



Australian Dog of the Year 2025

Elle, Border Collie, Gold Coast QLD

Nominated Charity Recipient: Deaf Dog Rescue Australia

Elle is a deaf rescue dog who was abandoned at 8 weeks of age. Despite her challenges, Elle has overcome every obstacle with resilience and an unwavering spirit. She has become a source of comfort and joy for those she meets, providing emotional support to people in need and helping to break down barriers for those who may not fully understand the challenges of living with a deaf dog. Her unique ability to connect with others through her sense of touch, sight and intuition is truly inspiring

Elle competes in agility and obedience competitions with her human Robyn Adair and relies on sign language to communicate. She is a school therapy dog and helps

children who are anxious or are having a difficult day. She also helps with behaviour management – children earn reward cards to come and do tricks with Elle - and helps educate students in how to communicate with her using sign language.

Robyn and Elle work together to teach children about how to approach dogs correctly and to ask the handler if they can pat their dog. Elle is a favourite visitor in the school's staffroom and office, where she instantly adds smiles and laughs to the room. She knows exactly who needs a fur cuddle and will go straight up to them and sit at their feet. Elle loves joining in on dress-up days with the children and has a sneaky way of encouraging anyone who walks into her office to play a quick game of ball with her. Elle is even included in the school staff photo!

Robyn says, "I hope people take away a deeper understanding of the unique bond between humans and animals, and how that connection can transcend barriers, like hearing loss. Elle's story highlights the incredible ways animals can serve, comfort and support us, even in non-traditional roles. It also emphasises the importance of empathy, adaptability and the power of communication, no matter the challenges we face. Ultimately, I hope it inspires people to appreciate the diverse ways we can interact with the world around us and the animals that enrich our lives."

"Elle's story exemplifies perseverance and the incredible bond between humans and animals. Her ability to overcome challenges and provide such meaningful support to others is a shining example of why we celebrate dogs through this award. Elle's journey is a testament to love, resilience and the extraordinary ways animals enrich our lives," says Awards Founder Kerry Martin.