MONASH University

MONASH EDUCATION

MONASH EDUCATION SHOWCASE WEEK

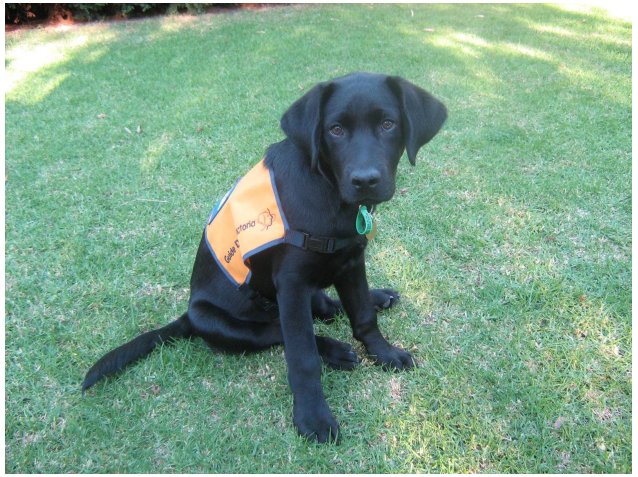
Using therapy dogs in educational settings

Dr Linda Henderson and Dr Christine Grove

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Daymon





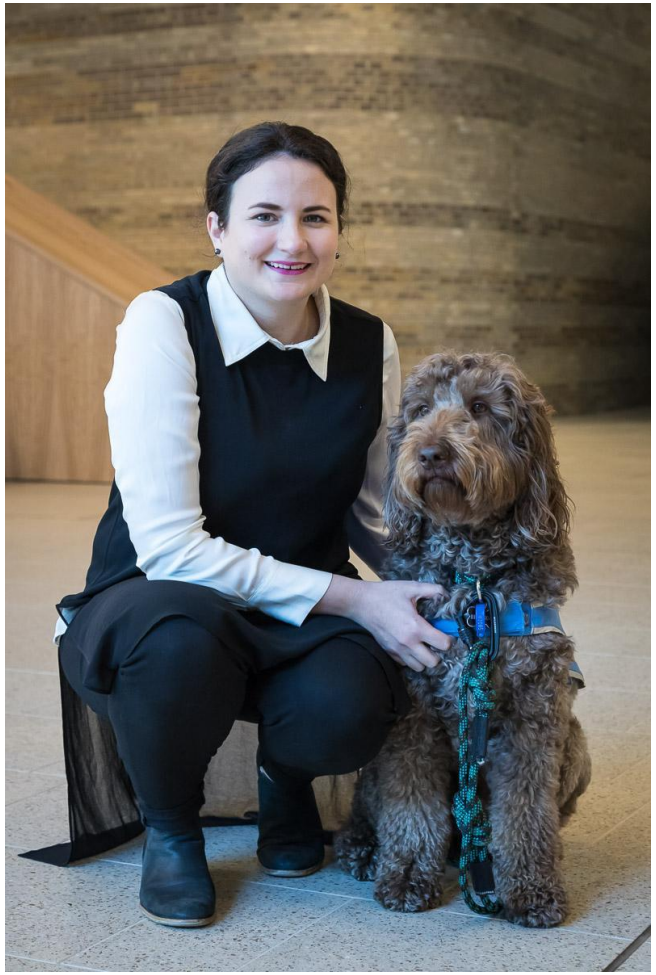






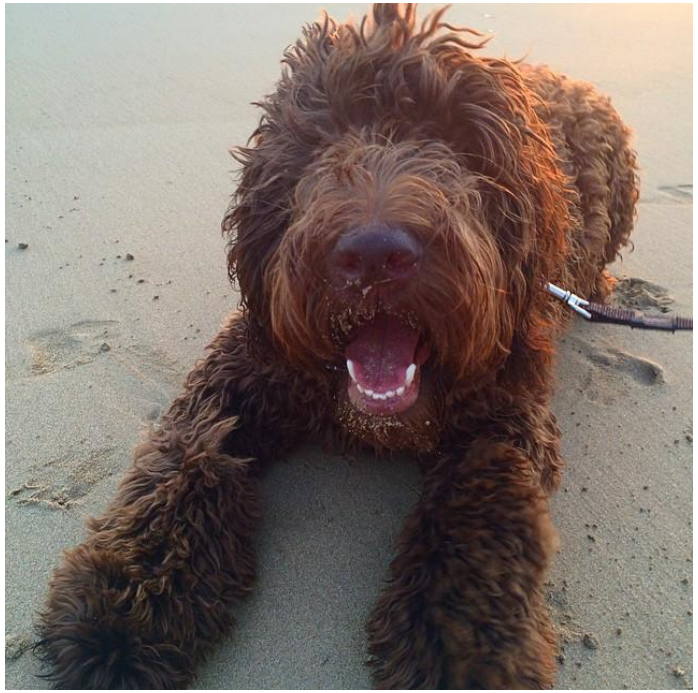
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Bronson









