



NAROOMA DOG TRAINING CLUB

Presentation to Eurobodalla Shire Council

Tuesday 28 March 2023

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What we do

Narooma Dog Training Club, a Branch of the NSW Animal Welfare League, focuses its activities on canine education and community engagement.

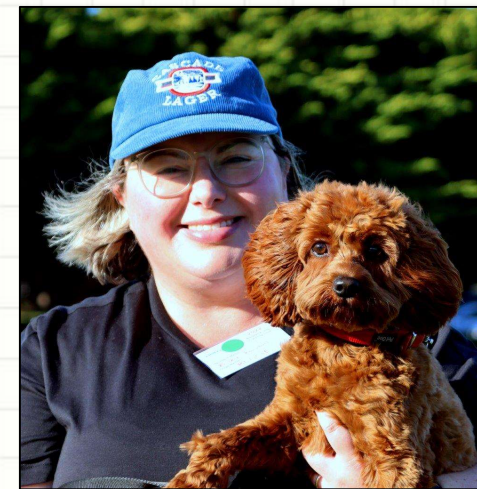
We hold weekly group classes in three disciplines - Obedience, Agility and Rally Obedience - for owners of pet dogs living on the NSW far south coast.

We operate every Saturday afternoon at NATA Oval Narooma, from February until early December. All classes are one hour in duration.

Dog owners register as handlers for a calendar year. Some stay a short while to achieve their Basic Handling Skills Certificate, socialise their dog, and bond with their pet. Others stay with us for many years, learning advanced dog handling skills, and enjoying the social and competitive aspects of our activities.

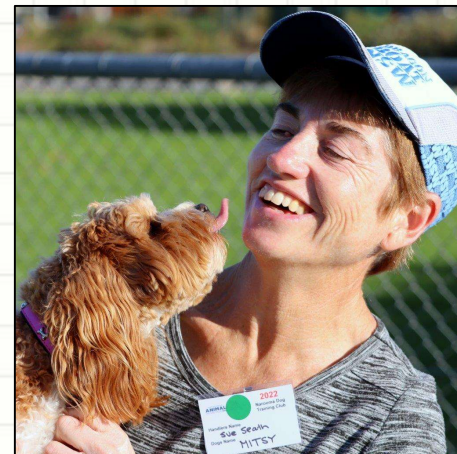
Our class goals are based on ANKCA (Association of National Kennel Council Australia) guidelines, so that handlers are well equipped to compete in formal Trials if they choose.

Promotions through four levels of Obedience are regularly awarded, and trophies and encouragement awards across all disciplines are presented at the end of every year.



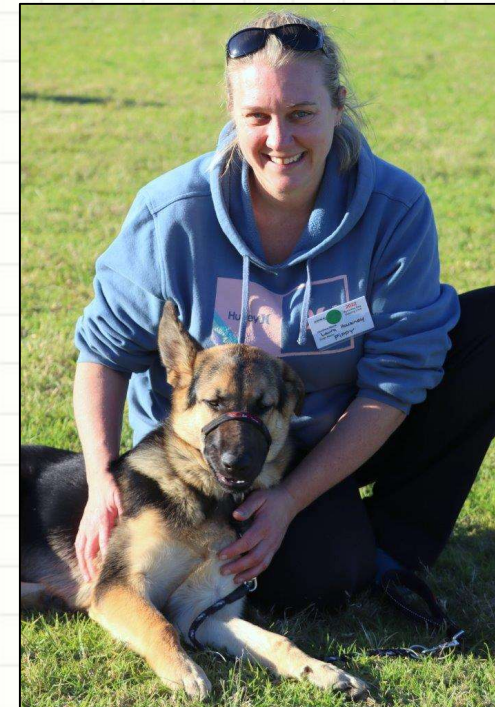
What are our aims?

- To provide opportunities for pet dog owners to form a strong bond with their dog and develop good behaviours in their dog, using gentle training techniques and positive reinforcement methods.
- To provide opportunities for pet dog owners to socialise their dog by mixing with dogs of all ages and breeds.
- To create a fun and safe learning environment for dogs, their owners, and our volunteer Instructors.
- To share knowledge and experiences of all aspects of canine management and welfare.
- To support dog owners who choose to adopt and rehome a rescue animal, and those experiencing particular behavioural problems in their dog.
- To conduct all our activities in the spirit and philosophy of the NSW Animal Welfare League.



How effective are we?

- Since 2017 over 650 dogs and their handlers have received training in our programs.
- 2017 - 108
- 2018 - 132
- 2019 - 115
- 2020 and 2021 were Covid ravaged years, with disrupted programs due to lockdowns. Overall 100 handlers still registered in 2020, and 85 in 2021.
- 2022, a year to rebuild post Covid, just under 100 handlers brought their pet dogs to our programs.
- Every year, 60-70 new dog owners bond with their pet, learn how to teach their dog good behaviours, and become responsible pet dog owners - all as a direct result of our programs.
- The outdoor nature of our activities promotes a healthy lifestyle and supports the positive impact that pet ownership has on humans - the “Pet-Effect”



What we want and why

We have achieved the confidence of the general public and our contribution to the control and good behaviour of the increasing number of dogs in Eurobodalla Shire, whilst undocumented, is significant.

