ANIMAL WELFARE CHARTER

Taronga's commitment to positive animal welfare and caring for animals with dignity and respect.

TARONGA
CONSERVATION SOCIETY AUSTRALIA
For the Wild

CONTENTS

Animal Welfare
- Charter and Commitments 02
- Framework 09

Ethics
- Dignity and Respect 10
- Photography 11

Animal Welfare refers to how an animal is experiencing its world, encompassing both its overall physical and mental state.

Good welfare is about maximising and generating positive experiences that contribute to a fulfilling life (like vitality from good health and nutrition, reward from expressing natural behaviours and making meaningful choices). Good welfare is also about minimising negative experiences (like pain, fear, or distress).

Taronga's Commitment to Positive Animal Welfare

Zoo and Aquarium Association Australasia
Positive animal welfare accredited

TARONGA CONSERVATION SOCIETY AUSTRALIA
For the Wild

WELFARE

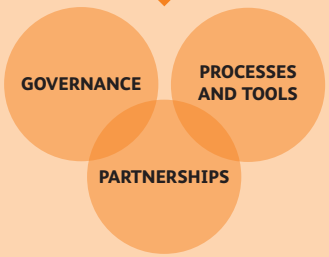
Animal Welfare: Our Commitments

Our Animal Welfare Commitment is to enhance the well-being of animals through enriched life experiences and continuous improvement in their care. We commit to treating animals with dignity and respect; providing opportunities for meaningful choices and agency; and improving care using the latest science.

Our commitments

1. **Nutrition:** High quality, balanced diets supporting vitality and species relevant feeding strategies.
2. **Environment:** Enriching and comfortable environments with opportunities for meaningful choice, stimulation, rest and seeking refuge.
3. **Health:** Optimum health and fitness for all life stages supported by a heathcare program and cooperative training techniques.
4. **Behaviour:** Opportunities to express diverse natural behaviours, build resilience, and interact positively with other animals and people.
5. **Positive Welfare Management:** Supported by a philosophy of continuous improvement and independent welfare accreditation.

Animal Welfare: Our Framework



Taronga has developed a welfare framework that is evidence based and promotes a culture of improvement through:

Governance: A transparent and accountable welfare framework including:
- Taronga Animal Welfare Committee & Incident Reporting
- Ethics Approvals
- Scientific Licences
- Policy and Procedures

Processes / Tools: Our Welfare Commitments actioned through:
- ZAA Accreditation
- Welfare Walkarounds
- Welfare Monitoring
- Welfare Onboarding
- Aged Animal Assessments

Partnerships: We foster relationships and advance our welfare capacity with research partnerships.

Animal Welfare: 5 Domains Model

HOW WE SUPPORT THE 5 ANIMAL WELFARE DOMAINS...

Taronga's approach to measuring animal welfare is underpinned by the 5 animal welfare domains – an evidenced based model for assessing animal welfare that considers both positive and negative experiences through evaluating the impact of nutrition, physical environment, health and behavioural interactions (the four physical domains) gives rise to animal's affective or mental state (fifth domain).

1. NUTRITION

- **Input**
  Nutritious balanced diets designed by the Nutrition Team.
- **Output**
  Appropriate body condition, weight and acquisition of variety of foods.

2. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

- **Input**
  Thoughtfully designed spaces promoting complexity, choice and variability.
- **Output**
  Utilising thermal comfort, refuge and novel opportunities. Pleasant sensory experience (light, odours, sound).

5. MENTAL STATE

Satiated, vitality, comfortable, calm, engaged, energised

3. HEALTH

- **Input**
  Preventative health care program and veterinary care.
- **Output**
  Healthy, fit animals with minimal disease, injury or impairment.

4. BEHAVIOURAL INTERACTIONS

- **Input**
  Behavioural enrichment and training and programs promoting species-relevant behaviours.
- **Output**
  Expression of rewarding behaviours. Eg. play, bonding & making engaging choices.

ETHICS

Ethics: Dignity and Respect for Wildlife

Our ethical philosophy that recognises all individuals and species have intrinsic value and should be treated with respect. We aim to present wildlife with context about their homeland, habitat, cultural significance and connections to people, place and stories.