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THINK-PAIR-SHARE ACTIVITY



- reflect on the questions below,
- introduce yourself to someone nearby,
- share your thoughts

What do you know about therapy dogs vs service dogs?

What are your experiences of therapy dogs in action?

What is the evidence to support therapy dogs in educational contexts?

Therapy Dog v's Service Dog: Is there a difference?



Sign saying no entry for dogs except assistance dogs

What is the legal understanding of an assistance animal

An assistance animal is a trained support designed to facilitate the participation of people with disability in accessing various aspects of personal and public life. They are sometimes mistaken as a pet but provide an essential function for some people with disability.

The *Disability Discrimination Act 1992* (Cth) (DDA) in Section 9, sets out the legal definition of an assistance animal as a dog or other animal that:

(a) is accredited under a State or Territory law to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effects of disability; or

(b) is accredited by an animal training organisation prescribed in the regulations; or

(c) is trained to assist a person with a disability to alleviate the effect of the disability and meets standards of hygiene and behaviour that are appropriate for an animal in a public place.

Service Dog: trained to perform tasks and do work that eases their handler's disabilities. Work as a 'team' to attain independence and safety. These dogs are not for petting. Access rights for Service Dogs and handlers is covered under legislation and are allowed access to all areas except hospital theatres.

Therapy Dog: Their role and responsibility it to provide psychological or physiological therapy to individuals other than their handler. The dogs have been trained and assessed to undertake this work. They have stable temperaments and friendly easy-going personalities.

Fake assistance animals and their users gaming the system and increasing prejudice

The Conversation By Paul Harpur, Martie-Louise Verreynne and Nancy Pachana

http://www.abc.net.au/news/2018-04-18/fake-assistance-dogs-gaming-system/9670848

Role of Therapy Dog

The role of therapy dogs is to react and respond to people and their environment, under the guidance and direction of their owner. For example, an individual might be encouraged to gently pat or talk to a dog to teach sensitive touch and help them be calm

Therapy dogs can also be used as part of animal assisted therapy. This aims to improve a person's social, cognitive and emotional functioning. A healthcare professional who uses a therapy dog in treatment may be viewed as less threatening, potentially increasing the connection between the client and professional.

Animal Assisted Activities

There are also animal-assisted activities, which is an umbrella term covering many different ways animals can be used to help humans.

One example is to facilitate emotional or physical mental health and wellbeing through pet therapy or the presence of therapy dogs. These activities aren't necessarily overseen by a professional, nor are they specific psychological interventions.





Therapy Dog Video Example

Dogs helping students deal with anxiety at school

Today Tonight

Monday, 5 February 2018 9:44PM



https://thewest.com.au/news/today-tonight/dogs-helping-students-deal-with-anxiety-at-school-bc-5726337013001

Benefits of Therapy Dogs

Therapy dogs in classrooms aren't just very, very, very good pups. They can reduce students' anxiety and improve learning outcomes.

Animal assisted therapy can:

- teach empathy and appropriate interpersonal skills
- help individuals develop social skills
- be soothing and the presence of animals can more quickly build rapport between the professional and client, and
- improve individual's skills to pick up social cues imperative to human relationships. Professionals can process that information and use it to help clients see how their behaviour affects others.