In order to continue to provide this important service in the shire, and remain sustainable and relevant, **we need a home** - a facility where:

- **Equipment can be permanently and securely stored.** This is especially important for the valuable agility equipment we own. Every week 6-7 volunteers carry equipment to and from Nata Oval in order to conduct classes. The physical demands are proving to be an impediment to securing and retaining volunteers. There are also challenges to the coordination of equipment that has affected the quality of our programs.
- **Meetings can take place.** Currently we meet at the Narooma Men's Shed. Whilst a sizeable space is available, it is both noisy and being a multi-use space, lacks the privacy needed to conduct business and discuss sensitive matters.
- **Animal Welfare is promoted.** Information about animal welfare organisations and Council regulations relating to pet dogs is available online. But nothing compares to the one-to-one advice and assistance that we offer individuals experiencing difficulties with their dog. This facility could also be regularly used by Council Rangers, and Veterinary personnel during emergencies, such as were experienced in the 2019/20 bushfires, without impacting the Nata Oval evacuation point itself.

What have we done so far?

Prior to 2016 (when Narooma Dog Training Club operated under the umbrella of the Eurobodalla Branch of the NSW Animal Welfare League) an approach was made to Council. At that time, it was muted to extend the back of the former Visitor Information Centre. This would have been perfect, but sadly did not eventuate. Since 2016, we have been fundraising and are ready to commit \$30,000 to the establishment with Council, of a permanent home at Nata Oval.

- In 2018 we commenced discussions with the Narooma Men's Shed, to secure a storage space on their new site in Barker Avenue.
- In 2020 we contacted the owners of the Narooma Scout Hall with a view to using that vacant building, but no reply was received.
- In 2021 we were advised by Narooma Men's Shed that no such space was available on their new site. An approach was then made to Club Narooma, who expressed support but were unable to offer space.
- In 2022 we formed a Sub-Committee, and commenced discussions with representatives of other like minded groups - Eurobodalla RSPCA, Montague Vets Narooma, and the Eurobodalla Branch of the NSW Animal Welfare League.
- In 2022 Head Office of the NSW Animal Welfare League gave us permission to approach Council.

We call it PAWS

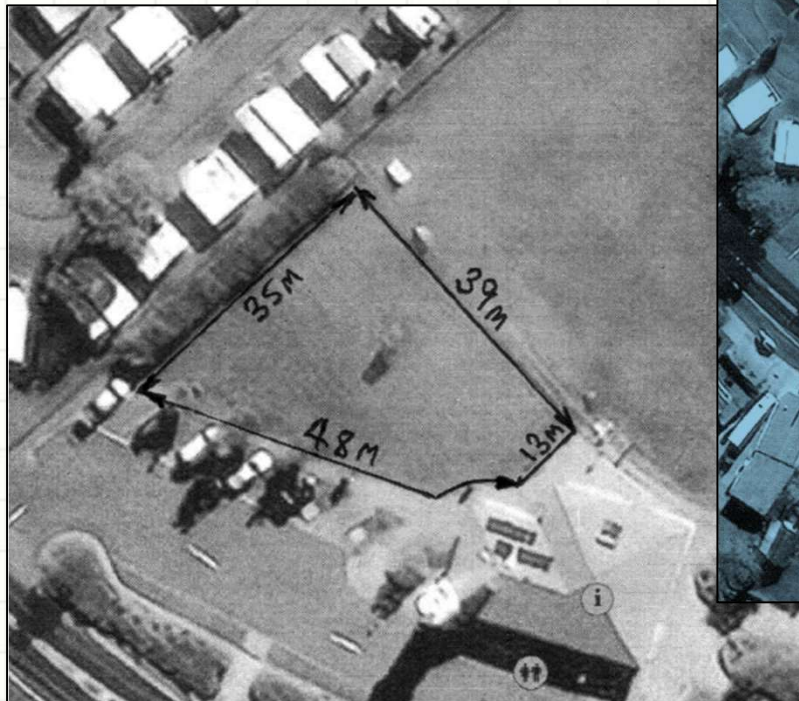
- **Project working title - PAWS (Pets And Wildlife Station)**
- A permanent facility, located on Crown Land adjacent to NATA Oval Narooma.
- There is plenty of car parking available and the area is large enough to support an additional permanent building without loss of important public space.

- PAWS would be accessible to Council Rangers and could be made available to other animal welfare and wildlife organisations.
- PAWS would operate as a “safe zone” during declared emergencies for people with pets, and a place of contact for Vet services. It would value add to the role of the Nata Oval area as an Emergency Operations Centre.

- **We can pledge \$30,000 right now to build PAWS.** The facility would be owned and managed by Eurobodalla Council, with an agreement for preferential and affordable hire given to Narooma Dog Training Club as co-funder of the facility. A precedent exists (the fence around NATA Oval) for this type of collaborative project.
- We would work with Council to develop a User Requirement Brief, to inform the construction of PAWS - including wheelchair access, solar panels, accessible toilet, kitchenette, WiFi, appropriate signage, notice board, storage room and external themed mural decoration.

