



Professional Standard 8 – Accessibility & Inclusion (Summary)

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1. Purpose

This Professional Standard sets out mandatory accessibility and inclusion requirements for all WAFA members. It ensures equitable access, participation, and representation of people of all abilities and backgrounds in all services, programs, facilities, and communications.

2. Scope

This Standard applies to all WAFA members, including their employees, contractors, volunteers, board members, and affiliated service providers. It applies across physical, digital, operational, and public-facing environments, including training and assessment services involving working animals.

3. Standard Statement

WAFA members must ensure that all environments, services, and interactions are designed and delivered in an accessible and inclusive manner. This includes proactively removing barriers, applying universal design principles, and ensuring cultural and disability inclusion across all levels of service delivery and governance.

4. Definitions

- **Accessibility:** The degree to which people of all abilities can use or benefit from a service, facility, product, or environment.
- **Inclusion:** The intentional effort to ensure people of all backgrounds and identities can participate fully, feel respected, and be valued.
- **Disability:** As defined by the Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth), including physical, sensory, intellectual, neurological, psychiatric, and psychosocial conditions.
- **Reasonable Adjustment:** A necessary and appropriate modification that enables equal access without imposing unjustifiable hardship.

5. Roles and Responsibilities

- **Board:** Responsible for governance, setting strategic direction, risk management, financial oversight, and compliance with WAFA standards.
- **Senior Leadership:** Implements board policies and manages day-to-day operations.
- **Staff and Volunteers:** Support organisational objectives under leadership direction and adhere to governance policies.

6. Accessibility Requirements

6.1 Physical Accessibility

All physical premises used for training, services, public events, and housing of working animals must meet national accessibility standards and:

- Be step-free or provide ramped access
- Include accessible toilets and parking
- Use tactile and visual signage
- Provide quiet spaces and adjustable lighting/sound where applicable

6.2 Communication Accessibility

WAFA members must offer communication supports appropriate to client and community needs, including:

- Auslan interpreters and captioning
- Plain language, Easy Read, and large print materials
- Augmentative and alternative communication (AAC) options
- Visual supports and multilingual signage

6.3 Cultural and Linguistic Accessibility

WAFA members must demonstrate cultural safety and responsiveness by:

- Providing access to interpreters for non-English speakers
- Translating key materials
- Engaging respectfully with First Nations peoples, CALD communities, and LGBTIQ+ clients
- Ensuring cultural competence across staff and service delivery

6.4 Technology and Digital Accessibility

All websites, training systems, applications, and digital resources used by WAFA members must:

- Meet WCAG 2.1 Level AA at a minimum
- Be compatible with screen readers and keyboard navigation
- Provide transcripts and captions for all multimedia content

- Avoid flashing content or inaccessible colour contrasts

6.5 Feedback and Complaint Mechanisms

WAFA members must maintain clear, confidential, and accessible mechanisms for:

- Providing feedback about barriers or experiences of exclusion
- Lodging complaints relating to access or discrimination
- Ensuring culturally safe, trauma-informed, and rights-based responses
- Providing outcomes in accessible formats and languages

6.6 Collaboration with Accessibility Experts

WAFA members must consult regularly with:

- People with disability and lived experience
- Disability advocacy groups
- Accessibility and universal design specialists

This may occur through co-design processes, advisory groups, audits, or ongoing partnerships.

6.7 Emergency Accessibility Planning

Emergency plans maintained by WAFA members must address the access and safety needs of:

- People with disability
- Handlers and staff with support needs
- Working animals, including assistance and therapy animals

Plans must include accessible communication of alerts, evacuation procedures, and emergency supports.

6.8 Inclusive Marketing and Outreach

All public materials produced by WAFA members must:

- Portray people with disability and diverse backgrounds in positive, non-tokenistic ways
- Be available in accessible and translated formats
- Use inclusive language and avoid stereotypes
- Represent working animals and their handlers respectfully and accurately

7. Compliance

Compliance with this Standard is mandatory for all WAFA members. Compliance will be:

- Audited through annual certification reviews and spot checks
- Assessed through client feedback and complaint handling
- Required for continuation or renewal of WAFA certification

Non-compliance may result in corrective action plans, suspension, or revocation of certification.

8. Training and Communication

WAFA members must:

- Provide induction and ongoing training on accessibility, inclusion, and cultural safety
- Ensure all staff are aware of their responsibilities under this Standard
- Maintain accessible internal communication practices

9. References

- *Disability Discrimination Act 1992 (Cth)*
- Equal Opportunity Acts (state/territory-based)
- Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1
- Australian Human Rights Commission: Guidelines for Equal Access
- National Disability Strategy and Disability Standards for Education, Transport, Housing

10. Review, Revision and Approvals

This policy will be reviewed annually by the steering committee to ensure its effectiveness and relevance. Any revisions will require approval from the steering committee.

11. Implementation

WAFA members must integrate these standards into governance frameworks, operational policies, financial management, human resources, and client service delivery to maintain high standards of accountability and organisational integrity.

12. Enforcement

WAFA enforces these standards through its accreditation and audit processes. Non-

compliance will lead to remedial actions and may impact ongoing WAFA membership and certification status.

13. Contact Information

For further information or assistance related to this standard, please contact the steering committee at the following email address: admin@workinganimals.com.au

Document Control

Version	Date	Author	Change Description	Approved By
V1.0	17/05/2025	V. Solomon	Initial	C.Williams