



## **Bonding in the Delta Triangle**

### **The dog, the client and the volunteer**

Delta Society Australia, a national non-profit organisation, was registered under the Corporations Law as 'a company limited by guarantee' in 1997. It is a registered charity in New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, South Australia, Tasmania and the ACT. The Society was granted Public Benevolent Institution and deductible gift recipient status by the Australian Tax Office in the financial year 2000-2001, based on its health promotion and education programs. It is income and fringe benefits tax exempt and all donations to the Society over \$2.00 are tax deductible.

The Society operates on a corporate governance model, with a chairman and a board of directors. Under its memorandum and articles of association no director may receive a fee or any financial reward (other than out of pocket expenses). If there is a surplus at the end of any financial year it must be used to maintain and expand the activities of the Society.

The Society's mission is to promote and facilitate positive interaction between people and companion animals. Currently it pursues this mission through three core projects:

- the Canine Good Citizen™ education programs;
- the Delta Dog Safe project; and
- the Delta Pet Partners program.

**Delta's Canine Good Citizen Program** is a package aimed at producing well-socialised and well behaved dogs with informed, responsible and satisfied owners.

- ❖ the Delta Canine Good Citizen™ Pet Dog Trainers Course is an eighteen month vocational course in reward-based dog training, which leads to the award of a Certificate IV in Companion Animal Services within the Australian Quality Training Framework. Delta is a Registered Training Organisation within that framework;
- ❖ the Delta Lifetime Manners programs for dog owners and their dogs, conducted by Delta-accredited CGC™ Instructors.

**Delta Dog Safe™** is a pro-active, dog friendly school education program for 5 to 8 year old children, their parents and local communities. Designed by Delta Australia as a public health initiative it teaches safe and sensible behaviour around dogs, both family pets and stray or street dogs.

Dog Safe™ programs are well established in Tasmania and South Australia.

**Delta Dog Safe™ Tasmania** is coordinated by Anne Boxhall BA, Dip Ed, an infant teacher from Hobart. DDS Tasmania is now funded by the Tasmanian Government, through the Department of Health and by 30<sup>th</sup> June 2007 it is estimated that it will have been presented to 22,000 young Tasmanians, almost 100% of the target 'audience'.

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**Delta Dog Safe™ South Australia** is conducted with the support of the SA Government through the Dog & Cat Management Board of South Australia. The program will have been presented to almost 100% of South Australian junior primary school children by the end of the 2007 school year.

#### **The SPOT (Safe Pets Out There) Program**

From the beginning of the 2007 school year the SPOT (Safe Pets Out There) Program will be presented in junior primary schools throughout New South Wales. Funded by the New South Wales Department of Local Government, the program is a joint venture between Delta, the AVA, the RSPCA and the Animal Welfare League NSW. The three components pet care (AVA), Dog Safety (incorporating Delta Dog Safe) and Kindness and Cruelty (RSPCA, AWL) will be presented to an estimated 250,000 children and their parents in the triennium 2007 through 2009.

**The Delta Pet Partners Program** involves temperament testing volunteers' pet dogs and training the volunteers to become Pet Partner teams. All of our teams are clearly identified - the volunteers wear attractive monogrammed polo shirts and their dogs wear stylish bandannas - and have a high community profile.

Volunteers and their Delta dogs will visit any institution where re-establishing contact with a companion animal enhances the quality of the patients' and residents' lives. The joy and therapeutic benefit that our visiting volunteers and their Delta dogs bring to our clients - from small children to frail elderly nursing home residents - really has to be seen to be fully appreciated.

Delta dogs are involved in recreational, diversional and play therapy activities and increasingly in goal oriented therapy. In February 2008, almost 600 Pet Partner teams were visiting residential care facilities and hospitals in branches based in Adelaide, Hobart, Devonport, Melbourne, Geelong, Bendigo, Mildura, Riverina/ACT, Sydney/Central Coast, Newcastle, the Central West (NSW), Brisbane, and Townsville.

Pet Partners visit children's and adult hospitals, mental health units, hospices, adult respite day care centres, rehabilitation units, hospices and community group homes, schools and nursing homes, our largest client group.

Increasingly, selected Pet Partner teams will receive additional training to participate in demonstration projects in selected hospital wards and units. They will work with rehabilitation specialists, psychologists, physiotherapists and occupational therapists on a one-to-one basis with patients to achieve defined goals and objectives in patient rehabilitation or treatment.

#### **Volunteers, facilities and quality control:**

Volunteers are recruited in a number of ways, sometimes following local or national publicity about the program, often because they hear about the program through local networks. They are asked to apply in writing and submit an application for a police (criminal record) check which is conducted for Delta by the Australian Federal Police. This clearance is essential for any volunteer who will be working with children or visiting residents in aged care.

The protocols for the dogs' temperament and behaviour assessment are detailed in the Delta manual. They include reactions to exuberant and clumsy petting, angry yelling, staggering and gesturing, being bumped from behind, held by a stranger, crowded and petted, all situations that are likely to be encountered at some time during a visit. At the same time the evaluators are asked to gauge the overall sociability of the team and to assess the level of trust and understanding between the dog and the volunteer. The assessments are

rigorous and there is always some disappointment for owners whose dogs fail to 'make it'.

Volunteers whose dogs have been passed by the evaluators are invited to a one day training seminar, usually conducted the following week, and on completion are asked to sign a simple but formal performance agreement with the Society. At this stage they are issued with a photo identification badge of volunteer and dog which must be worn at all times during a visit. Experience has shown that it is at this point that Pet Partner teams are best matched to facilities in their area. The Society does keep a waiting list of facilities that have applied to participate but does not actively seek expressions of interest until we know that we have volunteers in an area who can meet demand.

A Delta representative, usually an experienced Pet Partner volunteer, accompanies the new team on the first visit and establishes an ongoing, supportive relationship with him or her, reinforced by simple but regular activity reports.

Accredited Pet Partner volunteers are covered by the Society's public risk and accident insurance policies Australia-wide.

### **Sponsorship & funding**

It costs the Society approximately \$700 per year to recruit each volunteer, assess his or her dog, train them to our professional standards, provide shirts and bandannas, place them in a participating facility and give them ongoing support. Maintaining our quality assurance standards, constantly reviewing the manual, collecting activity statistics and ongoing monitoring and support of existing volunteers in the program are all making increasing demands on our resources. With almost 600 volunteers visiting more than 350 units Australia wide (figures at 30<sup>th</sup> April 2007) the annual budget estimate for program maintenance and growth in 2007-2008 is \$350,000.

As a non-profit organisation we rely heavily on commercial sponsorship, donations from the public and participating facilities, to make this service available to the children and adults of all ages who benefit so much from it.



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Chairman  
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