Boofred, the therapy dog, in Action

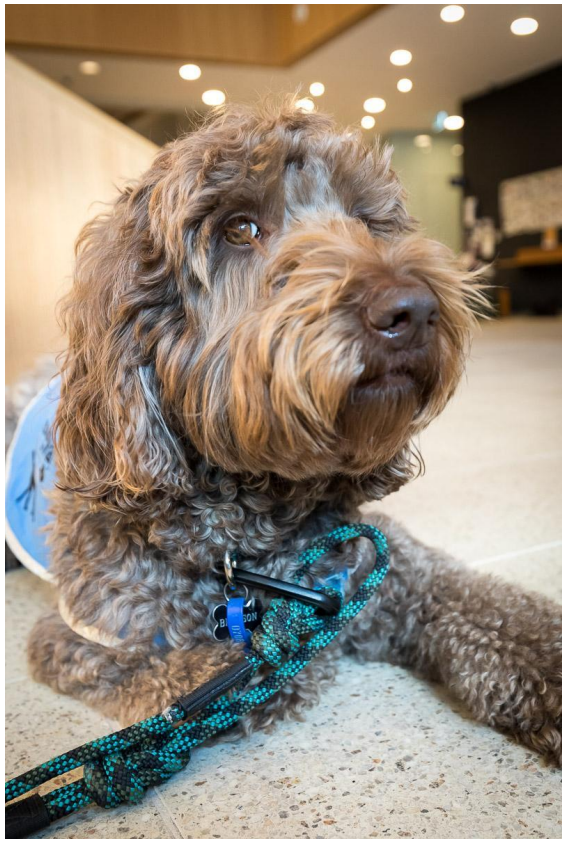


What's happening?

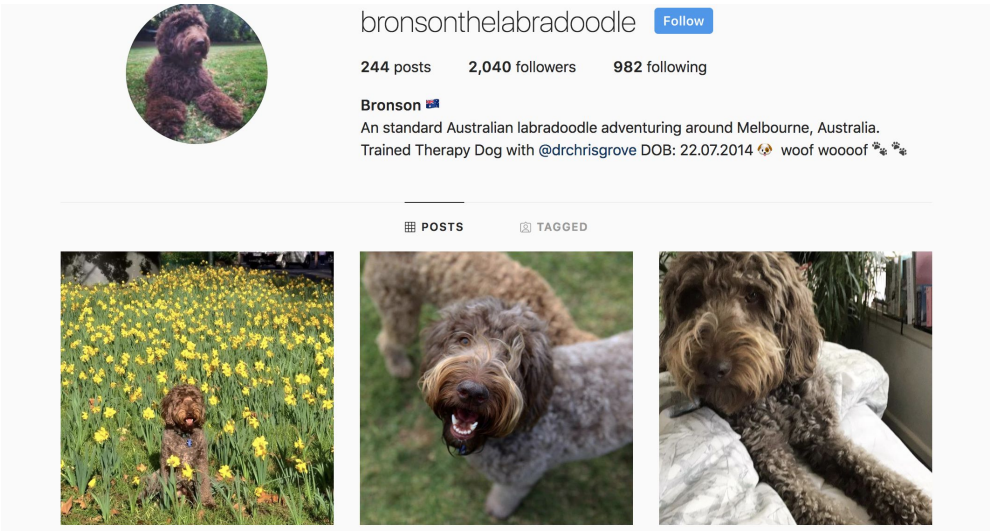
The human-animal bond can impact people and animals in positive ways. Research shows therapy dogs can reduce stress physiologically (cortisol levels) and increase attachment responses that trigger oxytocin – a hormone that increases trust in humans.

Dogs also react positively to animal-assisted activities. In response to the human-animal bond, dogs produce oxytocin and decrease their cortisol levels when connecting with their owner. Often dogs feel the same when engaging in animal assisted activities as if they were at home, depending on the environmental context.

Demonstration with Bronson the therapy dog



Follow his adventures on Instagram
@bronsonthelabradoodle



Need for ongoing and long-term research

Here is a snapshot of one of our research projects: Bronson and Daymon with our Masters of Ed/Dev Psychology research students who are examining whether therapy dogs may or may not have an impact on student wellbeing in educational settings:



From left students Hannah Schena, Louisa Trainer, Felicia Lee with Daymon the lab and Bronson the labradoodle.

