

# COMPANION

WINTER 2023 | [lortsmith.com](http://lortsmith.com)

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# A message from the CEO: Through adversity, we grow

In these challenging times, I continue to be moved by the commitment and generosity of the community in how they contribute to the mission of Lort Smith. For we are nothing without the kindness of our supporters, the loyalty of our customers and the dedicated input of our staff.

It's no secret, the cost-of-living crisis continues to weigh on members of our community. As budgets tighten even further, uptakes in pet insurance have steadily dropped and many pet owners are delaying routine check-ups for their animals. We are often seeing sicker animals at our hospital and clinics, and an increase in surrendered pets at our Adoption Centre as more people struggle to afford their care. It's a devastating reality many people face right now — the decision between taking their animal to the vet or putting food on the table.

The full story does not stop there either. Over the past few years, research shows that pet ownership in Victoria is on the rise. According to survey data from Animal Medicines Australia, Victoria saw an 8% increase since the pandemic began, meaning 69% of us have an animal companion to care for. Our pets bring us an invaluable source of love and companionship each and every day, which is critical to wellbeing in this tough economic climate. Being able to afford the healthcare they deserve is essential to pet ownership.

We are cognisant of these struggles and that we have an important role to play in helping however we can. Through generous donations to our Pets In Need fund we are able to help cover a portion of vet costs to those facing financial hardship and by working with local

caseworkers, our Emergency Welfare Assistance program helps to cover the cost of caring for pets when people are facing personal crisis, such as fleeing domestic violence or those experiencing homelessness.

The opening of our new hospital in North Melbourne is also a meaningful step in how we can continue to support the needs of our community. State-of-the-art facilities with comfort and care front of mind means better health outcomes for your pets. And while our new and improved facilities will have an enormous benefit to our capacity, our generous supporters are the true heart of the operation.

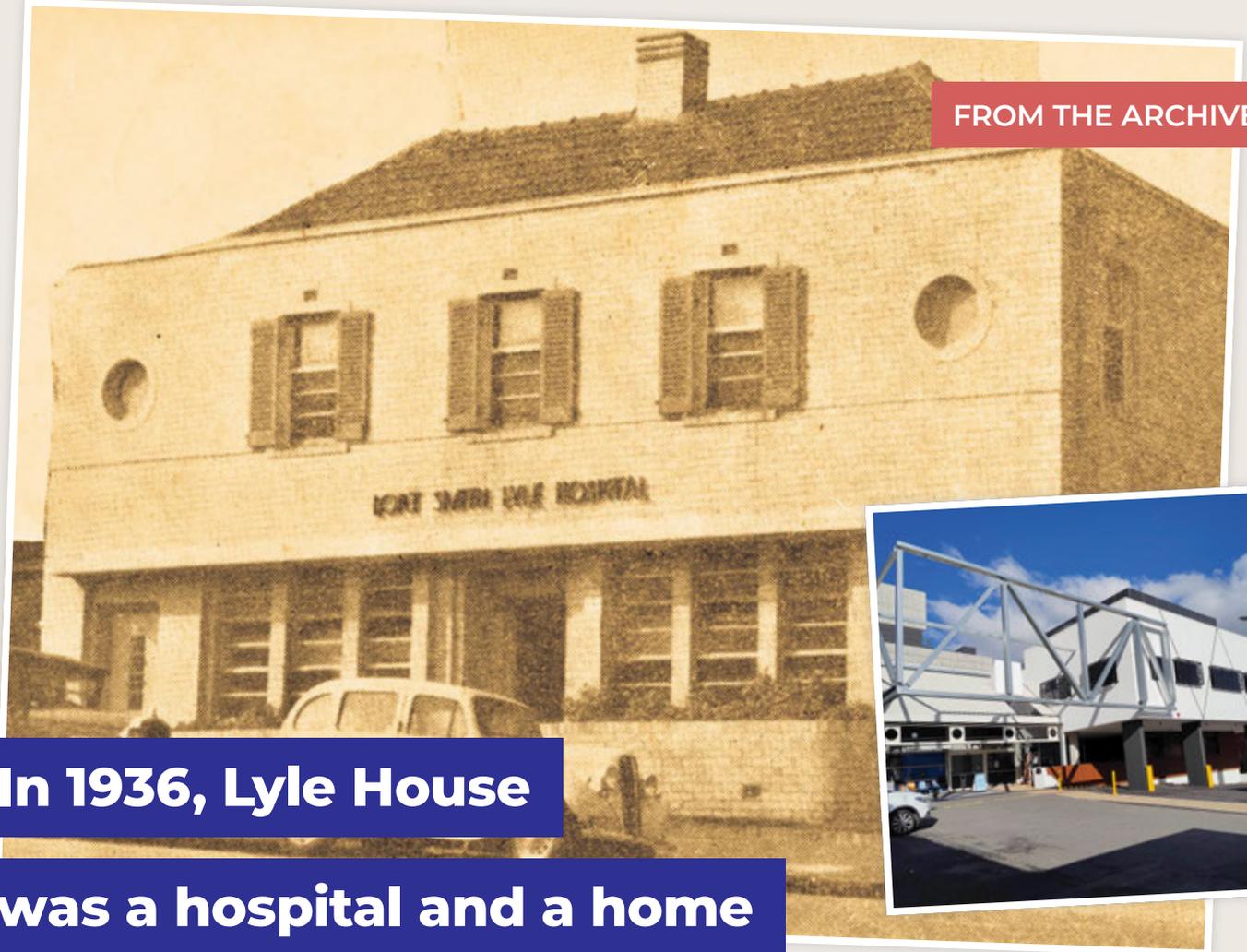
I am thrilled to see the needs of our vets and nurses reflected in the design of our new hospital, with features such as more natural light, and thoughtful flow of daily operations. In what is a demanding and often stressful environment, these details help us to support them to stay well and provide the best care for animals.

