



How to become a dog trainer in Australia

Embarking on a career as a dog trainer is not just a job, it's a journey of discovery and growth. It's about teaching others how to train their dogs to navigate the human world or perform specific service roles.

To be a great dog trainer, you need to be an astute observer of dog behaviour and body language, a skilled problem solver and lateral thinker, a clear communicator and patient teacher, and most importantly, an advocate of reward-based and force-free training methods based on the latest scientific evidence.

Dog training will constantly challenge and engage your intellect as you interact with dogs and their owners. You will also become an advocate for responsible and ethical training methodologies.

Australia's dog training and behaviour industry is currently unregulated, meaning anyone can use titles such as "dog trainer" or "animal behaviourist" without holding any formal qualifications or certification. This lack of regulation underscores the importance of seeking out qualified and experienced dog trainers and behaviourists.

A Certificate IV qualification in Australia demonstrates a person's ability to apply specialised knowledge and skills in various contexts. It's a higher level of vocational education and training (VET) qualification designed to prepare people for supervisory and management roles.

Here are some characteristics of a Certificate IV:

- **Level:** A Certificate IV is at level 4 of the Australian Qualifications Framework (AQF).
- **Content:** Certificate IV courses focus on factual and technical knowledge with less emphasis on theory.
- **Duration:** Depending on the course requirements, it can take between 12 months and 2 years to complete.
- **Delivery:** Certificate IV courses are usually offered by TAFE colleges, community education centres, and registered training organisations (RTOs).
- **Academic equivalence:** Universities generally accept a Certificate IV as the equivalent to 6–12 months of a Bachelor's degree.

Recognised courses

The APDT recommends the following organisations offering the Certificate IV in Animal Behaviour and Training qualification in Australia. The registered training organisations listed only teach reward-based, force-free, positive training methods. Each course, however, is different and may focus on different aspects of animal behaviour and training.

- **Delta Institute** – www.deltainstitute.edu.au
- **Animals on Course** – www.animalsoncourse.com.au
- **Applied Vocational Training (AVT)** – www.appvoc.com
- **The Animal Academy** – www.animalacademy.com.au

All of these courses combine online learning with in-person training. Students are expected to gain hands-on experience by working directly with qualified dog trainers in real-world situations.

Other respected qualification pathways include programs from the **Karen Pryor Academy**, **The Academy for Dog Trainers**, **Companion Animal Science Institute**, and **Diagnostics Career Center**. Graduates of any Certificate IV in Animal Behaviour and Training (or other highly regarded programs from the above providers) may be eligible to join the APDT as an **Accredited Professional Dog Trainer**.



In addition, specific certifications from independent industry bodies—such as the **Certification Council for Professional Dog Trainers**, **International Association of Animal Behaviour Consultants**, and **Pet Professional Guild** – are also recognised. A complete list of approved courses and qualifications is available on the **APDT Australia** website.

When choosing a dog training course, it's essential to ask about the training methods used. If you want to qualify for the APDT's highest membership levels, make sure the provider teaches **only** reward-based, force-free, positive training methods.

Employment opportunities

As a qualified dog trainer, you have a range of work options including:

- animal shelters
- rescue organisations
- training obedience
- training behaviour modification
- running your own business
- niche market specialisations, such as:
 - service dogs
 - assistance dogs
 - scent detection
 - dog sports
 - herding
 - search and rescue.

With more and more Australians welcoming dogs into their lives, dog trainers play an important role in the community, and are a valuable source of information, and dog training will continue to be a profession in high demand in the future.



Becoming a APDT member helps support dogs in Australia

Joining APDT Australia Inc. offers students, qualified trainers, and allied individuals a platform to communicate and exchange ideas about dog training and behaviour.

In addition, APDT provides educational and networking opportunities by holding not only a biennial conference featuring local and international speakers but also monthly webinars on dog training and behaviour.

Becoming a member will introduce you to a community of over 1000 like-minded members worldwide that share your passion and provides you with a wealth of resources and career support.

Additional benefits of joining the APDT Australia include three editions of *Click!* magazine a year, access to the APDT online shop, discounts from our dog-related business partners, and discounted access to our webinars and conferences.

APDT Australia Inc. is committed to educating dog trainers to use only reward-based and force-free training methodologies.

These training methods have been shown to make life-long changes to behaviours, build a deeper relationship between the dog and the handler, and encourage dogs to make appropriate choices.

Visit the APDT Australia Inc. website at www.apdt.org.au for further information and how to join.