NATA Oval

Available space for location of PAWS



NATA Oval with surrounds

Examples of facilities in NSW:



Brush Farm Dog Training Club - Ryde, NSW



Kyeamba Kennel Club - Wagga, NSW



Maitland Dog Obedience Club - NSW



Springwood District Dog Training - Blue Mountains, NSW

Examples of facilities in other states:



Bendigo Dog Obedience - VIC



Gold Coast Dog Club - QLD



Tuggeranong Dog Training Club - ACT



Southern Obedience Dog Club - VIC



Some of the equipment used in dog Agility.

Addendum

- Health Benefits - The “Pet Effect “
- Brief History of Narooma Dog Training Club
- Obedience
- Agility
- Rally Obedience

Health Benefits - the “Pet Effect”

“The ‘pet effect’, as it’s been dubbed, is the positive impact that pet ownership can have on our physical, social and even psychological health, improving everything from our immune system to the way we respond to stress.”

(Dr Kirsti Seksel - <https://www.deltasociety.com.au/post/the-pet-effect-the-benefits-of-the-human-animal-connection>.) Dr Seksel, a well-known animal behaviourist, backs up her comments with numerous popular and scientific studies that have observed a measurable effect on health outcomes in people who interact with pets and other animals. Many of us have experienced the positive impact of therapy dogs in schools and aged-care settings, and the curious way in which walking a dog invites strangers to come over for a chat.

In the *Australian Family Physician* magazine, Dr Bradley Smith states that *“Companion animals can be helpful in practical ways for patients with weight problems, high blood pressure, susceptibility to stress and anxiety, loneliness, depression and difficulty socialising.”*

His article (<https://www.racgp.org.au/afp/2012/june/the-pet-effect>) contains references from the *American Journal of Medicine*, the *Australian Bureau of Statistics*, *Psychology*, *Gerontology*, and the *Journal of Paediatric Nursing*.

Smith observes *“Information about smoking, nutrition, alcohol and physical activity is routinely collected when a patient's medical history is taken. The subject of companion animals is rarely discussed. Asking patients in high risk groups (eg. those who are overweight, depressed or lonely), 'do you have any pets at home?', and determining the level of pet attachment, can provide a wealth of information that may inform or influence management of that patient. Talking about pets may also facilitate discussion about health and lifestyle and promote rapport.”*

Brief History of Narooma Dog Training Club

- Narooma Dog Training Club (NDTC) was founded in 2005 by Yve Robinson, when she moved to Narooma from Sydney bringing with her a wealth of knowledge and experience. Yve was a driving force in the Brush Farm Dog Training Club - Canine Examiner (7yrs), Committee Member (7yrs), Trial Secretary (8yrs), Instructor (5yrs), Deputy Chief Instructor (7yrs), and Chief Instructor (12yrs). She was instrumental in the formation of the Parramatta International Agility Club, holding the position of President (3yrs), and championing the recognition of crossbreed companion dogs at both obedience and agility NSW trials.
- Classes in dog obedience and agility were initially held in Yve's back garden. But as interest grew a more formal structure was needed. From 2007 NDTC became part of NSW Animal Welfare League (NSW AWL) Eurobodalla Branch. The juxtaposition of welfare and education activities resulted in many years of successful delivery of canine services to the community by that Branch.
- In 2016 an opportunity to form a new Branch arose. NDTC, as a separate and independent Branch of NSW AWL, was born. NDTC is the first and only Branch in the NSW AWL family to focus solely on canine welfare and education.

Obedience

- Structured classes in dog obedience are held weekly, beginning with Basic Handling Skills (Green Class) with all dogs on lead.
- Blue, Yellow, Red and Black Classes follow, in which dog obedience exercises become more challenging. Upon reaching the top level, Black Class CCD equivalent level, all exercises are completed off lead.
- Handlers progress upwards following an assessment process called Handlers Days. Certificates are awarded for all promotions, and ribbons awarded to those achieving best results in each class. Trophies are awarded at the end of the year based on accumulated scores from Handlers Days.
- Our Obedience goals are set based on ANKCA (Association of National Kennel Council Australia) guidelines, so that handlers are well equipped to compete in formal Dog Trials if they choose.



Agility

- Agility Training is offered to dogs over 9 months of age, who have completed their basic obedience training. All dogs begin learning Agility on lead, until both handler and dog have developed sufficient skills to work off lead.
- Kathryn McKellar manages the Agility program, designs the weekly courses, and oversees the maintenance of equipment.
- An in-house competition offers the opportunity to win awards and trophies each year.
- NDTC also participates annually in an inter-club competition, run annually by Kyeamba Kennel and Training Club, based in Wagga.



Rally Obedience

- Rally Obedience Training (Rally) was a new initiative brought into the NDTC program in 2019.
- Rally is a dog sport based on obedience training. Handlers proceed around a course of designated stations with their dog in heel position. Signs instruct the handler what to do. This training discipline is great for improving handler and dog communication.
- Rally is open to all handlers who have completed basic obedience training in Green Class.
- An in-house assessment process provides opportunities to win ribbons and end of year awards.