We ensure animals in our care are treated with respect by delivering:

1. **Naturalness:** Thoughtfully designed spaces inspired by nature.
2. **Meaningful Connections:** Engender feelings of awe, admiration and wonderment for wildlife
3. **Conservation Driven Experiences:** Delivering conservation and education outcomes
4. **Choice:** Animals empowered through meaningful choice in daily lives.
5. **Positive Animal Welfare:** Positive experiences for wildlife & people.

Ethics: Encounters and Photography

Taronga's photographic guidelines encourage responsible and respectful animal photography that considers the welfare of the animal and potential impacts to other animals more broadly.

Q: Are animal selfies OK?

A: Consider the context of the photograph, and whether it helps deliver an appropriate message or inspire a conservation action and avoids validating harmful selfies that increase desire to keep wild species as pets, promote wildlife trade and promote the assumption the species is not threatened.

Q: How do I know if an animal experience is ethical?

A: Animals should have choice and be free to move away from people. They may choose not to be close enough for a photo and this should be respected. Watch out for encounters where animals are restrained or trained to do unnatural behaviours.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Taronga's Animal Welfare Charter

Taronga Conservation Society Australia's (Taronga's) vision is to secure a shared future for wildlife and people.

Taronga believes that a core purpose of zoos is to create direct and positive connections between people and wildlife; and to protect threatened species, increase understanding of wildlife and inspire community action.

As a conservation organisation with responsibility for the care of wildlife, we always ensure that the needs, interests and welfare of our animals are a primary consideration. We believe that good animal welfare is essential and will also assist us to achieve our conservation goals.

We continue to ensure that our wildlife team have the resources, training, skills and experience necessary to carry out their roles and responsibilities, and maintain resource levels that enable our programs to be delivered effectively.

Taronga's commitment to animal welfare is:

To enhance the well-being of animals through enriched life experiences and continuous improvement in their care. We commit to treating animals with dignity and respect, providing opportunities for meaningful choice and agency, and improving animal care using the latest science.

In considering Taronga's animal welfare responsibilities we acknowledge the inherent nature of the animals in our care. This compels us to provide the type of environment and diverse experiences that the animal's biology has evolved to expect. We understand that habitats and environments beyond the zoo are always changing, and at Taronga we continually strive to support animals' behavioural and physiological needs by finding inspiration and guidance from the natural world around us.

Taronga recognises three categories of responsibilities to ensure we meet the welfare needs of our animals. These are psychological (mental state), physical (biological function), and evolutionary adaptation (naturalness). We continue to provide environments and situations that focus on the wellbeing of the animal and provide circumstances that the animal's biology has evolved to experience and expect. Natural history is a powerful reference point for factors that are likely to be important and meaningful at the species level, and animals' individual history may also inform important individual difference. Animal welfare is based on an individual animal's experience of the world and should be tailored accordingly.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Commitment: Nutrition

To promote appropriate nutrition for animals in our care, we:

