

SLHD Policy Directive

Pets at Work	
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Pets at Work

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Pets at Work Policy

1. Introduction

Sydney Local Health District is committed to ensuring safe, welcoming and enjoyable work environments for all staff. SLHD is also committed to the health and wellbeing of staff.

There is an increasing recognition that interaction with pets has benefits for both pet owners and non-pet owners alike. There is evidence that a pet-friendly workplace may help to improve employee satisfaction, increase motivation and improve performance.

Management of pets in the workplace requires a sensible and standardised approach. This policy prescribes principals and procedures guiding the management of pets in the workplace and acknowledges risks associated with having pets in the workplace.

Key documents relating to pets in the workplace include:

- [Animal Visits and Interventions in Public and Private Health Services in NSW](#)
- [Infection Prevention and Control in Healthcare Settings \(PD 2023 025\)](#)
- [CEC Infection Prevention and Control Practice Handbook \(2020\)](#)
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 no. 10
- Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011
- Companion Animals Act 1998
- Companion Animals Regulation 2008

This policy covers employees bringing personal pets to their workplace. This policy does not include registered assistance animals, patient/client animal visits or other animal visitation programs such as Delta Dogs.

2. The Aims of this PCP

- To outline considerations for pets in the workplace
- To describe the process for applying to bring your pet to work
- To outline the decision making and approval process involved in pets attending the workplace
- To describe responsibilities for employees bringing pets to work
- To describe responsibilities for managers of employees bringing pets to work
- To provide a standardised approach to pets at work

3. Risk Statement

SLHD Enterprise Risk Management System (ERMS) Risk # 34: Work Health and Safety Strategies not effective:

- Systems for maintaining workplace safety by prevention or minimisation of safety risks including (but not limited to) - manual handling - aggression - bullying and harassment - security - slip trips and fall - motor accident - Psychosocial hazards - wellbeing strategies must be consistently implemented and adequately promoted and resourced to reduce incidents and injuries involving workers, visitors and patients and to ensure compliance with WHS legislation and NSW Health policies and guidelines

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4. Scope

- This policy applies to all staff applying to bring their pet to work
- This policy applies to all managers who manage staff bringing their pets to work

5. Implementation

- This PCP will be available on the SLHD intranet and accessible to all staff
- This PCP will be distributed via memorandum
- Resources supporting the Pets at Work policy will be available on the Workforce Services intranet site
- All applications (despite outcome) will be uploaded on to TRIM in relevant personnel files
- The Pets at Work program will be reviewed and audited regularly
- Governance will be provided through Workforce Services

6. Service Measures

- All incidents will be entered into the incident management system
- All incidents will be reviewed and reported to the executive unit of the facility that the pet was visiting
- Local workforce departments will maintain current records of approvals
- Department managers will retain records of approvals and associated documentation for the process

7. Procedures for Pets at Work

7.1 Important considerations

Pet owners must seriously consider if being in the workplace is in the best interest of the pet, other staff and the workplace generally. The following needs to be considered:

- Pets should not interfere with the comfort of other staff – this includes if staff have allergies, fear, distress or cultural reasons to not be comfortable around pets in the workplace
- Pets should not reduce productivity for both the owner and other staff in the department
- Having pets in the workplace is a privilege and is not automatically approved on application and owners have responsibilities which they must respect
- Owners are legally and financially responsible for any injury or damage caused by their pet, including destruction of personal property of others
- Bringing pets to the workplace is not a daily occurrence and is not an appropriate way to circumvent issues such as separation anxiety
- Bringing pets to work can only be offered where owners take their responsibilities seriously, where pets are eligible and suitable for the workplace and where the entire team is comfortable with having pets in the workplace.

7.2 Suitable animals

Not all pets are suitable for attending the workplace. Any pets should meet the following criteria:

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- Confident, gentle and friendly in nature
- Comfortable in the presence of strangers
- Able to follow basic commands (e.g. stay)
- Able to cope with high stimulus environments (bright lights, noisy environments, smooth flooring, equipment)
- Able to be contained (either by leash or in carrier)
- Not be a young animal (i.e. puppy, kitten). Minimum age is over 12 months.
- Have stable, consistent behaviours
- Not have challenging behaviours such as barking, digging, object obsession
- Able to toilet in designated areas (outside, litter boxes)
- Be healthy and well (including skin health)
- Be clean and not malodorous
- Be up to date with core vaccinations (if relevant) and on routine prophylaxis for parasites

7.3 Unsuitable animals

Some pets need to be excluded from attending the workplace. These pets include:

- Restricted canine breeds including dogs declared dangerous by an authorised officer of a council (as per the Animals Act 1998)
- Pets which require licences to own / keep
- Uncontainable pets
- Unwell or immobile pets
- Consistently noisy pets
- Pets with separation anxiety
- Pets who are inconsistent in behaviour
- Pets on heat
- Pets not owned by the employee

7.4 Suitable locations for Pets at Work

Due to the nature of healthcare, not every environment is suitable for pets at work. This policy covers employees bringing personal pets to their workplace. This policy does not cover registered assistance animals, patient/client animal visits or other formal animal visitation programs such as Delta Dogs.

