

## Paws-itive Change Medal 2026



**Gus**, Labrador Retriever, Perth WA

**Aligned Charity:** Ronald McDonald House WA

**Impact area:** Family wellbeing, comfort and emotional support

**Role:** Community support dog providing calm, connection and companionship

**Community supported:** Families staying at Ronald McDonald House WA

**Years of impact:** Since 2016

**Why this matters:** Gus has quietly supported tens of thousands of families during some of the most challenging moments of their lives, helping create a sense of normalcy, comfort and connection when it is needed most.

*“Gus just changes the atmosphere of the House. He brings calm, comfort and a sense of home at a time when families need it most.”* **Tamma, Ronald McDonald House WA**

Gus came to Ronald McDonald House WA after being placed from Guide Dogs WA, where his calm nature and gentle temperament quickly stood out. When families arrive at the House, they are often far from home, facing prolonged hospital stays and emotional uncertainty while their child receives specialist medical care. Gus meets them at that moment, offering reassurance without expectation.

For almost a decade, Gus has been a constant presence within the House. He sits beside parents receiving difficult news, plays gently with siblings who are struggling to understand what is happening, and curls up with children who simply need comfort. Through thousands of quiet interactions, he has become an integral part of the care and support provided to families during extended stays.

Gus' impact has continued even through his own health challenges. After undergoing surgery to remove a cancerous lump and later a tumour from his lung, he spent months on light duties while recovering. His return to the House was met with relief and joy from families and staff alike, a testament to how deeply he is woven into daily life at Ronald McDonald House WA.

The Paws-itive Change Medal recognises dogs whose influence creates meaningful, lasting change in the lives of others. Gus' contribution is not defined by a single moment, but by consistency. Day after day, year after year, he has helped families feel supported, seen and less alone.

*“Gus embodies what the Paws-itive Change Award stands for. For almost a decade, he has quietly supported families during some of the most difficult moments of their lives, offering comfort, normalcy and connection when it is needed most. His impact isn't measured in moments, but in the thousands of families whose time at Ronald McDonald House has been made gentler because he was there.”*

**Kerry Martin, Founder**