



Dogs at School Policy

Nar Nar Goon Primary School

PURPOSE

Nar Nar Goon Primary School is committed to the responsible implementation of a structured program through which a school wellbeing dog will be used to assist the school community in experiencing connectedness, developing links to learning throughout the school community, and helping to develop students who are socially adept, respectful, just, and appreciative of diversity.

This policy has been created to explain to our school community the rules and procedures we have in place in relation to dogs attending our school grounds. This includes the procedures in place for our Dogs Connect program to support student engagement and mental health. Nar Nar Goon Primary School's Dogs at School policy has been developed in conjunction with the Animals - Wellbeing and Engagement Policy.

PRACTICES

This vision is enacted through the following procedures/systems:

- Reflection on current teaching and learning practices and student data.
- A thoroughly considered and gradually implemented program involving the school dog interacting with staff and students on many levels.
- Documentation and review of current risk assessment agreed practice, and implementation schedule.
- Alignment of Agreed Practice with current pedagogy and student/staff needs.
- Reflection and evaluation to guide future action/implementation to ensure suitability of all practices.
- Clearly signed notification that dogs are not allowed on school grounds, unless previously authorised.

POLICY

Nar Nar Goon Primary 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.

Nar Nar Goon Primary School has a wellbeing dog who supports our students' mental health and engagement. Our wellbeing dog is suitably trained and integrated into the school community through Dogs Connect, delivered as part of the Department's Mental Health initiative.

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.

Where possible, Nar Nar Goon Primary School will only engage with low-allergen wellbeing dogs. Nar Nar Goon Primary 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.
- Have a duty to develop and model practices where teaching and learning can be linked to the love, care, and connection of our school dog
- Draw on the skills and knowledge of the school, Dogs Connect staff, and the wider community and enter into practices that are mutually beneficial to all community members.
- Implement effective decision-making practices in collaboration with School Executive, Dogs Connect staff, school staff and where appropriate the wider community.
- 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/carers and ensure appropriate steps are implemented to minimise health risks.
- The wellbeing dog will be appropriately identified while on school grounds, wearing a **Dogs Connect** bandana, whilst working within the school environment.
- No student or staff member will be mandated 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/carers at the beginning of the year in the school newsletter, and on student enrolment. In these communications, parent/carers 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
- Only teachers who have completed the Dogs Connect training will be permitted to utilise the wellbeing dog
- Schools must provide guidance to students on how to interact appropriately with wellbeing and engagement animals, including when they are eating, sleeping and toileting

PET DOGS

Nar Nar Goon Primary School is not a public place, and our principal has the authority to permit or decline entry to school grounds and impose conditions of entry.

Whilst Nar Nar Goon Primary School understands that many families in our school community keep dogs as pets, to ensure that our school remains a safe and inclusive place for everyone, ***pet dogs are not permitted on school grounds unless previously arranged with school leadership.***

Our school community is diverse and may include people that are allergic or uncomfortable around dogs. We are also conscious of the health hazards that may be posed by dogs. We ask that families please leave their pet dogs at home or safely tether them outside school grounds when attending our school or school events.

STRAY DOGS

Unaccompanied or stray dogs sighted at our school should be reported immediately to administration at the school office. School staff will contact municipal authorities and/or Victoria Police for assistance in managing and removing a stray dog from school grounds, and ensure staff and students remain safe at school.

DUTY OF CARE

Nar Nar Goon Primary School recognise their obligations to staff and student welfare in relation to our wellbeing dog. The school will consider the needs of staff members and students in relation to the wellbeing dog, and will consult with staff and the parent community to ensure there are no safety concerns. The school will ensure that the wellbeing dog is properly restrained around staff and students to avoid injuries.

Liability in the event of attack or injury: Under section 29 of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994*, the person 'in apparent control' of the dog at the time that a dog attacks or bites any person (or even if the dog 'rushes at or chases any person') is guilty of an offence, **whether or not they are the owner of the dog.** Various penalties can be imposed under the section, and a court may require the payment of compensation if a person is found guilty. Any staff members responsible for the supervision of a dog on school premises should be made aware of these obligations and the school should ensure they feel comfortable with this responsibility and managing the dog.

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.

A **pet dog** relates to any dog that is privately owned in the community for companionate reasons, rather than as a support function that requires specific skills or training.

A **stray dog** is any dog that is not accompanied by their owner.

COMMUNICATION

- This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:
- Available publicly on our school's website (or insert other online parent/carer/student communication method)
- Included in staff induction processes and staff training
- Hard copy available from school administration upon request

RELATED POLICIES

- Refer to Nar Nar Goon *Duty of Care* and *Visitors* policies.

FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

- <https://dogsconnect.net.au/>
- Our school is accredited by Dogs Connect, following their training and policy guidelines
- [Animals - Engagement and Wellbeing](#)

This policy should be read in conjunction with the following:

- Risk Assessment (see appendix 1)

POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	August 2026
Consultation	Core Group
Approved by	Principal – Jacqueline Cutler
Next scheduled review date	August 2029

APPENDIX 1: NAR NAR GOON RISK ASSESSMENT



DOGS CONNECT
RESTORING BALANCE

Dogs on site at Nar Nar Goon Primary School Risk Assessment 2026-27

Event	A dog being at school daily in an ongoing capacity	Date(s)(year)	Document completed by

Risk Description/ Hazard	Outcome	Current Control Measures	Risk Rating			Planned Control Measures
Person being injured while walking the school dog by being pulled on via the leash	Person falls or is pulled by the arm causing strain or damage to skin from the leash	Teaching people the correct method of holding the leash and the dog while walking the dog on leash'	Insignificant <u>Minor</u> Moderate Major Severe	Rare Unlikely <u>Possible</u> Likely Almost certain	Low <u>Medium</u> High Extreme	<i>School dogs are called to return to areas of restriction such as the classroom or office. Person to be assessed for injury and first aid to be administered where needed.</i>

<i>School dog can knock people over or scratch people when playing, responding to excitement or startling from person/s</i>	Person is injured as a result of being knocked into furniture or knocked over. Person is scratched through clothing or directly to skin and requires first aid	People can be educated about control measures for level of excitement and elements of surprise for dogs when working with or around the dog.	Insignificant Minor Moderate Major Severe	Rare Unlikely Possible Likely Almost certain	Low Medium High Extreme	<i>School dog is called to return to an area of restriction such as the classroom or office. Person to be assessed for injury and first aid to be administered where needed.</i>
<i>School dogs can scratch a person with teeth when playing tug of war or playing a game with a toy that can be retrieved from hand, air, or ground level.</i>	Person is damaged to the skin where teeth make contact and require first aid.	People will be educated about appropriate ways to engage the dog in play. Using set commands and common sense to do this.	Insignificant Minor Moderate Major Severe	Rare Unlikely Possible Likely Almost certain	Low Medium High Extreme	<i>Person to be assessed for injury and first aid to be administered where needed.</i>
<i>School dogs can become aggravated by people through physically threatening behavior, being cornered or physically mistreated.</i>	Dogs can snarl, bark, or snap/bite at the person requiring possible first aid.	People will be educated about giving the dog appropriate space and treating the dog with care and respect at all times.	Insignificant Minor Moderate Major Severe	Rare Unlikely Possible Likely Almost certain	Low Medium High Extreme	<i>School dogs are called to return to areas of restriction such as the classroom or office. Person to be assessed for injury and first aid to be administered where needed.</i>

<i>School dogs can be injured by physical mistreatment from a person.</i>	Dog require medical treatment, extra training or time away from the workplace to recover	People will be educated about the wellbeing needs of animals.	Insignificant Minor <u>Moderate</u> Major Severe	Rare Unlikely <u>Possible</u> Likely Almost certain	Low <u>Medium</u> High Extreme	<i>School dogs are called to return to areas of restriction such as the classroom or office. Dog to be assessed for injury and first aid to be administered where needed.</i>
<i>Person is frightened by school dog rushing toward him/her in excitement, anticipation of playing, or defense of food when feeding.</i>	Person requires space and time to recover from fright or mild shock.	People will be educated about giving dog appropriate space when feeding, and dog to be tethered when in open areas.	<u>Insignificant</u> Minor Moderate Major Severe	Rare Unlikely Possible <u>Likely</u> Almost certain	Low <u>Medium</u> High Extreme	<i>Person to be assessed for injury and first aid to be administered where needed.</i>
<i>School dog injured by sharp objects or ill from ingesting chemicals in the garden area</i>	Dog is wounded or becomes unwell and shows signs such as vomiting or diarrhea.	Vegetable garden area to be kept clear of sharp objects or hazardous materials such as fertilizers.	Insignificant <u>Minor</u> Moderate Major Severe	Rare Unlikely <u>Possible</u> Likely Almost certain	Low <u>Medium</u> High Extreme	<i>School dog to be assessed for injury and to see vet if deemed necessary. If not necessary, dog should be stationed to relax and rest in a quiet area.</i>
<i>School dog accesses public roads and moves throughout traffic.</i>	Dog is frightened or injured.	All gates remain locked during school time, and school dog is kept in supervised areas outside of these times. Holes in fence to be repaired.	Insignificant Minor <u>Moderate</u> Major Severe	Rare Unlikely <u>Possible</u> Likely Almost certain	Low <u>Medium</u> High Extreme	<i>School dog to be assessed for injury and to see vet if deemed necessary. If not necessary, dog should be stationed to relax and rest in a quiet area.</i>