We are overwhelmed by the generous response we received for our recent Cost of Living Crisis Appeal and the continued engagement of the wider community with our organisation. Your support is at the heart of our mission and we are grateful to have you by our side.



**Jennifer Fleming**  
Chief Executive Officer,  
Lort Smith Animal Hospital

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**In 1936, Lyle House**

**was a hospital and a home**

When it was originally built in 1936, the Lort Smith Lyle Hospital, as it was originally known, was a humble, blonde brick building where the clinic ran downstairs whilst the resident vet lived upstairs.

Many treatments took place outdoors in the yard behind — clearly horses and cows wouldn't be comfortable in the small consult rooms that originally existed. The building still stands today, largely unchanged. Renamed Lyle House, in honour of Lady Frances Lyle, Lort Smith's original benefactor. It is a constant reminder of what we can achieve together.

### **New hospital update**

While there have been a number of hurdles to overcome, during the redevelopment of the hospital, including noisy construction and the repositioning of some of our facilities, we are pleased to have remained open to the community throughout the works. A big thank you to our dedicated staff who have ensured we are always focused on the animals and their comfort throughout the redevelopment.

### **Why the redevelopments are important**

The high-tech new hospital will be significantly larger which means we can give extra support to Melbourne's growing pet population and their diverse needs. From vaccinations to CT scans, and dentistry to ultrasounds, as technology evolves, so does the way we treat our patients.

In short, our hospital is changing to meet the changing needs of the community we serve.

### **New features and facilities at North Melbourne**

The new hospital and clinical spaces are designed to be comfortable and fear-free, to reduce the anxiety and stress that vet visits can cause for our pets and families.

Some of the notable new features and facilities we can now utilise include:

- A new visitor carpark with 20 spaces at the front of our hospital entrance
- Fear-free pods to reduce disturbance for patients and their carers in the waiting room
- Spacious surgery rooms with upgraded equipment for procedures
- More consult spaces so we can provide care for patients sooner
- Improved laundry facilities with more storage and a chute to streamline everyday duties
- Windows and natural light in surgery spaces for vet and animal wellbeing.



## A special way to give

Every year Lort Smith supports thousands of animals and their carers because of the support of generous bequests. As the cost-of-living crisis continues, the need is now higher than ever.

There are many ways to show your support for animal welfare and leaving a bequest in your Will is one of the most valuable ways to assist the Lort Smith Animal Hospital. It means as the need of our services continues to increase, we are still able to provide shelter, treatment, and essential services to animals and those who care for them especially when they need it most.

### Bequests and gifts in wills

The Lort Smith Animal Hospital is incredibly grateful to their bequest supporters who give to help improve the health and wellbeing of animals and the people who love them into the future.

Bequests allow us to plan ahead to ensure that we can continue to provide our expert care and services to the community.

### Pet Legacy Program

Lort Smith can help ensure that your much-loved companion finds a wonderful and caring home when you pass away. Our Pet Legacy Program provides peace of mind to bequest supporters knowing that, should the need arise, Lort Smith will find their pets a loving home that will provide and care for them for the rest of their days.

