrier to participation	4
Who is eligible for the card?	6
Who is a companion?	7
How to apply for a card	7
Obtaining an application form	8
Assessment of applications	8
Unsuccessful applications and the review process	9
Card features and security	9
Using a Companion Card	10
Marg’s story — Companion Cardholder.....	12
Replacement cards	12
Change of contact details	13
Renewing cards	13
Cancelling a card	13
Business affiliation	13
Affiliation process.....	14
Cardholder concerns	14
Frequently asked questions	15
Privacy	17
Cardholder terms and conditions	18
Affiliate terms and conditions	19
Key contacts	20

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 have the opportunity to 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 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 managed by the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services and Smart Service Queensland.

Who is eligible for the card?

A Companion Card is only issued to an applicant who can demonstrate that he or she:

1. is a lawful Australian resident living in Queensland; and
2. has a disability; and
3. because of the impact of the disability, is unable to participate at most community venues or activities without attendant care support; and
4. needs, or is 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.

A Companion Card is issued in the name of the person who has the disability. Facilities, organisations or potential companions are not eligible to apply for a Companion Card.

There are no income or asset tests, nor are there fees associated with the application process.

A Companion Card cannot be issued to a person who is likely to become independent in the future as a result of treatment, rehabilitation, management, training, recovery or developmental improvement.

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.

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.

How to apply for a card

Applicants must complete a written application form which includes:

- two identical colour passport photographs (a current head and shoulder photograph for display on the card)
- verification of the application and photographs by a service provider or health professional (a guide is available to these professionals)
- signing the applicant declaration which includes agreeing to the cardholder terms and conditions (see page 18).

An applicant's formal or informal decision maker pursuant to the *Guardianship and Administration Act 2000* or the *Powers of Attorney Act 1998* may sign the declaration on their behalf. This may be a legal guardian, parent, or other family member or close friend who is not in a paid role.

The Companion Card program must be advised of any changes affecting a cardholder's eligibility. For assistance in completing the application form or for more information about eligibility and the application process please contact 13 QGOV (13 74 68).

Obtaining an application form

Cardholder application forms may be downloaded from the Queensland Companion Card website at www.companioncard.gov.au

Application forms are available on request by contacting 13 QGOV (13 74 68) or emailing cardservices@smartservice.qld.gov.au

All applications must be submitted in hard copy with original signatures and signed photographs. The photographs must be a clear, current head and shoulder passport photograph.

Assessment of applications

The Queensland Government will assess each application against all of the four eligibility criteria for the Companion Card program.

If more information is needed to process applications, the Companion Card program may:

- contact the applicant (or authorised contact) to ask for additional information
- follow up with an enquiry to the service provider or health professional who verified the application.

All persons applying for a Companion Card will be notified of the outcome of the application in writing.

Please note that completion of an application form does not guarantee a Companion Card will be issued.

Unsuccessful applications and the review process

Unsuccessful applicants will be informed about their rights to review and the processes and timeframes involved.

Any person who is not satisfied with the outcome of his or her application may request a review. A request for a review must be made in writing and may include any new information that assists in demonstrating the applicant meets the Companion Card eligibility criteria.

The additional information provided must be signed by a nominated service provider (manager or equivalent) or a specified health professional. This does not have to be the same person who verified the original application form.

Card features and security

Companion Cards are issued for five years to approved applicants. The card is issued in the name of the person with the disability for his or her use only.

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 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 card remains the property of the Companion Card program and a card will be cancelled if a cardholder's eligibility is no longer maintained. Misuse of a Companion Card may also lead to cancellation.

Using a Companion Card

The program's cardholder terms and conditions (see page 18) outline the use of the Companion Card.

A Companion Card must only be used when the cardholder requires the assistance of a companion to participate at a particular venue or activity.

Cardholders must inform the business affiliate of their requirement for a companion ticket at the time they book or purchase their own ticket. Where a cardholder has a requirement for more than one companion, the cardholder must negotiate this with the business affiliate at the time of booking.

The Companion Card must be presented when booking or buying a ticket. Participating businesses will issue the cardholder with a second 'companion ticket' for their chosen companion at no charge. The companion ticket cannot be used without the cardholder being present.

The Companion Card can be used in conjunction with any recognised concession cards held by the cardholder.

Cardholders are encouraged to:

- ask about the Companion Card program when booking a ticket
- look for the Companion Card logo when buying a ticket to a venue or activity
- search for current businesses, venues and activities that have formally agreed to accept the Companion Card by checking the Companion Card website at www.companioncard.gov.au or by reviewing the list of participating businesses provided to all cardholders. An updated list can be obtained by contacting 13 QGOV (13 74 68).



Some venue or activity operators may not know about the Companion Card however may still accept the card if it is presented or when informed about the program.

The back of the card provides details for accessing more information about the Companion Card and how to join the program. It is anticipated that by raising awareness in this way, many more businesses and organisations will participate in the program to support the rights of people who require a companion to provide attendant care support.

Marg's story

Companion Cardholder

Just like most people, I enjoy going to the movies, plays and concerts. Perhaps most of all I enjoy going to see my favourite footy team. Such outings seem intrinsic to my feeling included in the community. I get out of my house and enjoy events in common with my fellow citizens in the real world.

Given the choice, I would go out weekly to some event. But such a 'choice' is costly as I feel obliged to pay for a person who is accompanying me. I require such a person to provide assistance such as eating and drinking.

