



MEDIA RELEASE

December 2025

The Pawsuit Is On: Puppy Tales launches the 2026 Australian Dog of the Year!

Celebrating the goodest Aussie dogs for their love, courage and fur-iendship

\$20,000 prize pool for Winners, Nominees and Voters!

Plus more Medals and new Judges, including ABC Muster Dogs TV star Frank Finger

As Australia celebrates the nominees and winners for the 2026 Australian of the Year, [Puppy Tales](#) is once again proud to launch the search for the [2026 Australian Dog of the Year!](#)

Now in its sixth year, the **Puppy Tales Australian Dog of the Year** awards aim to sniff out the doggo who best embodies the true-blue Aussie spirit of love, courage, inspiration, assistance and fur-iendship. The winners will be unleashed on Australia Day, 26 January 2026.

“They awards are about shining a national spotlight on the often-unsung heroes making a paws-itive difference every day, whether in homes, schools, hospitals and communities across the country, often without asking for anything in return,” says Kerry Martin, award-winning pet photographer, author and founder of Puppy Tales.

The Awards are inspired by the remarkable dogs – including her own – Kerry has met and photographed throughout her years of travel across this beautiful country. From therapy and assistance dogs to hardworking farm dogs, conservation heroes, and the fearless hounds in rescue teams, the military and the police force, our canine companions are as diverse as Australia itself!

“These dogs aren’t just remarkable; they truly change lives,” Kerry adds. “The 2025 Australian Dog of the Year, Elle, is a remarkable deaf rescue dog who communicates through sign language and supports school children facing anxiety and behavioural challenges, spreading joy wherever she goes. Elle is even part of the school staff photo, a testament to the incredible difference she’s made in her community.”



The nominations have been so doggone impressive that Puppy Tales has added fresh new awards to keep up, including the Canine Home Hero Medal and Dog of Talent Medal.

Also, this year’s awards feature a special **new judging panel**, including ABC’s *Muster Dogs* TV star Frank Finger, 2025 Winner Elle’s human, Robyn Adair, Australian Dog Lover’s publisher Agnes Beugnon, and Australia’s most resilient dog Valerie the Dachshund’s human, Georgia Gardner.

Keep your paws on the [Australian Dog of the Year](#) website for updates!

Celebrating dogs with big rewards

Puppy Tales wants to hear about the pooches who’ve gone above and beyond, whether it’s through service to their communities, life-changing support to humans or simply being the best mate a person could ask for.

The Puppy Tales Australian Dog of the Year 2026 winners, nominees and voters will share in prizes worth \$20K.

“The Puppy Tales Australian Dog of the Year Award not only celebrates our incredible canine companions but also gives back,” says Kerry. “Puppy Tales will make a generous donation to the winner’s preferred charity, recognising the vital work they do in communities across the country, particularly in these challenging times.”

Winner

- \$1,000 Donation to Charity / NFP of their Choice
- Photography Session & 'The Bailey' Collection from Puppy Tales (minimum value \$4,000)
- Personalised trophy of the winning dog (value \$300)
- Media Campaign with [Pet Journo](#) announcing your title to the Australian Media
- \$250 Pet Circle Gift Card

The Paws-itive Change Medal

Celebrating the dog who makes a positive impact in the community, from work in policing, conservation, biosecurity and therapy to education, advocacy, fundraising, ambassador roles and more. This category also honours dogs influencing change in the pet industry, veterinary care or legislation.

- \$250 Donation to Charity/NFP of their Choice
- Photography Session and Large Canvas from Puppy Tales (Value \$1250)
- Media Campaign with Pet Journo announcing your title to the Australian Media
- \$250 Pet Circle Gift Card

Canine Home Hero Medal

Recognising the dog whose courage, intuition, work, companionship or life-saving actions have significantly impacted their human or family (and other pets), including medical or safety alerts, essential emotional support, farm working duties and so much more.

- \$250 Donation to Charity/NFP of their Choice
- Photography Session and Large Canvas from Puppy Tales (Value \$1250)
- Media Campaign with Pet Journo announcing your title to the Australian Media
- \$250 Pet Circle Gift Card

Dog of Talent Medal

Recognising the talented pooch who loves to excel, entertain or perform – from the sporting star or trick dog to the theatre or TV performer, the clever canine with show-stopping ‘party tricks’ or the dog who can paint, surf or pose with paw-fection. This category celebrates every unique doggo talent!