Staff pets are not allowed in the following areas:

- Areas where clinical services are provided (wards, clinics, outpatient departments)
- Areas where visitors, members of the public, patients/clients and families visit, wait or gather (waiting rooms, discharge lounges)
- Food service areas, kitchens, lunchrooms
- Areas with high patient/client, visitor, general public foot traffic (such as foyers in mixed clinical and administrative buildings)
- Research facilities including laboratories
- In fleet vehicles

Staff requesting to have their pets at work should:

- Work in an administrative/non-clinical area

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- Not have to walk through clinical areas or areas with high numbers of patients/clients/visitors with their pet
- Have ready and easy access to enter and exit the building (including being able to use stairwells where relevant)
- Have ready access to green space (for canines) and designated areas for toileting
- Have ready access to appropriate hand hygiene facilities (handwashing or alcohol-based hand rub (ABHR)) and ensure that hand hygiene is conducted pre/post-interaction or after toileting animals
- Should not utilise fleet vehicles with their pets.

7.5 Frequency for pets to attend the workplace

Approved pets are not permitted more than one day per week. Where multiple pets are approved in a workplace; a roster system will need to be developed and approved to ensure that one pet per workplace per day is adhered to.

8. Approval

All pets must be approved to be in the workplace, prior to their arrival. Approval is on a case-by-case basis and approval can be changed at any time.

8.1 Process

8.1.1 Pet Owners

Pet owners will be responsible for completing the Pets at Work Agreement (Appendix 1) and Risk Assessment (Appendix 2) and submitting to their manager. Pet owners should read this policy thoroughly and ensure that they have considered the impact of their pet in the workplace.

8.1.2 Managers

Managers are responsible for approving pets to be in the workplace. Managers will need to consider the following when approving or declining the request:

- Reviewing the Pets at Work Agreement, Risk Assessment and relevant attachments from the staff member
- Ensuring that the pet owner has read and understood this policy
- Confirming the date and time that the team member wishes to bring their pet to work
- Ensuring that only one pet will be in the building at a time
- Ensuring that this will not occur in a publicly accessible area except where the building is closed to the public or where an exception applies
- Confirming that the owner will be in the office for the day and understands that supervision of the pet is their responsibility during the day
- Checking that bringing a pet to work does not interfere with their work responsibilities or the general running of services
- Check that fleet vehicles will not be utilised with the pet
- Checking that the owner is aware that if there is an issue with their pet, they will be required to take the pet home or have the pet picked up (this needs to be in negotiation with what will be allocated with the manager)

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- Checking if other team members are comfortable with a pet being in the office. This includes visiting staff (such as environmental services). This needs to be undertaken sensitively, yet methodically, as other team members may disclose personal health information (such as allergies) or fears / cultural considerations. Managers should not disclose personal health information or other sensitive information about staff to other staff.
- Confirming that team issues will not be caused by a pet being in the workplace
- Confirming what space will be necessary to accommodate a pet, generally this should be confined to the owner's workspace (e.g. litterboxes, crate, food bowl, etc.) and if this may affect others
- Ensuring section 7 of this policy is met with the application

Once the above has been considered, the manager will need to document the outcome on the agreement. The agreement and risk assessment will then need to be sent to the facility executive unit.

Each pet will require a trial in the workplace prior to approval of the agreement. Three separate trial periods are required. Managers are responsible for overseeing the trials and identifying if the pet is suitable for the workplace. Please note, trials are not required for not approved agreements.

If the agreement is not approved, managers will need to document reasons for non-approval. Please ensure that any comments are de-identified, e.g. if the reason for non-approval is other staff discomfort.

The agreement may be ceased at any time. Circumstances may change, including additional staff requesting to bring their pets to the workplace.

If the agreement is approved by the Manager and the Executive Unit to proceed to trial, the final outcome will be sent to the Executive Unit following the trial for final approval.

Managers should communicate the outcome of the agreement with the staff member following final outcome from Executive Unit. A copy of the agreement does not need to be provided to the employee, especially in circumstances where it may cause conflict between team members.

