

Friday 24th February, 2023

CRONULLA RSL TO HOST WAR ANIMAL DAY MEMORIAL SERVICE

Cronulla RSL will host a special service to commemorate National Day for War Animals on Friday 24th February in the Club's memorial garden at 10am. The garden features a bronze plaque dedicated to animals who have served during times of war & peace, which is the first of its kind at an RSL club in NSW.

The National Day for War Animals recognises the important roles that animals have and continue to play in war.

Animals have been put to many uses in war, serving as transport, beasts of burden, messengers, protectors, mascots, and pets. They have played an important part in all wars in which Australians have been involved. It is estimated that more than 8 million animals died in WW1 alone: 400,000 horses left our Australian shore – only one was allowed to return home. 20,000 dogs, 200,000 pigeons, camels, mules, donkeys and even insects all played their part in battle.

On the day, the Club will also be fundraising for the Australian War Animal Memorial Organisation (AWAMO). AWAMO are currently working tirelessly to support and provide much-needed food, medication, and ground support to those helping the innocent animals of Ukraine suffering through conflict, via their sub-branch Australian Animal Aid. AWAMO also run ANZAC Veteran Service Dog Assistance Project; A program in place to financially help retired Military working dogs from the Australian Defence Force. During ANZAC day fundraising in 2021 & 2022, Cronulla RSL raised over \$15,000 for AWAMO & Manic.

The Chief Executive Officer of Cronulla RSL, Sue McNeill commented, "our local veterans have educated us on the courage of animals who have served their country and the peace they have fought hard to achieve. It is only fitting that we commemorate our service animals on this day, acknowledging the sacrifices they too have made.

We hope our ceremony will also raise awareness about the fantastic work conducted by AWAMO, their Military War Dog Assistance Program and Australian Animal Aid. We owe so much to animals impacted by war. We hope the wider community consider helping us make a difference."

War Animal Day is a day all Australians can wear a purple poppy and think not only about our soldiers who gave their lives in war, but also spare a thought for the four-legged and winged heroes that fought and died alongside our troops.

Locals are encouraged to bring their four-legged friends to the memorial, however it's important to remember that dogs must be on a lead and cats must be contained, and under the effective control of a competent person.

Dignitaries attending the event include:

- The Hon. Mark Speakman, NSW Attorney General & Member for Cronulla
- Mayor Carmelo Pesce & Deputy Mayor Carol Provan, Cnr Leanne Farmer of Sutherland Shire Council
- Chief Inspector Craig James & Superintendent Julian Griffiths, of the NSW Police Force Dog & Mounted Command
- The directors of Cronulla RSL, led by President John Brown
- The Chief Executive Officer of Cronulla RSL, Sue McNeill
- The Committee of the Cronulla RSL Sub-Branch

Local Veteran War Dog Manic, plus other service animals (both retired and currently serving) will also be attending.

For more information on War Animal Day visit
<https://www.cronullarslcommunity.com.au/waranimalday>

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