**For a confidential discussion about how you can leave a lasting legacy by remembering Lort Smith in your Will, please call Elaine McPartlin on (03) 9287 6417 or email [bequests@lortsmith.com](mailto:bequests@lortsmith.com)**

# Lort Smith supporters provide

## a happy family reunion

Having a baby is an exciting and daunting time for most people. But for Maggie and Simon, the mountain of additional challenges they faced leading up to the birth of their first baby in 2022 was overwhelming, so they turned to Lort Smith for help.

The couple and their sweet kelpie, Dyson live in the Victorian High Country with minimal local support. Maggie is wheelchair-bound and her partner, Simon is her main carer, so the pending birth came with a number of obstacles. To name just one, who would care for much-loved Dyson while Maggie and Simon were in Melbourne preparing for the delivery of their first child?

This is where Lort Smith stepped in with our donor-funded Emergency Welfare Assistance program. Based in the beautiful new Adoption Centre at Campbellfield, this program provides short-term accommodation and foster care for the pets of people experiencing extraordinary crises, such as domestic violence, periods of homelessness and extended or complex medical treatment.

Over the years and through the generosity of supporters, hundreds of pets have been given loving temporary homes and essential medical treatment while their carers have had time to recover.

A long way from home, kelpie Dyson was welcomed to Lort Smith with open arms, quickly becoming a favourite with the staff and volunteers. "He is a beautiful boy" says Lisa Varrasso, Senior Welfare Officer. "Everyone loved him, and knowing that we could give support to a family who really needed it meant a lot to all of us."

### Stress, transformed into joy

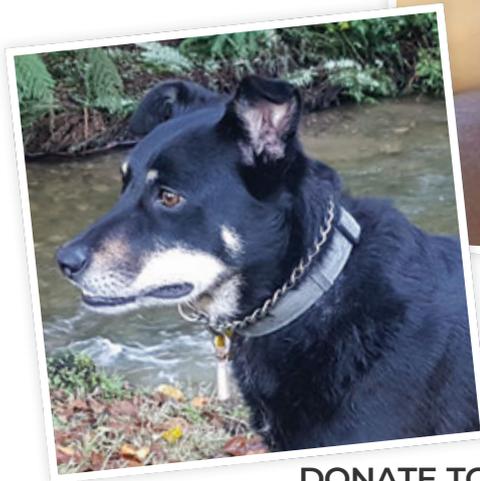
Baby Peggy arrived safely after a 10-day stay in Melbourne and after reuniting with a very excited Dyson, Maggie and Simon were able to take their whole family back home.

"Maggie and Simon were so grateful that we could support them when there were no other options" says Lisa. "Dealing with this level of stress and not knowing who'd care for Dyson wasn't healthy for them or the baby. We were so happy that we could take some of it off their shoulders and help them focus on safely bringing Peggy into the world."

Simon believes that what could have been a fraught and stressful experience was transformed into something joyous, thanks to the generosity of donors and the team at Lort Smith. "Knowing that Dyson was loved and cared for meant that we could focus on Maggie's health and the safe delivery of our beautiful little girl. We're so grateful to Lort Smith and the incredible donors who made this possible."

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— SIMON





# Combat the chill of winter:

## Keeping pets warm and well

Winter is upon us and the chilly days and frosty nights can be as challenging for our pets as they are for us. Just as we need to adjust our habits to remain comfortable and healthy, our pets need a little extra care too. Here are some helpful tips on keeping pets warm, safe, and healthy this winter.

### Elevate pet beds off cold, hard surfaces

Did you know that cold, hard surfaces can be a major source of heat loss for your pets? This winter, consider raising their beds off the ground. Even a few centimetres can make a significant difference. Providing an insulated bed with high sides can also help trap warmth and shield your pets from cold drafts.

### Fight the freeze with regular exercise

When it's cold outside, we might feel like staying bundled up indoors. But don't let the winter blues slow down your pet's exercise routine. Regular physical activity boosts your pet's circulation and helps keep them warm. Just remember to adjust the intensity and duration of outdoor activities to prevent overexposure to cold or musculoskeletal injuries.

### General health check-ups for cold weather ailments

Cold weather can exacerbate certain health conditions in pets, like arthritis. A routine check-up with our vets can help detect any potential problems early and they can advise on nutrition, exercise and medications to help your pet navigate the winter months with minimal discomfort.