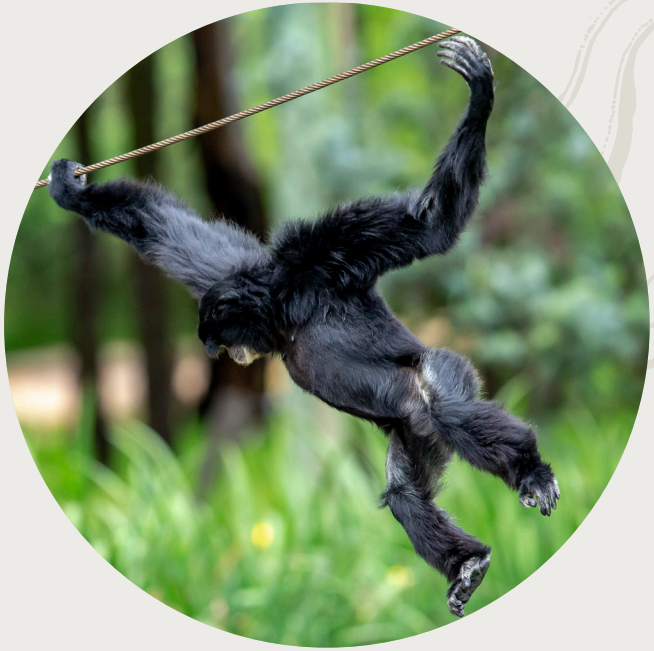
- Provide nutritionally balanced, safe and hygienic diets tailored to each species' natural feeding strategies, digestive physiology, and individual needs. This supports health, behaviour, and welfare.
- Present food and water in species-appropriate ways, considering natural intake patterns, feeding postures, and behaviour, including moisture provision through the appropriate combination of food, water, misting, and ambient humidity as indicated by species ecology.
- Ensure species-appropriate environmental conditions, such as temperature and humidity, to support proper digestion and hydration.
- Reference wild diets, current research and knowledge of domestic animal models to guide diet formulation, under the supervision of a dedicated nutritionist, ensuring diets reflect natural nutrient profiles and meet energy demands.
- Monitor nutritional status through regular assessments of body condition, weight, feeding behaviour, feather, skin or coat condition and faecal consistency, adjusting diets as needed to achieve goals.
- Prevent over or underfeeding and reduce competition by ensuring adequate access, appropriate quantities, and minimising guarding or dominance behaviours.
- Maintain high standards of food and water quality, avoiding spoilage, contamination, and pest interference.
- Maintain detailed records of diet composition, feeding schedules, and individual animal weights to support ongoing evaluation and refinement.
- Use nutrition as a proactive welfare tool, supporting conservation recovery, managing health conditions, undertaking research to fill knowledge gaps and maintaining positive affective states.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Commitment: Physical Environment

To create environments that are safe, comfortable and stimulating, we:

- Design spaces that are generous in size and meets or exceed regulatory requirements.
- Build complex and stimulating environments providing opportunities for exploration, to be active, and empowered through agency.
- Provide an environment that supports the opportunity to engage in a diversity of species-appropriate behaviours.
- Create the conditions for meaningful choices through offering areas of varied thermal range and substrates supporting thermal comfort and pleasant resting places.
- Create the opportunity for positive species appropriate social interactions with individuals of the same species, other species and human caregivers and opportunities to seek sanctuary or refuge from enclosure-mates, guests and external disturbances.
- Create spaces that are safe and secure and provides protection from the elements, intruders, pests, predators, physical injury and disease.
- Ensure environments can be readily maintained at appropriate hygiene standards.
- Present animals with respect in a setting that provides effective learning or connective experiences for guests.



ANIMAL WELFARE

Commitment: Health

To promote optimum health and fitness, we:

- Deliver a comprehensive veterinary care program with the capacity for high quality medicine, surgery, diagnostics and pathology, and meeting current international standards for zoo and wildlife health care.
- Ensure that systems and knowledge on the status, health and wellbeing of our animals are maintained and continually improved.
- Regularly monitor individual animals, appropriate to the health and wellbeing requirements for that species and at different life stages including tailored geriatric care.
- Minimise stress in delivery of supportive heath care through a cooperative training and conditioning program to facilitate participatory examination, medication administration, blood collection and ultrasound.
- Provide prompt veterinary response to any injured or ill animal.
- Provide a preventative health care program, including effective quarantine for incoming animals and mitigation of zoonotic and emerging animal diseases to our population.
- Ensure that responses and rehabilitation practices for injured or orphaned wildlife are ethically sound and ecologically responsible.
- Ensure that euthanasia can be implemented where necessary to bring about the best welfare outcome for an animal or a population.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Commitment: Behavioural Interactions

To promote expression of a diversity of species-specific behaviours, we:

- Aim to provide experiences that cater to each stage of an animal's lived experience, ensuring animals have the opportunity and agency to express a broad range of behaviours, including challenge where appropriate.
- Provide environments and group structure and size that promote species appropriate social skills and support the ability of an animal to be integrated with its own kind.
- Provide species-appropriate social opportunities, including opportunities for learning and maintenance of behaviours critical for social interactions and breeding.
- Facilitate enriched experiences that stimulate mental and physical activity, promote species-appropriate behaviours, and maintain behavioural diversity.
- Regularly review and change the enrichment programs appropriate for the species, to maximise stimulation, interest and learning and ensures animals' safety and supports the animals' nutrition.
- Acknowledge that animals' lives include challenges and provide training and conditioning programs that build resilience (ability to adapt well to environmental change), including programs to facilitate delivery of health care, encounters and presentations.
- Undertake appropriate research, training and planning, and provide resources to support safe and effective environmental enrichment programs.
- Provide tailored welfare programs to individual animals and populations that incorporate individual animal past experiences, species' evolutionary biology and incorporates nature as a reference point.