Current Monash Study

Story Dogs and Faculty of Education Research Partnership

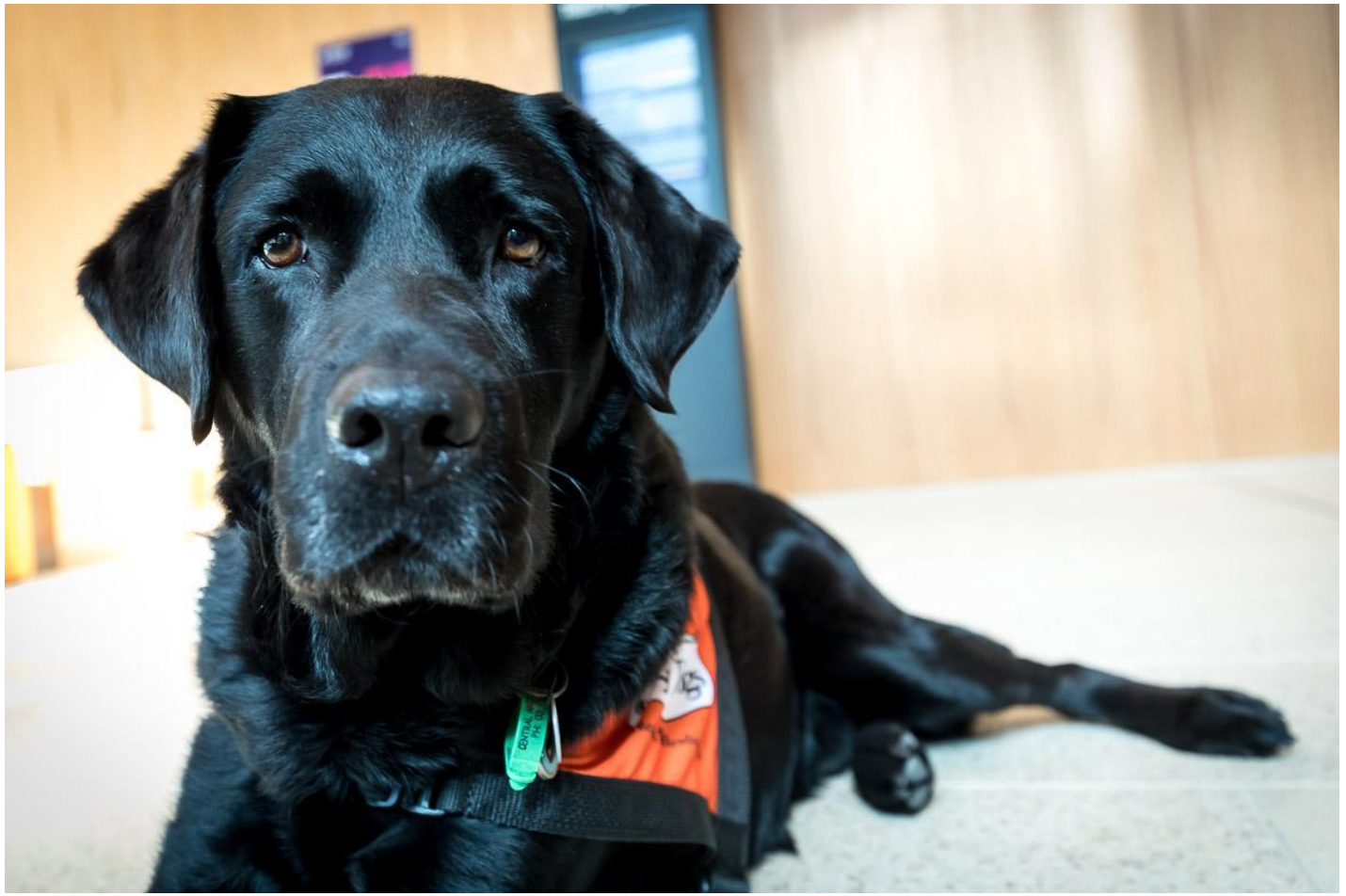
- A reading program for all of Australia
- Making reading fun by reading to a dog
- Story Dogs Facts:
  Help over 1870 children each week
  Currently 373 volunteer dog teams
  Partner with 224 schools in NSW, VIC, TAS, WA, SA, & ACT
  Currently 220 dog teams fully sponsored (59%)

A ‘Story Dog’ Story



http://www.abc.net.au/news/2017-03-10/story-dogs-help-kids-read-literacy-skills/8341060

Demonstration of a Story Dog Reading Session



Benefits of Therapy Dogs in Schools

A recent report highlighted children working with therapy dogs experienced increased motivation for learning, resulting in improved outcomes.

