

# Australian Dog of the Year 2026



**Louie**, Border Collie, Gold Coast QLD

**Nominated Charity Recipient:** Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence

**Impact area:** Trauma recovery and emotional wellbeing

**Role:** Accredited therapy dog supporting survivors of sexual violence

**Community supported:** Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence and broader Gold Coast community

**Years of impact:** 4+ years

**Why this matters:** Louie's work highlights the profound role dogs can play in healing, safety and connection, particularly for people navigating trauma.

*"My hope is that people take away (from Louie's story) a deeper appreciation for connection, gentleness and the unexpected ways healing can occur, sometimes with four paws and a quiet presence beside you."*

**Caroline Brunne, Louie's human**

Louie entered his human Caroline's life in late 2020 during a pivotal period of personal healing. Without formal training or expectation, he became a steady and grounding presence, offering quiet companionship and emotional support during difficult moments. That early bond would go on to shape Louie's future role in the community.

As Caroline began working with trauma survivors, Louie's calming influence quickly resonated beyond the home. Clients responded to his ability to help them feel safe, regulated and present, particularly during conversations that can be confronting or overwhelming. What began organically was later formalised through Therapy Dogs Australia, ensuring Louie's work could be delivered ethically and safely, with care for both dog and human.

Today, Louie supports survivors through his work with the Gold Coast Centre Against Sexual Violence. His role is not directive or performative. Instead, he provides calm companionship, grounding and reassurance in spaces where trust can be fragile and words are often insufficient. His presence helps people feel safe, regulated and supported during moments that can feel overwhelming.

Louie's impact is shaped not only by the support he offers others, but also by his own resilience. At just six months old, he underwent major hip surgery, with concerns raised about his long-term mobility. Through careful rehabilitation and determination, he made a full recovery and now works confidently and joyfully in his therapy role.

Louie's story is one of full-circle impact. Once a source of comfort during a personal healing journey, he now helps others navigate their own. His work demonstrates how dogs can contribute to wellbeing in deeply meaningful ways, through presence, gentleness and connection.

*"Louie's work supporting survivors of sexual violence is highly specialised and deeply impactful. He provides a sense of safety and regulation that words alone cannot offer, helping people navigate conversations often held in silence. His role is quiet, but its effect is profound."* **Agnes Beugnon, Judging Panel**