

Companion

Winter 2026



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**LORT
SMITH**

Companion

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From the Heart

A favourite time for me is when we produce Companion. It's always a joy to sit down and take time out of a busy day to read it from cover to cover. Every edition reminds me why I love being part of Lort Smith. It tells the stories of brave animals, remarkable people and the kindness that brings them together.

I hope reading these pages brings you the same joy it brings me, because these are your stories too. Every recovery, every second chance and every happy ending has been made possible by people like you. Together, we're part of a wonderful

community of animal lovers, brought together by a shared belief that every pet deserves compassion, the chance to receive the care they need, and to stay with the people who love them. It's something truly special to be part of.

On 2 September, we'll hold our second annual Pet Care Crisis Appeal. For one day only, every donation will be matched by generous supporters, doubling the impact of your gift to help even more pets and families facing crisis through our **Pets in Need Fund**. You can read more about this special one-day event, and the uplifting story of Lexi and her family, on pages 6-7.

Contact us:

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Connect with us:



Lovingly designed by: U-bahn design

Front cover: Dorothy with Dr Elsa

Lort Smith is Australia's largest not for profit animal hospital. We make sure pets enjoy happy and healthy lives with the people who love them, through providing accessible, compassionate care.



Please don't forget to mark this special day in your calendar!

Thank you for everything you do for Lort Smith. Your generosity changes lives every single day. Together, we can give even more animals the second chance they deserve.

Frances Mirabelli
CEO



Adoption Day for Fella

Look at Fella now!

When we first shared Fella's story, this sweet young whippet had a very uncertain future ahead of him.

Born with a severe cleft palate - a gap more than eight centimetres long in the roof of his mouth - Fella struggled to eat and drink safely. Every meal came with the risk of food or water entering his nasal passages or lungs, making something as simple as eating a challenge.

Thankfully, thanks to caring supporters, Fella got the chance he deserved.

Because his condition was so complex, Fella needed surgery from an experienced veterinary surgeon. With our kind donors' support, we were able to arrange the care he needed and give him the best possible chance of a healthy, happy life.

We're delighted to share that Fella's surgery was a success.

Today, he's doing wonderfully well, and it's all because compassionate people like you chose to help when he needed it most.

At Lort Smith, we see so many animals who need a second chance. Some have been surrendered, some have been neglected, and others simply need medical care that their families can't afford. Whatever their circumstances, your

support means we're there for them.

That's why we wanted to say thank you.

Your generosity helps provide life-changing treatment, comfort and hope to vulnerable pets every day. It helps our veterinary teams do what they do best: care for animals who have nowhere else to turn.

And we have one more piece of wonderful news to share.

Fella has now found his forever home.

After everything he's been through, he is settling into family life, surrounded by love, comfort and all the things every dog deserves. We couldn't be happier for him... and none of it would have been possible without you.

From all of us at Lort Smith, thank you for being part of Fella's journey and for helping give pets like him the chance to live happy, healthy lives.

If you're not currently receiving our appeals but would like to hear more stories like Fella's and learn about the difference your support makes, please contact us at fundraising@lortsmith.com.



Final check-up... and cuddle!



Dorothy's Journey Home

When six-week-old Dorothy arrived at Lort Smith, she had already endured more than any kitten ever should.

After being thrown from a moving car onto a busy road in St Albans, Dorothy was found terrified, injured and alone. Witnesses Emma and Tahlia immediately stopped to help, rushing the tiny kitten to Lort Smith Animal Hospital's Emergency Department.

Our veterinary team soon discovered Dorothy had suffered a fractured pelvis. It was a devastating start to life, but from the very beginning, Dorothy showed remarkable resilience.

With the support of our vets, nurses and foster carers, Dorothy began the long road to recovery. Along the way, she underwent surgery to amputate her tail due to her injuries, but she continued to bounce back with the determination that quickly won over everyone she met.

While recovering in foster care with nurse Jordan, Dorothy

discovered something she had never known before: safety. She spent her days resting, healing and building confidence alongside her best furry friend, Sundae the Staffy. The pair became inseparable, often found curled up together watching television.