Therapy dogs are being used to support children with social and emotional learning needs, which in turn can assist with literacy development.

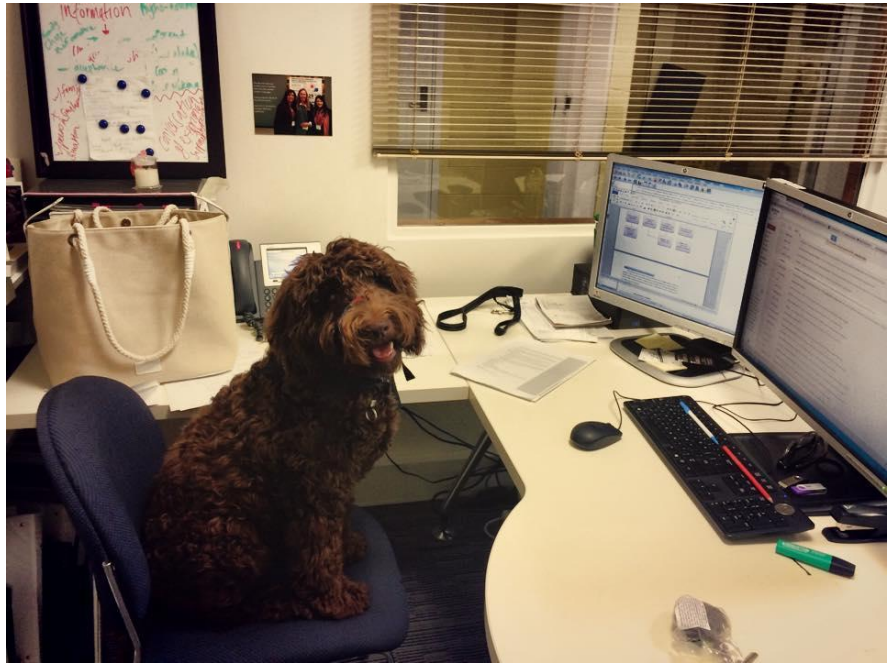
Benefits of Therapy Dogs in Schools

Research into the effects of therapy dogs in schools is showing a range of benefits including:

- increase in school attendance;
- gains in confidence;
- decreases in learner anxiety behaviours resulting in improved learning outcomes, such as increases in reading and writing levels;
- positive changes towards learning and improved motivation;
- enhanced relationships with peers and teachers due to experiencing trust and unconditional love from a therapy dog. This in turn helps students learn how to express their feelings and enter into more trusting relationships.

Benefits of Therapy Dogs at University

Researchers have found university students reported significantly less stress and anxiety, and increased happiness and energy, immediately following spending time in a drop-in session with a dog present, when compared to a control group of students who didn't spend any time with a therapy dog.



Meet Jasper a Therapy Dog at University



https://www.youtube.com/watch?time_continue=5&v=ftJJgX5hASs

Perceived Risks

Despite these known benefits, many schools choose not to have therapy dog programs due to perceived risks. These range from concerns about sanitation issues to the suitability of dog temperament when working with children. But therapy dogs and owners are carefully selected and put through a strict testing regime prior to acceptance into any program.

The main reason for the lack of take up has been linked to the limited research into the benefits of therapy dogs in schools

> Arent allergies a bit of a problem in schools? If the kids cant take a peanut butter sandwich, how can they be having dogs in the room?

> I thought this also. My husband is highly allergic to dogs and being in the same room as a dog, or even a room where a dog has been and left hair, triggers debilitating reactions. The increasing number of therapy and companion animals in public and even regular pets allowed in shops such as Bunnings impacts his life - and there are plenty of people like him.

> Using animals in classrooms is fraught with many regulations. Beware rushing in.

> The student pulls the dog's tail. The dog turns around and snaps at the student. The parents want the dog destroyed as vicious?