The Companion Card will make a world of difference to my life. It will mean I'll no longer miss out on sporting events or favourite shows. It will give me a freedom to go out which I currently yearn. I will have a freedom to ask family, friends and support workers to assist me to go out at no cost to them and no double cost to me.

Replacement cards

Cardholders may request a replacement Companion Card prior to the expiry date if the card is lost, stolen or damaged, or they have changed their name. If required, photographs may also be updated.

To request a replacement card, the Replacement/Change of Details form must be completed. Forms may be requested by telephoning 13 QGOV (13 74 68) or emailing cardservices@smartservice.qld.gov.au

Change of contact details

Cardholders may update their address details or telephone number by calling 13 QGOV (13 74 68) or emailing cardservices@smartservice.qld.gov.au

Renewing cards

A card is issued for five years and the expiry date is printed on the card.

Cardholders will receive a reminder letter ahead of the expiry date with advice on the renewal process.

As part of the renewal process, cardholders will be required to confirm their ongoing need for the Companion Card. This will include verification by a nominated service provider or a specified health professional.

Cardholders are also required to provide new photographs when renewing their card.

Cancelling a card

Where a change in circumstances means that a cardholder is no longer eligible for a Companion Card (e.g. death, change in medical condition, moving interstate) a card may be cancelled by calling 13 QGOV (13 74 68) or completing a Cancel a Companion Card form. Forms may be requested by telephoning 13 QGOV (13 74 68) or emailing cardservices@smartservice.qld.gov.au

Business 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.

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 must be 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 19).

Cardholders or their companions are encouraged to raise awareness about the program with businesses. The contact details for the program are displayed on the back of the card.

Business participation in the program is voluntary. Suggestions about potential new affiliates are welcomed and may be provided to the program on 13 QGOV (13 74 68) or by emailing cardservices@smartservice.qld.gov.au

Cardholder concerns

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.

Affiliated businesses are encouraged to develop their own complaints procedure to manage issues relating to the Companion Card.

Frequently asked questions

Who can help me complete an application form?

You may seek assistance from any person to complete your application form.

For children or adults unable to sign the applicant declaration and authorisation, the applicant's formal or informal decision maker (pursuant to the *Guardianship and Administration Act 2000* or the *Powers of Attorney Act 1998*) may sign on their behalf. This may be a legal guardian, parent, or other family member or close friend who is not in a paid role.

A service provider or specified health professional must also sign your form.

I can attend most places by myself but some venues are difficult because of their accessibility. Should I apply for a card to use at a specific venue only?

No, the card was not developed to compensate for the lack of accessibility of a specific venue. The Companion Card is issued to people who require attendant care support to participate at most venues and activities.

What if my condition is episodic?

The Companion Card program will consider an application from a person whose condition is episodic — for example, multiple sclerosis, epilepsy or schizophrenia. Please provide information in your application about the frequency and impact of episodes and about why attendant care support is needed.

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 age limits on who can apply for a Companion Card?

No, an age limit does not apply. However, generally children up to a certain age require a parent/supervisor to perform functions similar to that of a companion. The card can only be issued to a child applicant where the companion is required due to the disability and not due to age alone. It must be demonstrated that a child's need for attendant care support is lifelong or likely to be lifelong. If a child's condition will improve, and he or she is likely to become independent, the child will not be eligible for a card.

I have recently sustained an injury and now require attendant care. I am undergoing treatment and therapy in the hope that I will regain my independence in the future. Am I eligible?

A Companion Card will not be issued for a temporary impairment where it is likely that you will regain your independence as a result of your rehabilitation or recovery program. It is best to wait until you have completed your rehabilitation or recovery program to determine if you have an ongoing need for attendant care support.

In situations where companion support is required but you do not qualify for a Companion Card, you should attempt to negotiate with the operators of the activity or venue.

Does working full-time prevent me receiving a Companion Card?

No, there is no income or asset test for a Companion Card.

I live outside Queensland. Can I apply for a Queensland Companion Card?

No, applications for a Companion Card are made to the state or territory of your principal residence.

Participating businesses will recognise cardholders from other states and territories.

I regularly provide attendant care. Can I apply for a Companion Card?

No, cards are only issued to a person with a disability who has met the eligibility criteria, and the cardholder must be present when purchasing a companion ticket. The cardholder may choose his or her companion.

Cards are not issued to groups, facilities or organisations.

Can I use my Companion Card for proof of age?

No, the Companion Card is not a proof of age card; it only identifies the cardholder as a person who, due to their disability, always requires attendant care support from a companion to participate at most community venues and activities.

The application process does not require a copy of your birth certificate or other proof of age documentation and your date of birth is not displayed on the card.

Privacy

If you apply for a Companion Card, the Department of Communities, Child Safety and Disability Services will collect your personal information on the Companion Card Application form in order to assess your eligibility for the Companion Card and to administer and evaluate the Companion Card program. Your personal information will be managed in accordance with the *Information Privacy Act 2009*.

See also:

<http://www.communities.qld.gov.au/gateway/site-information/privacy>

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.

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.

Key contacts

Queensland Companion Card Program

Phone: 13 QGOV (13 74 68)
Fax: (07) 3404 3045
Email: cardservices@smartservice.qld.gov.au
Address: GPO Box 52, Brisbane QLD 4001

*Interpreter services are available and supported

National Relay Service (for TTY and modem users)

Phone: 133 677 (Monday to Friday, 8 am – 6 pm)

Companion Card website

www.companioncard.gov.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)

United Nations Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities