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31/10/22

Dear Parents and Carers,

Bali is on her way to school!

I have attached the Wellbeing Dog Policy for your information and Wellbeing Dog Permission Form. PLEASE NOTE the permission form is OPT OUT so it does not need to be returned unless you OPT OUT. (This is different from the usual permission forms you have been provided with in the past)

Bali will be arriving on Monday 7th November.

Kind regards

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'Anne' in a cursive style.

Anne



Wellbeing Dog Policy

Barwon Valley School is committed to safety and wellbeing of all children and young people and has zero tolerance for child abuse.
(Child Safe Standards)



Help for non-English speakers

If you need help to understand the information in this policy, please contact Barwon Valley School on 52431813

PURPOSE

To explain to our school community the rules and procedures we have in place in relation to our wellbeing dog program to support student engagement and mental health.

Definitions

A **wellbeing dog** is a dog that has been suitably trained to provide animal-assisted wellbeing programs under the control of his/her handler.

A **handler** is a volunteer in the school who is responsible and in control of a wellbeing dog while on school grounds and when facilitating the animal wellbeing program.

Wellbeing dogs

Barwon Valley School supports the use of wellbeing dogs for the benefit of our students subject to the conditions of this policy. The role of the wellbeing dog is to support the social and emotional needs of our students, under the guidance and supervision of their handler and other school staff.

Barwon Valley School has a wellbeing dog who supports our student's mental health and engagement. Our wellbeing dog is suitably trained and integrated into the school community.

Recognised benefits from working or visiting with a wellbeing dog include:

- reduced stress and anxiety, including decreased learner anxiety behaviours
- improved physical and emotional wellbeing
- improved self-esteem, empathy and interpersonal skills
- improved relationship building and ability to pick up on social cues
- improved attendance (for disengaged students or students at risk of disengaging).

Examples of activities students may engage in with the wellbeing dog include:

- petting and/or hugging the dog
- speaking and reading to the dog
- giving the dog commands that the dog is trained to respond to.
- Walking the dog
- Grooming the dog
- Feeding the dog

Where possible, Barwon Valley School will only engage with low-allergen wellbeing dogs. Barwon Valley School will take care to avoid, where possible, contact between the wellbeing dog and students, staff, and visitors where the school is aware they have allergies to dogs.

Staff, students and visitors are requested to notify the school of any health or safety concerns about the wellbeing dog. We are committed to consulting with students and parent(s)/carer(s) in relation to any such health or safety concerns so that appropriate arrangements can be made on a case-by-case basis.

Wellbeing dog standards and procedures

- There will be a maximum of one school wellbeing dog at any given time.
- When the wellbeing dog is on school grounds they will be under the supervision of a handler or staff member. The wellbeing dog will not be unsupervised or alone with students. A safe area separate to the school classrooms and offices will be allocated to the wellbeing dog and their handler where they will spend time when they are not working with students.
- The handler will ensure that the wellbeing dog does not pose a health and safety risk to any student, employee, or other person at school and that the wellbeing dog is brought to school only when properly groomed, bathed, free of illness or injury and of the temperament appropriate for working with the school community. In the event the school is made aware that the dog triggers a student's health condition (for example, allergies or asthma), the school will notify the student's parent/carer(s) and ensure appropriate steps are implemented to minimise health risks.
- The wellbeing dog will be appropriately identified while on school grounds by wearing a jacket
- No student or staff member will be required to interact with the wellbeing dog. If a student indicates that they wish to overcome any fear of dogs, they can be supported to do so with coaching in a controlled environment with the wellbeing dog and their handler.
- The wellbeing dog program will be communicated to parent/carer(s) of the existing BVS students ASAP, and on new student enrolment to the school. In these communications, parent/carer(s) will be given the opportunity to 'opt out' of the program for their child, raise any concerns or update student medical information (such as allergies or asthma) which may be triggered by a visit from the wellbeing dog.

COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Included in Operations Guide
- Included in transition and enrolment packs
- Discussed at parent information nights/sessions

RELATED POLICIES AND RESOURCES

Duty of Care

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Created Date	October 2022
	SC information only
Endorsed by	Principal
Next scheduled review date	October 2026



Wellbeing Dog Program at Barwon Valley School

Dear Parent / Carer,

Barwon Valley School supports the use of wellbeing dogs for the benefit of our students. The role of the wellbeing dog is to support the social and emotional needs of our students, under the guidance and supervision of their handler and other school staff.

Barwon Valley School has a wellbeing dog who supports our student's mental health and engagement. Our wellbeing dog is suitably trained and integrated into the school community.

Examples of activities students may engage in with the wellbeing dog include:

- petting and/or hugging the dog
- speaking and reading to the dog
- giving the dog commands that the dog is trained to respond to.
- Walking the dog
- Grooming the dog
- Feeding the dog

As a parent/carer you are given the opportunity to **'opt out'** of this program for your child, if it raises any medical concerns (such as allergies or asthma) which may be triggered by a visit from the wellbeing dog, or your child is frightened by dogs.

Student Name	
	<u>I WISH TO OPT OUT OF THE WELLBEING DOG PROGRAM</u>
Comment	
Parent / Carer Name	
Parent / Carer Signature	
Date	

Life of School Policy

I understand that I can approach Barwon Valley staff at any time to make changes to this form.