As Dorothy grew stronger, so did the number of people cheering her on.

Then came the news everyone had been hoping for.

In a wonderful twist, Dorothy's forever family turned out to be much closer than anyone expected. Tahlia's mother-in-law, Lynn, had fallen in love with Dorothy from the moment she first saw her.

"When we first rescued Dorothy, we took her to Lynn's house because it was closer," Tahlia said. "The moment she saw Dorothy, she said, 'She's mine.'"

Although Lynn had to wait patiently while Dorothy recovered, she never stopped thinking about the tiny kitten.

Today, Dorothy is exactly where she belongs, safe, cherished and deeply loved.

Her story began with an act of cruelty, but thanks to the compassion of strangers, the dedication of her carers and the support of people like you, Dorothy now has the future every animal deserves.

**A warm bed. A loving family.
And a place to call home.**



Not just cats and dogs!

When people think of Lort Smith, they often think of wagging tails and purring patients. But our team also cares for some of Victoria's native wildlife - including one very resilient Eastern Long Neck Turtle.



After being clipped by a car while crossing a road in Whittlesea, this little traveller arrived at Lort Smith Animal Hospital with a serious shell fracture. Now under the care of Dr Nicole, he's on the road to recovery thanks to a clever repair technique involving slow-cure epoxy and zip tie fixators to stabilise his shell while it heals.

"People often think a turtle's shell is inanimate, but it's actually living tissue and very sensitive," says Dr Nicole. "We use slow-cure epoxy because fast-curing products generate heat and can cause burns."

While the repair is going well, recovery won't be a quick sprint, more of a turtle-paced marathon. Healing is expected to take several months, meaning he'll remain in care until at least spring.

One of the biggest challenges? Mealtimes.

Unlike many animals, native Australian turtles generally prefer to eat while submerged in water. But because his shell needs to stay dry while healing, Dr Nicole and the team have had to get creative.

"We've been monitoring his weight and body condition very closely, but thankfully he's maintaining and gaining weight," says Dr Nicole. "I provide food in a shallow water dish and hope that if he gets his head in, he'll feel comfortable enough to eat, but generally they don't tend to do that."

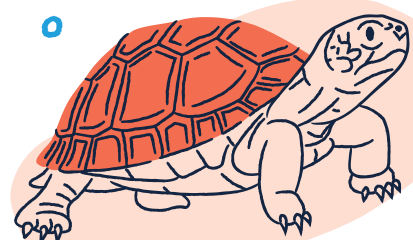
The good news is that he's progressing well and is expected to make a full recovery. Once the weather warms up and his shell has healed, he'll be released back into the wild near where he was found.

Dr Nicole is also reminding everyone to keep an eye out for turtles during autumn and spring,

when they're often on the move searching for nesting and hibernation sites.

"They don't move very quickly, and unfortunately many are hit by cars," she says. "If people can slow down and stay alert near waterways and roadsides, it can make a huge difference."

Here's to this determined little turtle being back paddling through local waterways before long.





Together, We Can Give More Pets a Second Chance

**Our Pet Care Crisis Appeal,
Wednesday 2nd September**

**On Wednesday 2nd September,
we're inviting our wonderful
community of supporters to come
together for Lort Smith's Pet Care
Crisis Appeal.**

For one day only, we'll be raising vital funds to help pets receive life-saving veterinary care when their families are facing financial hardship. All funds raised on the day go straight to our Pets In Need fund. We're also looking for generous Pet Care Crisis Partners, matching donors who can help double the impact of every donation and ensure even more pets get the care they urgently need.



FOR ONE DAY ONLY
your gift will be matched



The difference your support makes can be seen in heart-warming stories like Lexi's.

