

## Therapy Dog of the Week

### **Zac**

**“I feel privileged to be able to take my dog to visit people who often have no family, no friends, no visitors.”**



**Name:** Margie Riley and Zac

**Type of dog:** Border Collie

**Location:** Queensland

**Visits:** Mental Health

**Volunteering:** 1 year

**Why:** Since I love animals, and know how much Zac means to me, I wanted to share his gentle nature and warmth wherever it was needed.

**Enjoys most:** Seeing the obvious delight on the faces of those who don't have much joy in their lives. Seeing how they benefit from

stroking him, touching his ears and generally reliving things from their pasts – and seeing the interaction between Zac and the residents.

**Dog enjoys:** Apart from cleaning up the crumbs under the tables he loves to jump up onto beds (not something permitted at home!) and seeing his friends. I know he remembers them from visit to visit.

**Reaction:** The residents who are still able to interact with one another and Zac are, mostly, thrilled to see him. Faces light up and hands reach out to caress him.

**Experiences:** One resident, newly admitted to the facility, was not speaking, not eating, not reacting to any stimuli. No doubt he couldn't understand where he was, why he was there, and what had happened to his familiar surroundings... On seeing Zac his face lit up and he reached out to him. He stroked him on the first visit since his admission and has since laughed, spoken to his mother by phone (something that had not happened for years) and, the last time I saw him, was still delighted to see Zac. Zac showed his friendship with this man as he has an endearing habit of pushing his head down onto your shins and ankles when he loves you – and he did this to this particular resident.

NB. The facility is being closed down and the residents are, mostly, now in other premises. We haven't seen this particular resident for a month or so.

It is all that I had expected and anticipated. I feel privileged to be able to take my dog to visit people who often have no family, no friends, no visitors and very little quality of life.



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