



## Barking Mad Company Animal Welfare Policy

Our Animal Welfare Policy demonstrates our strong commitment to the safety and wellbeing of animals working at our practice and outlines how we keep these animals safe from harm.

### Our commitment to animal welfare and wellbeing

Barking Mad Company is committed to upholding the highest standards of animal welfare in accordance with the Australian Code of Conduct for the Animal-Assisted Services Sector and the Five Freedoms of Animal Welfare. Our policy outlines our approach to ensuring the physical and psychological well-being of animals involved in providing our therapy services.

### Core principles

- Respect and care for all animals involved in our therapy services.
- Promotion of positive welfare outcomes by ensuring animals' physical, psychological, and social needs are met. We make the care and wellbeing of our animals a normal part of our everyday conversations and engagement with staff and clients.
- Ensuring staff are appropriately trained in animal handling, behaviour, and welfare standards.

### The Five Freedoms

These freedoms were developed as an evidence-based framework to capture the welfare needs of animals and guide our procedures and decision making at our practice.

#### Freedom from hunger and thirst

- Our animals are provided a nutritious and species-appropriate diet and receive access to fresh water.
- Feeding schedules align with the needs of our animals.

#### Freedom from discomfort

- Our animals are provided appropriate shelter, comfortable resting areas, and environments suited to their species whilst working with us.
- We ensure that animals have regular rest and toilet breaks during their working hours and monitor their behaviour for signs of fatigue.
- Working days and times are determined with the optimal enjoyment and welfare of our animals.
- Enclosures, equipment, and transport are maintained to ensure cleanliness, comfort, and safety.

#### Freedom from pain, injury, or disease

- Animals receive prompt veterinary care if signs of illness or injury are identified.
- Routine health checks, vaccinations, and preventative treatments are conducted as recommended by a qualified veterinarian.



#### **Freedom to express normal behaviour**

- Animals will be provided with sufficient space, enrichment activities, and social opportunities to encourage natural behaviours.
- Therapy sessions will be designed to prevent stress and fatigue by recognizing individual animal preferences and limits.

#### **Freedom from fear and distress**

- Handling techniques prioritise positive reinforcement and minimize stress or fear.
- Staff are trained in recognising signs of anxiety, discomfort, or distress in animals.

### Engaging Animals in Therapy Services

Our work with animals in therapy is guided by the Australian Code of Conduct for the Animal-Assisted Services Sector.

#### **Animal selection and training**

- Animals chosen for therapy services undergo assessments for temperament, suitability, and health.
- Our training emphasises positive reinforcement, ensuring animals are comfortable and cooperative during therapy sessions.

#### **Staff training**

- Staff and volunteers complete suitable and adequate training in animal welfare, behaviour, and handling techniques.
- Ongoing professional development is provided to maintain best practices in animal-assisted therapy.
- Our staff engage only in direct therapy services with their own therapy animals, ensuring trust and consistency for our animals.

#### **Monitoring and review**

- All incidents, injuries, or welfare concerns are documented and reviewed to ensure continuous improvement.

#### **Ethical Considerations**

- Animal welfare takes precedence over operational demands at our practice. This means on occasion animals are not available to engage in therapy work if they are observed to be unwell or fatigued.
- Therapy animals will be retired when they can no longer engage in therapy comfortably and safely.

### Review

Barking Mad Company will review all animal welfare practices and policies at least every two years. We also review relevant practices and policies in response to incidents or any 'near miss'. Findings from reviews will inform our approach to continuous improvement of our animal welfare practices.