



Paws Pet Therapy Young People Wellness Visits

Welcome to our suite of 'Wellness' programming designed to bring the joy and therapeutic benefits of dogs into schools and other settings, enhancing the overall wellbeing of students and young people through meaningful interactions and tailored programs. At the heart of our initiatives is the belief that social and emotional learning is profoundly enriched when coupled with authentic experiences like interacting with dogs. This approach is not only embedded in pedagogical principles but also delivers powerful impacts across school communities and other settings, benefiting students, staff, and families alike.

What are these programs about?

Research demonstrates that simply being in the presence of a dog can significantly reduce stress and anxiety levels among students. This calming influence fosters a positive school environment where students are more engaged and active participants. Schools we have collaborated with have reported improved attendance rates, as students eagerly anticipate the opportunity to interact with our friendly dogs.

Beyond reducing stress, our programs foster communication skills by providing students with a shared interest and a non-judgmental companion. This enables them to connect more easily with peers and adults, enhancing social interactions that may otherwise be challenging. Moreover, dogs in schools can support literacy initiatives, as students often feel more comfortable reading aloud to a dog than to their teachers or peers.

Our initiatives also nurture empathetic qualities in students by involving them in the appropriate care of our wellbeing dogs whilst at school. Through these experiences, students learn valuable skills such as responsibility, the gentle handling of animals, appropriate behaviour around dogs, and effective communication, which are essential for personal and academic growth.

Furthermore, our programs are dedicated to supporting schools dealing with trauma, such as communities affected by natural disasters. We collaborate closely with educators and community partners to develop tailored interventions that promote resilience and manage anxiety effectively.

By integrating dogs into school environments, we aim to create inclusive and supportive communities where every student feels valued and empowered.

Who are the programs designed for?

- Our wellness programs are primarily tailored for children of primary school age or young adults in high school settings but may also extend to other facilities such as libraries or before and after school care. To be flexible to the needs of all young people we tailor programs specifically based on the goals and outcomes supplied by the facility.
- Referrals to the program mainly originate from teachers, support staff, healthcare professionals or facility staff engaged in a young person's education and wellbeing.

- The program is beneficial for children and young people who may be experiencing disability, mental health conditions, or changes in personal circumstances, including trauma.

Coordinated children's and young Persons programs

We have noticed that children's programs frequently share objectives, with no single program fully addressing all student or group needs. For instance, Wellbeing sessions may be integrated into broader initiatives like Mate@theGate or Paws'n'Tales. In such cases, PAWS will offer support and guidance to the school or facility on how to effectively integrate these elements to achieve more comprehensive goals or to fulfill specific requirements. Falling under the category of wellness visits are the Jab Dogs and HSC visits:

Jab Dogs

The Jab Dog program merges the foundational aspects of wellness visits with a focused mission to offer support to students undergoing vaccinations at school, particularly those grappling with needle phobias, anxiety, or needing emotional regulation and distraction for comfort.

Medical research underscores the benefits of canine companionship, highlighting their ability to reduce stress and anxiety through the release of oxytocin and endorphins, ultimately fostering a calming effect that can alleviate fear and enhance emotional wellbeing in challenging situations like medical procedures.

HSC visits

Our program offers a unique approach to supporting students preparing for the HSC by integrating dogs into their study environment. Designed to provide stress relief and promote healthy study habits, our initiative encourages students to take breaks, practice mindfulness, and learn the importance of pacing themselves. Interacting with our wellbeing dogs not only fosters a calming atmosphere but also encourages kindness, moderation of expectations, and the development of positive social interactions among students.

Students have the opportunity to engage in fun and interactive sessions that include chatting with fellow students, petting dogs for relaxation, and reflecting on their studies and personal wellbeing. This holistic approach aims to create a supportive and nurturing environment where students can recharge, build resilience, and maintain a balanced approach to their studies.

Financial details

You can enjoy the benefits of visits by a therapy dog team tailored for student's needs, where you only pay \$88 per visit, GST included, for the visits you schedule. A typical visit is between 1 to 1.5 hours in length to ensure the wellbeing of our dogs.

Visits are invoiced monthly. Please let us know if an alternative arrangement is required.

Paperwork

Our volunteer teams:

- Have completed the Paws Pet Therapy Course and successfully passed at a PAWS assessment and training day.
- Include PAWS dogs who have been vet approved for health and temperament.
- Have a current Police Check (3-year renewal).
- Have a current WWCC Check (5-year renewal).
- Have been double COVID vaccinated.
- Include dogs who are on a current health regime, are washed within 24 hours of their visit and have current vaccination to the highest standard for their state.
- Are covered by current Public Liability Insurance.
- Will display PAWS signage during visits to denote the presence of a dog.

On enquiry

Much of the success in the program comes from careful planning. On enquiry you will be asked to:

- Complete a Facility Application Form where you are invited to provide any information that will help us meet your client's learning needs. Please provide as much information as possible including your preferred days and times for visits.
- We will then endeavour to find a suitable team for your school or facility.

Prior to commencement, once we have matched a suitable team to your service we will:

- Confirm details of the visit including organising a suitable start date.
- Provide a Statement of Documentation for the volunteer team verifying currency of required paperwork.
- Provide a team photo, Visit Commencement Summary and the PAWS document, Visits to Children's Services for you to read.
- Provide a risk assessment for you to approve and sign.
- Provide our volunteer with specific details relating to your goals and requirements.
- A PAWS representative will give you a call to discuss visit protocols.

Before beginning the visits, we kindly request that you consider the following:

Please note all interactions are controlled by the volunteer handler. These visits are suited to small groups with interactions occurring on a one-to-one basis. The volunteer handler will provide participants with guidelines regarding interacting with their dog safely.

- It is crucial to plan specifics. Please designate a consistent contact person, such as the classroom teacher, librarian or other staff person, establish a set location, and formalise procedures for students or clients to understand expectations and behaviour guidelines.
- Establish ground rules with all participants, including discussions on how to interact with the dog, ensuring dog safety, and explaining the purpose of the therapy team's presence at the school. Our document, "Guidelines for PAWS Pet Therapy Visits to Children's Services" will assist you with this.

- Determine where the visits will occur, ensuring a school staff member or facility staff person supervises and maintains line-of-sight during interactions.
- Identify participants, outlining their goals and anticipated outcomes. Provide time to relay this information to the volunteer.
- Provide a contact person for volunteers to report to at the office or desk at your facility. Communicate sign in and any induction procedures to the volunteer.
- Coordinate visit timing considering assembly schedules, breaks, and other scheduled activities.
- Notify of any allergies, dog fears, or other relevant information volunteers should be aware of.
- Organise an efficient student/participant arrival process for session timeliness.
- Inform the school or greater community about the presence and purpose of the therapy dog team.

Upon commencement, we will:

- Arrange an initial visit by the volunteer (without their dog) to discuss induction, ongoing sign-in procedures, visit details, and student requirements as outlined above.

Ongoing

- Visits will continue at the agreed time, on your specified days.

We ask that you inform the PAWS office as soon as possible if you wish to cancel a visit on 0407 325 157.

Our Wellness Visits program is dedicated to enriching the lives of students and young people through the therapeutic presence of dogs in schools and various other settings. By fostering meaningful interactions and tailored programs, we aim to enhance social and emotional learning while supporting overall wellbeing. Our initiative not only aligns with pedagogical principles but also delivers significant positive impacts across school communities and beyond, benefiting students, staff, and families alike.