

About Paw Pals

At Paw Pals, a heart-driven initiative under MacKillop Family Services, our mission is to reduce barriers to learning and engagement in education for children and young people. We passionately embrace the transformative power of animal assisted education (AAE), specifically employing therapy dogs, as a catalyst for positive change.

Our commitment is grounded in the unwavering belief that every child and young person, regardless of their challenges, possesses the innate ability to thrive at school. We operate on the principle of unconditional positive regard, recognising the unique strengths and potential within each individual.



For the Adults

We are proudly not-for-profit and provide a range of other services to directly support our core Paw Pals work. Partner with us and support children and young people through:

- **Training and Certification:** Elevate your practice with our specialised courses and training in animal-assisted education.
- **Consultancy:** Are you thinking about an animal assisted education program? Not sure where to start? Need some support? We can help.
- **Corporate Engagement:** Demonstrate your corporate social responsibility: Host a fundraiser for Paw Pals, donate to our annual Paw Pals appeal, join our match-giving day or host a corporate meet-and-greet with us.

Why Choose Paw Pals?

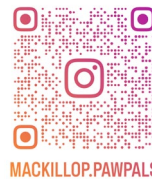
Join us in our mission where every child's success story begins with a gentle paw of a furry friend – support, donate, or partner with us.

- **Proven Approach:** Our Paw Pals program has been independently evaluated and demonstrates positive outcomes.
- **Trusted:** Consistent high satisfaction rates and transformative outcomes.
- **Expertise:** Our team are multidisciplinary experts trained in animal assisted education in schools.
- **Best Practice:** We have robust policies and practices to ensure wellbeing of animals and young people are our top priority.
- **For-Purpose Commitment:** We are driven by our core mission of empowering young people. All funds contribute directly to our vital work with young people.

Contact us for more information

@ education.metro@mackillop.org.au

www mackillop.org.au/paw-pals



Check out our Paw Pals in action on their Instagram!



MacKillop Family Services acknowledges the Traditional Custodians and their Elders in each of the communities where we work.




MacKillop celebrates and draws strength from diversity and respects the dignity of all people. We value an inclusive culture where lesbian, gay, bisexual, trans, queer, gender diverse, intersex and asexual people (LGBTIQA+) have the right to be safe.



mackillop.org.au



Paw Pals
Program



Animal Assisted Education
Unlocking the Power of Paws
for Learning and Wellbeing

Unlocking the Power of Paws for Learning and Wellbeing

Education isn't one-size-fits-all, especially for our children and young people grappling with mental health issues, emotional challenges, and social obstacles. The impacts of these without intervention can be profound and long-term. Here's where Paw Pals steps in – a nationally leading program driven by our mission to redefine learning harnessing the power of animal companions.

Paw Pals is a journey towards emotional and social wellbeing, guided by MacKillop's expert multidisciplinary team. Our approach is grounded in our comprehensive understanding of trauma, grief, loss, developmental psychology, neuroscience and best practices in education and student wellbeing. The heart of this is our Paw Pals – animals specially trained to assist in creating positive and nurturing educational experiences.

Collaboration and customisation are key. We work closely with you to design structured interventions specifically for individual needs. As a proud for-purpose organisation, we're committed to making a real difference in the lives of children and young people. By walking this path together, we not only improve educational engagement but also contribute to the overall wellbeing of our students and their animal companions.

Why Paw Pals

Paw Pals participants, and independent evaluations have demonstrated the following:

Outcomes and Benefits:

- **Improved Emotional Awareness:** Deeper understanding of empathy, compassion and effective communication.
- **Enhanced Engagement:** Re-ignited passion for learning.
- **Better Self-Regulation:** Enhanced vital emotional and behaviour management skills and techniques.
- **Increased Confidence:** In a range of social, emotional and learning domains.
- **Positive Learning Experiences:** Feeling acknowledged and celebrated.



What do we Offer:

For young people (Year 3 to Year 8) we have two main services:

- **School-Based Small Groups:** (Up to 8 students) sessions held in your school. We come to you.
- **1:1 Student Support:** Individualised support in diverse learning environments. We can visit you at schools, residential care homes, foster care placements and our MacKillop spaces.

What do the Paw Pals do:

Our facilitators and Paw Pals run individualised sessions to develop confidence, knowledge, skills, and positive learning experiences. Each session is tailored with activities to support the needs of the participants.

Example Session Plans:

Safety Plans

We create visual cards of emotional management skills, practices and techniques with our Paw Pal to build emotional management practice and develop self-regulation.



Emotional Literacy

In this activity, students roll a dice with their Paw Pal to choose a feeling to explore together. Animals express a range of emotions through body language and behaviour. Learning to recognise these cues fosters empathy and emotional attunement.



Literacy and Numeracy Activities

Storytelling sessions allow students to create and share stories inspired by the therapy dogs. This activity enhances creative writing and encourages students to express themselves in a positive and imaginative way.



Friendship Skills

Our friendship skills curriculum is designed to teach patience, trust, teamwork and cooperation.