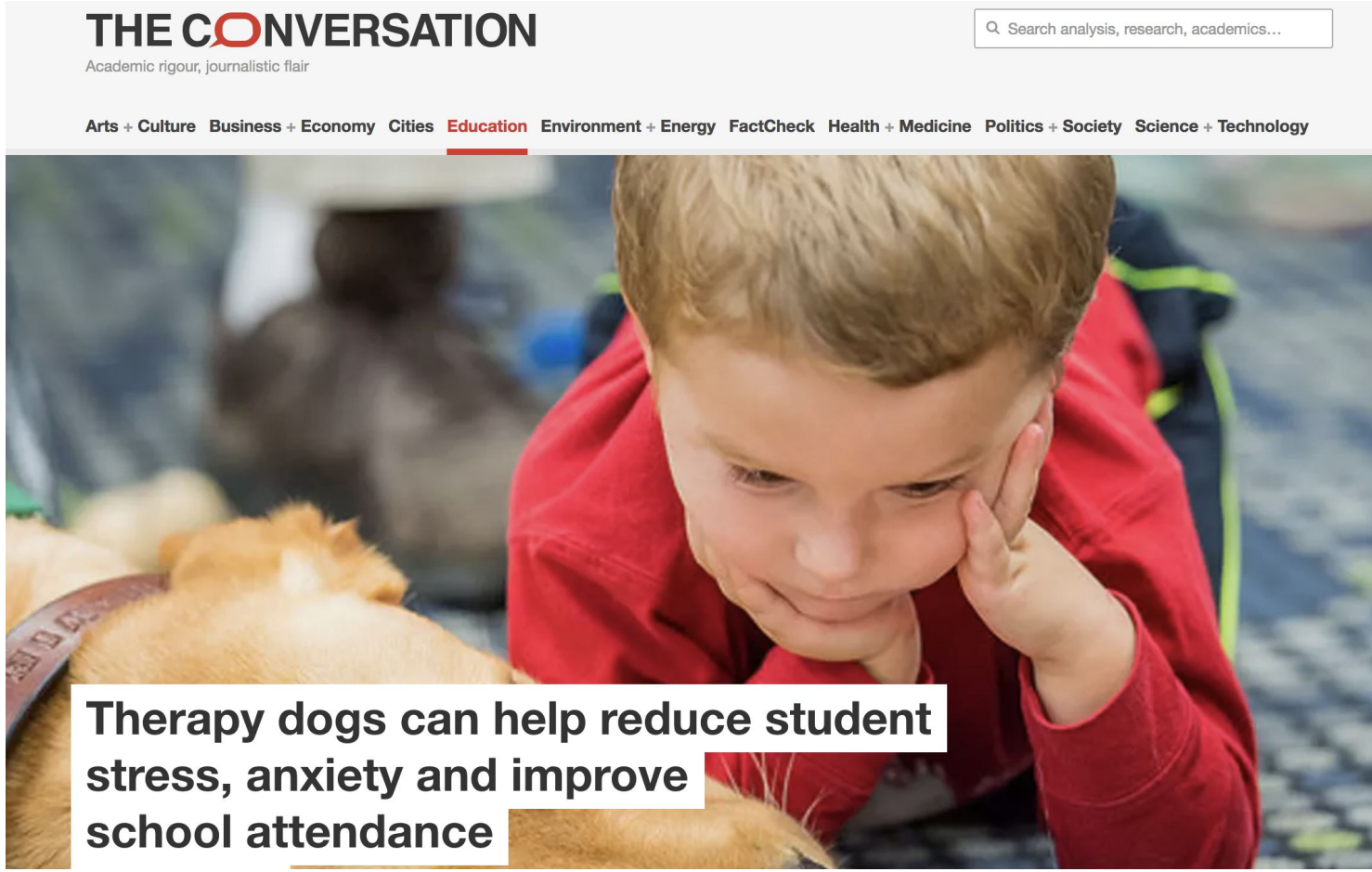
Next steps in Research

- Future collaborations
  - Partnerships with University
  - Funding for long-term research
- Challenges
  - Volunteer status of most therapy dog organisations and implications for funding
  - Integrating therapy dogs into a whole school approach to student well-being

For more information

- Read our piece in the conversation;
- Look out for our upcoming research with Story Dogs;
- We'll keep our followers up to date via ResearchGate & FigShare

https://theconversation.com/therapy-dogs-can-help-reduce-student-stress-anxiety-and-improve-school-attendance-93073



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Final Questions and Thoughts



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THANK YOU

We welcome your feedback, go to:
https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/showcase-therapy-dogs

We look forward to seeing you at future events:
monash.edu/education/community

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