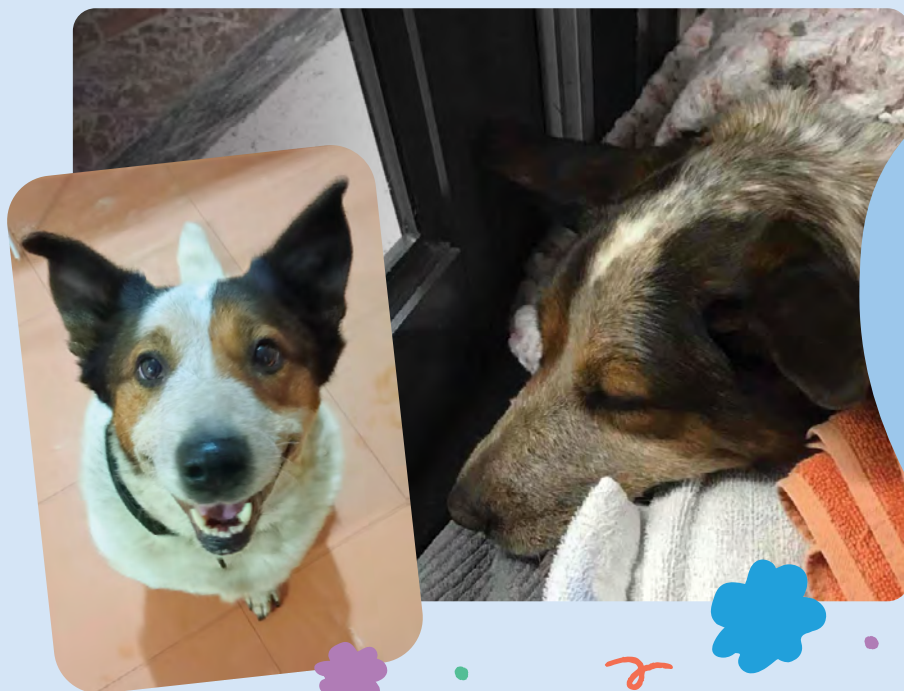
Lexi, an Australian Cattle Dog, has been part of Allison's family almost since birth. When Lexi's mother died unexpectedly, Allison stepped in to hand-raise the tiny puppy from just four weeks of age. From those earliest days, the pair formed an unbreakable bond.

"She's family," Allison says.

Living in Underbool with her two sons, Allison couldn't imagine life without Lexi by her side. So when Lexi suddenly became lethargic, stopped eating and developed a swollen abdomen, she knew something was seriously wrong.



Dobby, the first ever beneficiary of our Pets in Need fund is living his best life today, thanks to wonderful people who gave to the Pet Care Crisis Appeal in 2025.



A local veterinarian diagnosed pyometra, a life-threatening uterine infection requiring urgent surgery. The news was devastating. Allison knew Lexi needed immediate treatment, but the cost was beyond what she could afford.

As Lexi's condition worsened, Allison became increasingly worried. She explored every option she could find, hoping there would be a way to save her beloved dog.

Then she contacted Lort Smith.

Our team encouraged Allison to bring Lexi to Melbourne and reassured her that support would be available. Allison and her sons immediately made the long drive, hoping they weren't too late.

When they arrived, the veterinary team moved quickly to care for Lexi. Throughout the process, Dr Kass and the hospital staff provided not only expert treatment, but also kindness, reassurance and regular updates that helped the family through an incredibly stressful time.

Thanks to support from the Pets in Need Fund, financial assistance was also made available through a combination of a grant and a no-interest loan. For Allison, it was an enormous relief to know that cost would not stand in the way of the care Lexi desperately needed.

After emergency surgery and two nights in hospital, Lexi began to recover.

The call to say she was eating again and ready to come home was one Allison will never forget.

"We all cried when we saw her," she says. "We were just so happy."

Today, Lexi is back to her happy, energetic self, enjoying life with the family who loves her.

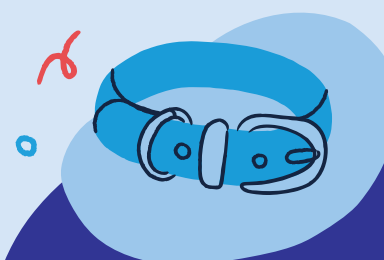
"Without Lort Smith, Lexi wouldn't be here," Allison says. "They saved her life and kept our family together."