### Appropriate winter clothing

A simple sweater or coat can provide an extra layer of insulation for your pet, especially for those with short or thin hair. Ensure it fits well, covering the major muscle groups without restricting movement. Consider waterproof coats for rainy days if your pet is outside to reduce the chill and support temperature regulation.

### Understanding heat seeking behaviour

Pets often seek warmth in risky spots like under cars or near heaters. Keep an eye on your pet's heat-seeking behaviour to ensure they aren't endangering themselves. Provide plenty of safe warmth options, like thermal beds. You may find them in soft warm spaces around the house such as the beds and couches if they are cold.

### Appropriate winter bedding

Upgrade your pet's bedding for the winter months. Opt for thicker blankets and consider thermal pet beds. Where possible, allow your pet indoor access or an insulated shelter (such as a kennel) and provide extra blankets.

### Beware of dehydration from heating

The dry air in heated homes can lead to dehydration for pets. Ensure they always have access to fresh water. Use plastic bowls rather than metal to prevent their tongue from sticking to cold surfaces.

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## Brianna's heartwarming journey to her forever-home

Incredible stories of healing and humanity are lived out in the clinics and corridors of Lort Smith every day, and Brianna's is one of them. Abandoned, skeletal and heavily pregnant, two-year-old cat Brianna was surrendered to our donor-funded Campbellfield Adoption Centre in March 2022.

The Centre's manager, Amanda Doolan, still remembers her first impressions of Brianna, "She was very neglected and malnourished when she arrived." Warm and safe in one of the new cat-condos, the little cat went into labour within hours of arriving at Lort Smith. Four kittens emerged mewling, shaky-legged and healthy.

When they were strong enough to travel, Brianna and her kittens went into foster care in the home of one of our volunteers. The volunteer foster care program is supported by donors, whose generosity pays for food, medicine, litter and toys while shelter animals are in their care.

### A difficult turn

After the kittens were weaned and Brianna had started to gain weight, the feline family came back to Campbellfield in preparation for adoption.

But before that could happen, Brianna's journey took a difficult turn. She became sick with a dangerous condition called intussusception. "This is when part of the intestine folds into the section next to it," Amanda explains. "If it doesn't get treated, it can be fatal."

Brianna was rushed to our North Melbourne hospital, where the surgical team saved her life. Hers was a long recovery requiring months of medical care, love and pats, but at long last, the little cat and her babies were able to find their new homes.

### Love at first sight

Brianna's story had the happiest outcome of all. A client named Tara contacted Lort Smith looking for a special cat for her grandad, whose wife had recently moved into full-time care. For Brianna and Tara's grandad, it was love at first sight.

Tara says, "Brianna has given Pop the company and love he needed. He now has something to look forward to, someone to care for and love, and honestly she couldn't be any more perfect for him."

The terrified and malnourished cat is now a different girl. "She is such a character with a huge personality, and makes my Pop laugh a lot," Tara says. "He honestly doesn't stop talking about her and all the funny things she does. At night she touches his face with her nose, and she wakes him up the same way every morning."

# Little Paws of the North:

## Ensuring the health of our feline friends

**Did you know that one female cat and her offspring can produce up to 5,000 kittens in seven years?**

Across Victoria, the overpopulation of domestic and feral cats is a widespread and growing concern. Large volumes of unwanted pregnancies have significant negative impacts on the environment and our native wildlife. It also puts a strain on animal welfare services who spend resources managing the population of unwanted cats. Additionally, pet owners in the community are also impacted when male cats are not desexed. This is because they are more likely to roam and engage in fights with other cats, which leads to more injuries and the spread of disease.

With the support of the Victorian State Government, Lort Smith are delighted to be partnering with the City of Whittlesea and Hume City Council to run a program that addresses this issue. 'Little Paws of the North' is a program that provides the opportunity for residents of Melbourne's Northern corridor to do the right thing for their furry friends.

Each month, concession card holders can book a visit at our Campbellfield Clinic for desexing, microchipping, and vaccinations costing just \$50 per cat. These are vital services every cat deserves and we are committed to making them more accessible to those who need it in the community.

Some of the key benefits the 'Little Paws of the North' program provides to pets and their owners include:

- **Health** Routine desexing, covered in the package, reduces the risk of serious hormone-related conditions and unwanted pregnancies.
- **Protection** F3 vaccinations protect cats from harmful diseases like flu and parvovirus.
- **Security** The microchip implantation and registration mean pets can be quickly and easily returned if they ever get lost.
- **Education** In addition to these services, we offer pet owners valuable tips on creating safe, nurturing environments for their beloved animals at home.