- \$250 Donation to Charity/NFP of their Choice
- Photography Session and Large Canvas from Puppy Tales (Value \$1250)
- Media Campaign with Pet Journo announcing your title to the Australian Media
- \$250 Pet Circle Gift Card

People's Choice Medal

- \$250 Donation to Charity / NFP of their Choice
- Photography Session and Large Canvas from Puppy Tales (Value \$1,250)
- Media Campaign with Pet Journo announcing your title to the Australian Media
- \$100 Pet Circle Gift Card

The ARAS (All Rescues Are Special) Medal - Sponsored by The Saltiest Dog

- \$250 Donation to Charity/NFP of their Choice
- Photography Session and Large Canvas from Puppy Tales (Value \$1250)
- Media Campaign with Pet Journo announcing your title to the Australian Media
- \$100 The Saltiest Dog Gift Card

Nominee Prize Draw (x10)

- \$450 Puppy Tales Photography Gift Card

Voters in the People's Choice Prize Draw (x10)

- \$450 Puppy Tales Photography Gift Card

Random weekly prizes for nominees

To add an extra wag to the celebrations, everyone who nominates a dog has the chance to fetch a weekly prize! For **five weeks from 24 November**, all valid nominations will go into the draw to win one of **5 x \$200 gift cards for Golden BARKery Treats**.

The gift cards are a generous gift on behalf of **Sunday the Rottweiler**, winner of the **2025 Paws-itive Change Award** – a tribute to the dogs making a paws-itive difference in the lives of people and pets everywhere.

Which dogs can be nominated?

Every dog is a hero in their own way – and **ALL** are encouraged to enter!

“Whether they’ve saved lives, supported their humans through challenges or simply brought joy and comfort to those around them, every dog’s story deserves to be celebrated,” says Kerry.

- Guide dogs, hearing dogs and assistance dogs
- Therapy dogs visiting hospitals, aged care or schools
- Dogs who help people with disabilities or health challenges
- Dogs involved in reading programs or providing support in classrooms
- Wildlife detection, conservation or protection dogs
- Dogs who have located, rescued or saved people or animals
- Police, military and other service dogs
- Working dogs on farms and in the community
- Dogs who are blood donors helping to save other pets
- The loyal best friend who helped you through a tough time

If your dog represents the true spirit of Australia by being courageous, loving or in any way amazing, [nominate them now](#) for a chance to be celebrated for the awesome doggo they are and win fabulous prizes to treat them like the royalty they are!

Important dates

- Nomination deadline is 8pm on Monday, 12 January 2026
- Finalists will be announced on Wednesday, 14 January 2026
- Voting for the People’s Choice of the finalists will also commence on January 14 and will close at 12pm on Friday, 23 January 2026.
- Winners will be announced on Australia Day (Monday, 26 January 2026) on [Puppy Tales’ Facebook page](#).

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MEDIA CONTACT

Caroline Zambrano, Pet Journalist
petjournalo@gmail.com | 0403 550 730

IMAGES: Please credit all photos to Puppy Tales Photography

- [General](#)
- [Past Winners](#)
- [Social Media Visuals](#)



About Kerry Martin & Puppy Tales

*Photodography™ you'll adore
Pet Travel & Adventures you'll Dig*

Kerry Martin of Puppy Tales considers pets very much part of the family so lives this adage to help and inspire fellow pet parents to create incredible memories of a most pawsome life together!

Kerry is Melbourne-based but on the road throughout Australia offering her award-winning dog photography. She was crowned the only Australian winner in the 2024 International Pet Photography Awards!

She's known throughout the country for her seasonal photography experiences, most notably Snow Dogs, and her studio-based Project Dogalogue. Of the many national and international photography awards she's received over the past decade, the highlights have been Master of Photography and Australian Pet/Animal Photographer of the Year.

As she travels with her own adored furry companions Keiko & Summer, Kerry writes to share her knowledge and experiences of all things dog, photography and travel. She creates content for the Puppy Tales website, a social media community of over 500,000 and other publications to promote the wonderful relationships between dogs and people. This includes encouraging dog-inclusive activities and lifestyles, telling of her travels & adventures, providing resources for keeping dogs happy & healthy, sharing dog photography how-to and recounting heartfelt dog stories. All accompanied by her stunning photography!

Puppy Tales is a business for good with a mission to make a paws-itive difference. Puppy Tales operates as carbon negative; supports many local organisations through photography, fundraising and more; and plays a part in the global community's effort to protect the planet, take action on climate change and care for animals and wildlife. She's also the founder of the Australian Dog of the Year Awards which recognise the incredible contribution of dogs to people, communities and society. To discover more, visit <https://puppytales.com.au>