All agreements, despite outcome should be sent to Workforce Services to file in the employee's personnel file on TRIM. Risk assessments should also be sent.

Managers are responsible for communicating with the department if pets will be attending the workplace.

8.1.3 *Executive Units*

All Pets at Work applications (including agreements and risk assessments) require executive unit approval / acknowledgement. Approval will need to be provided:

- To proceed to a trial of the pet attending the workplace
- To commence the regular attendance of the pet in the workplace following the trial

If the agreement is not approved, the Executive Unit should acknowledge the agreement, as per the form.

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9. Grievance Process and Issues Management

9.1 Application Outcome

If a staff member has a concern about the outcome of their application, they should raise this with their manager in written form. Please note, confidentiality regarding other staff in the department will be maintained.

9.2 Approved Pets at Work

Any incidents or near misses should be reported through existing channels – ims+, following the reported incident. Normal incident management processes apply.

Complaints about approved pets at work should be reported and investigated in a timely manner.

10. Consultation

11. References

- [Animal Visits and Interventions in Public and Private Health Services in NSW](#)
- [Infection Prevention and Control in Healthcare Settings \(PD 2023 025\)](#)
- [CEC Infection Prevention and Control Practice Handbook \(2020\)](#)
- Work Health and Safety Act 2011 no. 10
- Work Health and Safety Regulation 2011
- Companion Animals Act 1998
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12. National Safety and Quality Standard/s, 2nd ed



Clinical Governance Standard

13. Appendices

13.1 Pets at Work Agreement

13.2 Risk Assessment Tool

Pets at Work Agreement

Details	
Name of Owner:	
Name of Pet	
Species:	Dog / Cat / Other:
Sex:	Male / Female
Size:	Small <10kg Medium <26k Large <45kg Giant >45kg
Date of Birth	
Location	
Proposed day for attendance	

Pet Suitability	
Is your pet suitable for the workplace (e.g. energy, behaviour, etc)?	Yes / No
Is your pet housetrained (or trained to use pads, litterboxes or similar)?	Yes / No
Is your pet free of any communicable infections, illnesses or parasites?	Yes / No
Is your pet kept up to date on appropriate parasite prevention medication?	Yes / No
Is your pet comfortable interacting with other people?	Yes / No
Has your pet shown signs of food aggression or guarding behaviour?	Yes / No
Has your pet ever bitten anyone?	Yes / No
Is your pet over the age of 1?	Yes / No
Do you own your pet?	Yes / No
Can your pet be contained safely?	Yes / No
Location Suitability	
Will the pet be kept in a shared workspace?	Yes / No
Do you work in a clinical environment?	Yes / No
Do visitors, patients or clients gather or wait in the workspace?	Yes / No
Do you have a way to get to your workspace that does not include areas where there are patients/clients or visitors?	Yes / No
Is there an easily accessible toileting location?	Yes / No

Owner Acknowledgement

I understand that I am fully responsible for:

- My pet's safety, wellbeing and care (including supervision and cleaning)
- Ensuring that it does not adversely impact others in the workplace or upon my work responsibilities
- Any legal, financial or other costs arising from damage or injury caused by my pet
- Ensuring that my pet does not cause others to become uncomfortable

By signing this document, I:

- Understand that having pets in the workplace is a privilege and is subject to approval. Approval can be removed at any time.
- Have read and agree to comply with the *Pets at Work Policy*
- Confirm that my pet is suitable to the workplace
- Agree that while my pet is in the workplace, it must continue to meet the suitability and eligibility requirements above (e.g. be up to date on parasite prevention, etc.)
- Agree to indemnify Sydney Local Health District to the extent permitted under law for any costs or actions relating to having my pet in the workplace

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- Understand that if I change locations or positions, that this agreement is void
- Understand that a trial is required prior to approval
- Understand that an annual agreement is required

Employee Name and Position: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

Manager Acknowledgement

I have reviewed this agreement and undertaken due diligence in decision making.

<p>Not approved [] Comment: _____</p>
<p>Proceed to trial [] – 3 x trials are required. Dates of trials: _____</p> <p>Comment: _____</p>

Manager Name and Position: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

Executive Name and Position: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

<p>Outcome following trial: Approved [] Comment: _____</p> <p>Not approved [] Comment: _____</p>

Manager Name and Position: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

Executive Name and Position: _____ Signature: _____

Date: _____

Manager Checklist:

- Employee aware of final outcome (Date: _____ / How: _____)
- Completed copy sent to Workforce Services for personnel file (Date: _____)
- Risk Assessment completed and sent to Workforce Services (Date: _____)
- Other staff in department communicated with (Date: _____ / How: _____)

Compliance with this Policy is Mandatory