<i>Wellbeing dog may pull away, jump up, run off, be startled, react aggressively, obstruct walkways or trip staff or students</i>	Dog is frightened or injured.	Staff and students briefed before the dog enters the school. Students are supervised.	Insignificant <u>Minor</u> Moderate Major Severe	Rare Unlikely <u>Possible</u> Likely Almost certain	Low <u>Medium</u> High Extreme	<i>School dog approached from front on if engaging with the dog.</i> <i>School dog to sit or stand calmly if a new student first approaches the dog.</i> <i>Students to be given permission to walk the dog or engage with the dog before they do so.</i>
<i>Students may provoke school dog to react.</i>	Dog is frightened or injured resulting in students being harmed.	Dogs to be checked regularly by their carers to ensure they are in good health and their needs being met with balance. Staff and students instructed how to calmly approach the dog. Not from behind, or with sudden movements or escalating behaviour.	Insignificant <u>Minor</u> Moderate Major Severe	Rare Unlikely <u>Possible</u> Likely Almost certain	Low <u>Medium</u> High Extreme	<i>Students to be given permission to walk the dog or engage with the dog by adult before they do so.</i>

<i>Startled school dog reacts in an unpredictable or sudden manner</i>	Dog is frightened or injured resulting in students being harmed.	Dog response plan communicated to all staff and students.	Insignificant Minor <u>Moderate</u> Major Severe	Rare Unlikely <u>Possible</u> Likely Almost certain	Low <u>Medium</u> High Extreme	<i>School dog sleeping or resting bed located away from traffic areas. Students and staff do not intentionally disturb the dog while resting or sleeping.</i> <i>If the dog chooses to sleep or rest in the classroom or student activity area, students are not to deliberately wake or disturb the dog, engage in loud activities or make sudden movements that may startle the dog.</i>
<i>Students could get sick from contact with school dog.</i> <i>Hygiene issues -dirty hands, transfer of contaminants. licking.</i>		General personal hygiene procedures in place eg handwashing.	Insignificant <u>Minor</u> Moderate Major Severe	Rare <u>Unlikely</u> Possible Likely Almost certain	<u>Low</u> Medium High Extreme	<i>Handwashing after contact with the dog.</i> <i>Designated areas for cleaning of dog waste equipment.</i> <i>Dog is regularly groomed</i>
<i>School dog could become sick.</i>		Dog has annual veterinary appointment including vaccinations.	<u>Insignificant</u> Minor Moderate Major Severe	<u>Rare</u> Unlikely Possible Likely Almost certain	<u>Low</u> Medium High Extreme	<i>Health of the dog is monitored and if sick or tired does not attend school.</i> <i>Dog is not to be fed by anyone other than the carer or handler.</i> <i>Fresh water is always available for the school dog</i>

<i>Outside dog or other animal enters the school and attacks the school dog.</i> <i>New visitors do not follow rules and protocols associated with engaging with and care of the school dog.</i>			Insignificant Minor <u>Moderate</u> Major Severe	Rare Unlikely <u>Possible</u> Likely Almost certain	Low <u>Medium</u> High Extreme	<i>School community is made aware of the dog in school via social media and newsletters.</i> <i>School gates shut at all times.</i> <i>Signs on gates informing visitors: Wellbeing dog onsite. No other dogs allowed unless authorised.</i>
<i>School dog hygiene/ contaminated area. Dog urinates or defecates.</i>		Solid bowel movements picked up. Accidents cleaned up immediately.	Insignificant <u>Minor</u> Moderate Major Severe	Rare <u>Unlikely</u> Possible Likely Almost certain	<u>Low</u> Medium High Extreme	<i>School dog is trained to urinate and defecate in a specific area away from students. Area monitored and cleaned.</i> <i>Clean up materials available for clean up.</i> <i>Responsible person to take the dog for regular toilet breaks.</i>
<i>Record keeping and insurance</i>			Insignificant Minor Moderate Major Severe	Rare Unlikely Possible Likely Almost certain	Low Medium High Extreme	<i>Attendance register maintained.</i> <i>Dog medicine records maintained and kept.</i> <i>Public Liability Insurance accommodates use of the school dog in school environment.</i>