ANIMAL WELFARE

Commitment: Welfare Management

To support positive animal welfare ongoing, we:

- Undergo the Zoo and Aquarium Association (ZAA) Welfare Accreditation program validating positive animal welfare is being experienced by animals in our care and that we have the systems, policies, and procedures in place to support good welfare ongoing.
- Model our welfare approach on the five animal welfare domains model and provide the conditions to generate positive experiences through good nutrition, environment, health and behavioural interactions leading to positive mental experience.
- Align our welfare strategy with other leading zoos through supporting principles in the World Zoo and Aquarium Association (WAZA) Animal Welfare Strategy.
- Ensure staff have comprehensive training to deliver high quality care and an awareness and understanding of Taronga's policies, procedures and reporting processes to support good animal welfare.
- Carry out animal transfers to support our commitments to conservation releases, regional breeding programs and population viability; taking great care to review welfare of organisations we work with to ensure aligned values and ethical animal sourcing.
- Recognise animal births can be associated with positive affective states such as maternal reward. Parent rearing of offspring is our priority, while we recognised assisted rearing may sometimes be necessary.
- Promote showcasing natural behaviours for animals involved in education programs and animal presentations and foster rewarding interactions between animals and animal training staff.

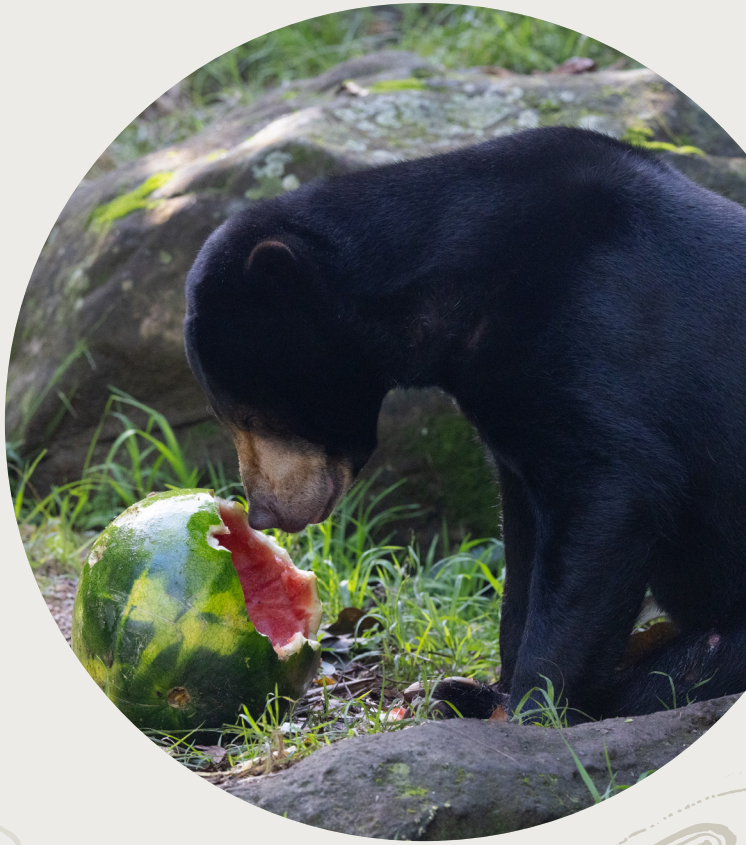
ANIMAL WELFARE

Framework

Taronga has developed a rigorous animal welfare framework to ensure positive welfare is supported, a culture of improvement is fostered and instances risking negative welfare are effectively remediated.

