

MEDIA RELEASE
FOR RELEASE ON Wednesday 17 September 2025

Vets and Dogs: Supporting Veterans Through Dog Training

Spotswood, VIC – Veterans from the Police, Navy, Army, Air Force, Fire Brigade, Prison, and Ambulance services are coming together with their dogs in *Vets and Dogs*, a unique new program launched by Planet K9 and Spotswood–Kingsville RSL.

Developed from the vision of retired Detective Sergeant **Peter Bellion** and guided by Class Captain **Nala**, a retired police sniffer dog, the program supports mental health, builds confidence, and strengthens community through hands-on dog training. The inaugural program is proudly sponsored by **RSL Active**.

Participants and their dogs are building skills in basic manners and agility while discovering the powerful role dogs play in reducing stress, encouraging connection, and creating a sense of belonging.

“This program brings together everything we stand for — mateship, support, and service. And dogs have a special way of breaking down barriers and building trust,” said Peter Bellion, President of Spotswood–Kingsville RSL.

Planet K9 trainer **Nicole Beasley**, former Corrections Officer, has seen firsthand how dogs transform group dynamics:

“I know how hard it can be for people to open up. Dogs change that — they break down barriers, create common ground, and make connection feel natural.”

Participants have praised the program for its impact on wellbeing and connection:

- **“It’s been a huge lift for my mental health — the dogs make it easy to relax and join in.”**
- **“The conversations just flow when the dogs are around. It feels natural, not forced.”**
- **“This program reminded me how much fun community can be. The dogs give us a reason to laugh and connect.”**
- **“I walked in feeling isolated and walked out feeling part of something again.”**

Dr **Katherine Kovacic**, Planet K9 trainer, added:

“This program is about more than dog training. It’s about restoring connection, building confidence, and creating a supportive community for veterans.”

With the success of this inaugural course, Planet K9 and Spotswood–Kingsville RSL are now seeking sponsorship partners to expand *Vets and Dogs* across Victoria. Interested organisations or individuals are encouraged to contact the program team to discuss opportunities to support veterans and their dogs.

Program Details:

- **Location:** Planet K9, Spotswood–Kingsville RSL
- **Session Times:** Sundays, 11am (45-minute sessions)
- **Cost:** Free for veterans — proudly sponsored by RSL Active
- **Eligibility:** Open to all veterans; no dog training experience required

Media Opportunity:

Journalists and photographers are welcome to attend Sunday sessions to capture veterans and their dogs in action, led by Class Captain Nala. A weekday photo/live opportunity can also be arranged on request.

Media Image Gallery:

High-resolution images available for media download here:

<https://snappypetphotography.pixieset.com/planetk9vetsanddogs/>

Photography by Snappy Pets Photography

Media and Sponsorship Enquiries:

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<https://www.planetk9.com.au/vetsanddogs>

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