The program will deliver this package to approximately 300 cats in 2023. So far, uptake by the community has been a great success and we will bring you more updates very soon.

**The real beauty of 'Little Paws of the North' lies in the community it creates — one committed to responsible pet ownership and the wellbeing of all our furry friends.**





**Champion of compassion:**

**Chaplain Bronwyn Hayward**

**Losing a family member can be devastating and although you can receive a lot of support after a human life is lost, sometimes we don't receive the same compassion when we lose our pets.**

Bron Hayward, welcomed at Lort Smith Animal Hospital in 2022, has brought indispensable comfort and guidance to clients and staff during tough times. In her role as a trained and qualified non-denominational chaplain, she provides emotional support during difficult times of decision-making and grief.

Beyond personal support, Bron is instrumental in improving hospital practices around animal loss, making them more compassionate and thoughtful. Her presence bolsters staff confidence, reminding them to care for themselves in this emotionally demanding industry.

Bron has a certification in Pastoral Care. Her past experience as a veterinary nurse, combined with her chaplaincy, affirms her belief in the transformative power of an animal's love. She's seen these bonds help people navigate immense hardship, emphasising that our connection with pets is a societal benefit as much as a personal one.

At Lort Smith, the goal is to ensure every client and patient is treated with dignity and compassion. Bron embodies this mission, underscoring the profound impact of human-animal relationships on our community. We're honoured to have her in our family.

**“As a pet owner I understand the difference animals make to our lives. It is a privilege to do this work and support people when they experience a loss.”**

**— BRON**

## Pet frogs

## leave a lasting

## impression

The connection between humans and animals comes in many forms and we see a range of species come through our doors each day, whether they hop, slither, swim or flap.

Wanda, Barry and Bonk were three wonderful Eastern Banjo Frogs who became 'insta famous' through featuring on popular Instagram account 'Sticky Frogs'.

Many of the frogs on the 'Sticky Frogs' channel come to Lort Smith for expert care from our Exotics Veterinary Department — who care for any animal that is not a cat or dog.

The quirky family of frogs bring joy to tens of thousands of people online but they have also made a difference to Lort Smith in our hospital. Recently, house owner, Trish used her popular social media channel to raise \$2,500 for Lort Smith in memory of Wanda, Barry and Bonk who embody the joy and comfort that some of our more unusual pets can give their owners.

Their generous donation will go towards the purchase of a special temperature-controlled enclosure for exotic pets at our hospital.

Thank you to 'Sticky Frogs' for their support. Their generous gift will ensure that many more unusual pets who visit Lort Smith have access to a warm and safe place to recuperate during treatment.



# A special update: Sooty's happy ending

Last winter, Sooty was on his daily walk with his family when he was suddenly attacked by another dog.

Mark, Sooty's owner, rushed him to the Lort Smith Animal Hospital where he learned that Sooty's wounds required extensive treatment. But with a young family to feed, Mark was struggling to make ends meet.

Thankfully, Sooty had a good prognosis and Mark met the criteria to access the donor-funded Pets In Need program which covered a portion of the costs of Sooty's treatment. Thanks to the generosity of Lort Smith supporters and the expert care of dedicated vets and nurses, Sooty has fully recovered from his injuries and is back at home playing with baby Jamie. According to Mark, the pair grow closer every day.

**"Thanks to everyone at Lort Smith. Sooty is an important family member and he has been doing really well at home where he belongs."**

— MARK



## Three easy ways to donate:

### 1 Mail

Mail your cheque or money order (payable to Lort Smith) to:

24 Villiers Street,  
North Melbourne VIC 3051

### 2 Phone

Call our fundraising team on  
**(03) 9287 6419**

### 3 Online

Visit [lortsmith.com](https://lortsmith.com)  
or scan the QR code



### Lort Smith Animal Hospital North Melbourne

24 Villiers Street, North Melbourne VIC 3051

(03) 9328 3021

### Lort Smith Campbellfield

25–35 Berwick Road, Campbellfield VIC 3061

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Lort Smith acknowledges the Wurundjeri people of the Kulin nation as the traditional custodians of the land on which Lort Smith stands, and pays our respects to Elders past, present and emerging.

Lort Smith values and celebrates diversity in our community. We are committed to providing animal care services that are inclusive and support equality and accessibility.

ABN 87 004 238 475

