



MEDIA RELEASE

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Therapy dogs gather to celebrate 'pet effect' milestone

Thousands of therapy dogs and their owners will join together around Australia on 25th November to celebrate Delta Society Australia's 20th birthday and the remarkable bond between dogs and people.

From humble beginnings in 1997, Delta Society Australia (Delta) today touches the lives of 20,000 Australians per week in more than 850 health and service facilities nationally via its flagship therapy dog program.

Ms Hollee James, General Manager of Delta Society Australia says, "Given recent comments by the Federal Minister for Aged Care that up to 40% of people in aged care homes never get visitors, a regular visit from a Delta therapy dog can be the one highlight in an otherwise lonely day-to-day life.

"Attention from a dog, made possible via a dog and handler team such as Delta's, brightens your day, makes you feel loved and is scientifically proven to enhance health and wellbeing. As more people recognise the real physical and emotional benefits from spending time with a dog, demand for our services is increasing," said Ms James.

In addition to its therapy dog program in health facilities, Delta therapy dogs visit primary school classrooms to improve children's literacy and provide stress-relief visits to a growing number of workplaces. Delta also offers dog safety awareness programs for pre-school and primary aged children and delivers accredited courses for individuals seeking to become qualified dog trainers.

Meet two of Delta's special 'therapists': Fiona Morton and her dog Ruby.

Every Thursday for six years, Fiona and Ruby have been visiting patients at Mater Hospital in Brisbane. During that time, they have seen the real difference their visits make to patients.

Fiona, a registered nurse, says that Ruby's visits are a welcome distraction for patients, many of whom have dementia. Fiona recalls one particular gentleman who had been admitted a few days prior to their visit and had not spoken a word.

"When we arrived at his room, Ruby went straight up to him and put her head in his lap and he immediately started talking to her and telling her stories about the dogs he'd owned previously. It was amazing to see the difference she made just by being there. Over the next few weeks, he developed a real bond with Ruby and he would light up every time she came into the room. I found it very special to witness their connection," explained Fiona.

Delta relies on the generosity of donors and volunteers to provide its life-changing services. Hollee James says, "We simply could not have continued for 20 years without our donors and the tireless work of Delta's volunteers and accredited trainers. I sincerely thank everyone who has shared their energy, time and commitment with Delta over the years.

"There is increasing demand for Delta's services, especially leading up to Christmas when people in hospitals and care facilities may feel particularly lonely. We hope that people might consider making a donation to Delta this year as a gift for family and friends, or even as a special Secret Santa present," added Ms James.



For more information about Delta Society or to make a donation, visit www.deltasociety.com.au

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A photo of Fiona Morton and her dog Ruby is available upon request (please credit Queensland Nurses and Midwives' Union if used). Local 20th anniversary photo opportunities are also available at the following locations on Saturday 25 November:

NEW SOUTH WALES

- Sydney Castle Hill Showground undercover dog ring, Castle Hill
- Central Coast Point Clare Public School, Point Clare
- Albury Woodland Grove Wodonga, Wodonga

QUEENSLAND

- Brisbane Pine Rivers Park, Strathpine
- Townsville Strand Park, North Ward

VICTORIA

- Melbourne Priscilla Jones Café, Port Melbourne
- Geelong Geelong Botanical Gardens Tea House, Geelong
- Ballarat The Farmers Arms Hotel, Creswick
- Bendigo White Hills Botanical Gardens, White Hills (26 November)
- Hamilton Lemon Myrtle Café, Hamilton
- Wodonga Woodland Grove Wodonga, Wodonga

SOUTH AUSTRALIA

- Adelaide Glenelg North Community Centre, Glenelg North

TASMANIA

- Hobart Beach House Café, Sandy Bay
- Devonport Legion Park, Ulverstone

ACT

- Canberra The Old Canberra Inn, Lyneham

WESTERN AUSTRALIA

- Perth Fur Baby Café, Westminster

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