

Guide Dogs.

Guide Dogs Victoria Dog Welfare and Ethics Advisory Committee Charter

Effective Date April 2024

1. Purpose

The primary objective of the Guide Dogs Victoria (GDV) Dog Welfare and Ethics Advisory Committee is to provide expert advice and strategic guidance to support the optimal welfare of all dogs in the care of Guide Dogs Victoria in accordance with applicable legislation and GDV policy.

The committee will provide comment on and participate in the development and revision of GDV policies, procedures and ways of working to prioritise exceptional dog welfare.

2. Responsibilities

The committee's responsibilities include, but are not limited to:

- Reviewing and advising on ethical considerations related to dog use.
- Reviewing and advising on animal welfare considerations related to care, health, training, breeding, and dog use.
- Reviewing and advising on GDVs dog care housing infrastructure and management practices.
- Advising of any emerging changes to legislation, issues or challenges relating to dog welfare and use.
- Participating in International Guide Dog Federation feedback from time to time
- Developing and maintaining a GDV Animal Welfare Policy.

The committee will consider the full life cycle of dogs under our care and influence. This includes;

- Breeding

- Rearing
- Training
- Participating in publicity events and activities.
- Canine career assessment
- Matching with handlers
- Working
- Retirement

The Committee will advise on the development of, then actively monitor and review, key metrics and Key Performance Indicators (KPIs) that pertain to dog care and welfare. The metrics will be reviewed for effectiveness and revised if required on an annual basis.

Inspection, at least annually, of the GDV dog care facilities and training activities to assure itself that dog care and welfare assurance practices are being upheld in accordance with applicable internal and external policies and legislation.

Reviewing case studies of past decisions that have ethical considerations with the purpose of feedback supporting and informing future decision making.

Review and advise on any dog-focused research proposals.

(Note: this committee will not function as an Animal Ethics Committee as described in *Australian code for the care and use of animals for scientific purposes*. Therefore, some research activities may require external ethics approval)

Engage with external stakeholders (locally and internationally) as required to seek input, advice or understanding.

3. Membership of the Committee

The committee will consist of the following members:

- An External Veterinarian: Responsible for providing expert veterinary advice and guidance.

- An External Professional with expertise in animal welfare: To ensure current animal welfare principles are understood, upheld, and shared.
- An External Professional with animal behaviour expertise: Responsible for providing expert behaviour advice and guidance.
- A Guide Dog Handler: To provide insights from the perspective of those working directly with guide dogs.
- A Volunteer Guide Dog Puppy raiser or a volunteer who works with the dogs on the Kew Campus.
- General Manager of Dog and Vision Services.
- Manager of Dog Client Services.

Other Staff and external experts may be invited to present to the committee from time to time.

All members will be appointed by the GM of Dog and Vision Services in consultation with the CEO.

The chair will be appointed by the committee for a two-year term.

4. Advising

Recommendations made by the committee will be based on consensus among members and may require ratification by the GDV board. In cases where a unanimous recommendation cannot be reached, the different views will be noted in the minutes.

From time to time, issues may arise that have a significant impact on clients. If this is the case, the Consumer Advisory Committee and the Dog Welfare and Ethics Committee may meet to consider the issue.

The committee fulfills an advisory role, therefore is not responsible for organisational practices.

5. Reporting

Summary reports and minutes will be made to the board biannually.

Reports will also be made available to the Consumer advisory committee.

Issues may be raised to the committee via the GM Dog and Vision Services or Chair.

6. Review and Amendment

This charter will be subject to periodic review to ensure its relevance and effectiveness in fulfilling the committee's objectives. Amendments can be proposed and approved during committee meetings.

Effectiveness of the committee will be assessed periodically.

7. Confidentiality

All committee members are expected to uphold the confidentiality of discussions and decisions made within the committee, in accordance with GDV's confidentiality policies, code of conduct and Memorandum of Understanding.

8. Membership Process

Members will be appointed for a period of up to three years with re-appointment being at the discretion of GDV (for further three year and one year terms).

Non staff Members of the committee undertake the role in a volunteer capacity.

9. Meeting Frequency

There will be a minimum of four meetings per year.

There will be a minimum of one on-site meeting each year, where members will inspect the GDV facilities.

The meeting will be held on GDV's campus or on-line.

10. Quorum

A quorum consists of a minimum of 4 members and will require at least two of the external professional members.

11. Minutes

Minutes are to be distributed to the DWEAC members within 2 weeks of the meeting. GDV will provide the necessary secretarial assistance for the efficient operation of the DWEAC.

The secretarial assistant shall ensure that all Board members and Senior Leaders receive a copy of the finalised DWEAC minutes.

12. Understandings

Each DWEAC member shall sign a Memorandum of Understanding and register to become a GDV volunteer before the commencement of their term.

Reasonable and necessary travel and accommodation expenses will be refunded and/or provided by GDV by prior notice.

DOG WELFARE & ETHICS ADVISORY COMMITTEE

MEMORANDUM OF UNDERSTANDING

Guide Dogs Victoria (GDV) has created the Dog Welfare & Ethics Advisory Committee (the DWEAC) for the purpose of ensuring the optimal welfare of the dogs in our care. The committee will ensure GDV policies, procedures and ways of working are centred around current understanding of exceptional dog welfare.

Members of the DWEAC, the membership of which is set out in the Charter of the DWEAC, agree to act in good faith to support and promote the vision of GDV.

It is expected that members of DWEAC will:

- Conduct themselves in accordance with GDV's Code of Conduct, Values and Behaviours including signing the Code of Conduct forms and undertaking the required police checks and other checks required of GDV volunteers.
- Have good communication skills and be a team player
- Be proactive, ensuring actions that are agreed to, are completed within mutually agreed timeframes
- Be available to attend the DWEAC meeting at least four times a year.
- Nominate for, and contribute to, appropriate Working Groups when required.
- Members of the DWEAC must not, during or after their term on the DWEAC, disclose any information obtained as part of their role on the DWEAC, except:
 - a) In the proper performance of their responsibilities;
 - b) If the DWEAC member is compelled to do so by law and has used every lawful means available to them to prevent disclosure; or
 - c) If the DWEAC member has been authorised in writing by the CEO or CEC Chair to do so.
 - d) DWEAC members are not authorised to represent GDV without prior consent (including media or government organisations). GDV may request DWEAC members to be spokespeople for particular issues and situations. GDV will provide support to DWEAC members as required.

GDV agrees to:

- Provide and/or refund reasonable and necessary travel and accommodation expenses directly related to meetings of the DWEAC
- Provide necessary secretarial assistance for the efficient operation of the DWEAC
- Confirm dates of meetings at the commencement of the calendar year to all members

Members will be appointed for an initial period of up to three years with re-appointment being at the discretion of GDV (for a further three year and one year terms).

Each DWEAC member shall sign this Memorandum of Understanding before the commencement of their term. This Memorandum of Understanding constitutes the entire understanding of the parties here to and all prior agreements, understandings, representations or negotiations are hereby superseded, terminated and cancelled in their entirety and are of no future force or effect.

The foregoing is agreed to by:

Signed:

Date:

DWEAC Member

Who is appointed for a term of ____

Signed:

Date:

General Manager Dog and Vision Services (Guide Dogs Victoria)