This is achieved through:

- **Governance/Policy:** We have a transparent and accountable animal welfare framework that includes a Taronga Animal Welfare Committee with external representation and Animal Welfare Incident Reporting System to ensure immediate and effective resolution of animal welfare issues. We also ensure appropriate licences and ethics approvals are in place.
- **Processes and tools:** We have a suite of tools to support consistent and objective animal welfare processes including: ZAA Animal Welfare Accreditation, Aged Animal Assessments to ensure our geriatric animals sustain a good quality of life, Welfare Walkarounds to ensure our exhibits support species needs and wants, Welfare Tracking/Monitoring to assess welfare and evaluate interventions or events and animal welfare onboarding to ensure all staff are conversant in animal welfare.
- **Partnerships and expertise:** We build animal welfare capacity and expertise on staff and through strategical research relationships with universities and other credible organisations.



ETHICS

Dignity and Respect for Wildlife

With over 4,500 animals in our care and 2 million guests visiting annually, Taronga takes its commitment to conservation and animal welfare seriously.

Inherent within that, is caring for and portraying wildlife with the greatest dignity and respect, whilst delivering engaging and transformational guest experiences. Taronga believes that all individuals and species have intrinsic value and should be treated accordingly. We believe it is a privilege to care for the amazing wildlife at Taronga's two zoos and aim to present wildlife with context about its homeland, habitat, cultural significance and connections to people, place and stories.

To support our philosophy, Taronga has developed five criteria to ensure all animals in our care are treated and portrayed with dignity and respect.

1. **Taronga presents wildlife in thoughtfully designed spaces inspired by nature that provide for the opportunity to undertake behaviours specific to their life history.**
   We choose provide animals with enrichment and design features that use nature as the reference point. By celebrating the natural world and species relevant behaviours, we can inspire our guests so they too can connect-understand-act for wildlife and their habitats.
2. **Taronga aims to engender awe, admiration, wonderment for wildlife and recognises the essence of the species.**
   We choose to connect people to wildlife through personalisation but not humanisation, as we consider it important that animals retain many of the characteristics important to that species.
3. **Taronga wildlife connections support the delivery of Taronga's conservation and education objectives.**
   We chose to design wildlife experiences that communicate an appropriate conservation, environmental sustainability and/or animal welfare message, and align ourselves with like-minded organisations.
4. **Taronga strives to empower wildlife through the incorporation of choice (or agency) in their daily lives and avoids portraying human superiority (or dominion) over wildlife.**
   We chose to develop animal experiences that reflect a more balanced and respectful relationship between humans and animals. We promote experiences that are animal-led, do not require restraints, can occur in an area that has context and meets the species needs, and is backed by behavioural husbandry that supports good health and wellbeing.
5. **Wildlife connections are designed to be a positive experience for both wildlife as well as guests.**
   We chose to make animal welfare our top priority. The realisation of this is supported by a veterinary care program, diets prepared by our zoo nutritionist, enrichment determined by our behavioural ecology team, care provided by qualified zoo keepers and animal spaces that allow wildlife to flourish.
   We believe that a future without wildlife is not an option and that people are at the centre of conservation. We have a responsibility to share with our guests the awe and wonder that we feel towards wildlife and to value the nature of all species. From this, we can engender respect for the creatures with whom we share this planet, and have a chance at securing a shared future for wildlife and people.

ETHICS

Ethical Encounters & Photographic Guidelines

A photograph of a close animal interaction is powerful.

Responsible images have the potential to positively foster meaningful and memorable emotional connections with wildlife and the natural world and inspire positive conservation behaviours. However, wildlife images involving close contact with people can result in an increased desire to keep wild species as pets, promote wildlife trade and promote the assumption the species is not threatened. Taronga's photographic guidelines encourage responsible and respectful animal photography that always considers the welfare of the animals involved as of primary importance.

Guidelines:

- Animals are the hero of the photograph, not people. The focus is on the animal and the connection with guests, not on the guests with animals as a prop.
- Touching, hugging or holding can make animals feel uncomfortable and may not be appropriate. Animals experience the world differently to us and unlike humans may not be tactile.
- Ensure natural behaviours such as foraging or exploring are not impacted by close interactions.
- Animals have choice and are free to move away from people if they so desire or have staff empowered to move animals or people in response to behavioural cues. Animals may choose not to be close enough for a photo and we respect that.
- Consider the context of the photograph, and whether it helps deliver an appropriate message or inspire a conservation action and avoids validating harmful selfies occurring elsewhere.

TARONGA

CONSERVATION SOCIETY AUSTRALIA®

For the Wild