Stories like Lexi's are only possible because of caring supporters who make the Pets in Need Fund possible.

Every donation helps families facing difficult circumstances access the veterinary care their pets urgently need, providing hope when it is needed most.

This September, we're asking for your help so we can be there for more pets like Lexi and more families like Allison's.

Together, we can give more pets a second chance, keep more families together and create many more happy endings.



And if you'd like to know more about how you can inspire even greater generosity on the day, by becoming a Pet Care Crisis Partner, contact Brianna on 03 7037 2267 for more details.

Until They Could Be Together Again



When Leo arrived at Lort Smith, he was frightened, injured and in pain.

A young dog with a serious injury to his back leg, Leo's case initially appeared to be a tragic accident. But as our team worked to understand what had happened, a more troubling picture emerged. Security footage revealed Leo had been harmed during a family violence incident.

Behind Leo's injury was another victim of the crisis, his person, Kimberley*.

In the days that followed, Kimberley found herself navigating police involvement, safety planning and an urgent relocation. Her world had been turned upside down. While she desperately wanted to care for Leo herself, she was suddenly faced with impossible decisions.

Leo needed major surgery and a long recovery. Kimberley needed safety, stability and time to rebuild.

For many people experiencing crisis, this is the heartbreaking reality: being forced to choose between their own wellbeing and the pet they love most.

Thankfully, because of supporters like you, Kimberley didn't have to make that choice.

Leo was able to receive the lifesaving veterinary treatment he urgently needed. Our veterinary team performed a right hind limb amputation and carefully monitored his recovery. Before long, Leo was learning how to navigate the world on three legs, adapting with a resilience that amazed everyone who met him.

But medical treatment was only part of Leo's journey.

While Kimberley worked through the immediate challenges of securing her safety and rebuilding her life, Leo needed somewhere safe to heal. Somewhere he could recover, decompress and be cared for until they could be together again.

That's where Lort Smith's Emergency Boarding service stepped in.

Emergency Boarding provides temporary care for pets whose owners are facing circumstances beyond their control, family

violence, homelessness, hospitalisation, mental health crises or other emergencies. It means pets don't have to be surrendered when life suddenly falls apart. Instead, they are cared for in a safe and supportive environment while their people focus on getting back on their feet.

For Leo, Emergency Boarding meant warm meals, gentle care and a secure place to recover from surgery.

For Kimberley, it meant something equally important: hope.

It meant knowing Leo was safe every night. It meant regular updates during one of the most difficult periods of her life. And it meant she could focus on rebuilding her future without the devastating grief of losing her best friend. And when Kimberley's circumstances finally stabilised, the reunion everyone had been waiting for could happen.

Because of compassionate supporters, a difficult chapter became a story of recovery, resilience and reunion.

Every year, pets and people facing crisis turn to Lort Smith with nowhere else to go. Your support helps ensure that when life takes an unexpected turn, families can stay together, even when they need time apart.

***Names have been changed to protect privacy.**





From Horses to House Cats

If you are curious to know how Melbourne has changed over the past 90 years, you could look at old photographs or newspaper archives.

Or you could just look at Lort Smith's patients.

For nearly a century, the animals coming through our doors have mirrored life in Melbourne. In the early days, horses were some of our most regular patients. Lort Smith even had its own stables. Before trucks and vans took over, horses pulled milk carts, sanitation night carts and rag-and-bone wagons, helping keep the city running. During the Depression, many small business owners struggled to afford veterinary care for their animals, making Lort Smith a lifeline for hardworking animals.

Not every patient was quite so ordinary. Over the years, Lort Smith has treated a camel from Melbourne Zoo, a family of ducks that wandered over from the Royal Botanic Gardens and even a valuable snake visiting Australia for a local show.

Our archives provide a fascinating snapshot of Melbourne's pets. In the 1960s, terriers dominated the waiting room, followed by Pekingese, pugs and dachshunds. Most cats were domestic short-hairs, while Siamese cats were the pedigree favourites of the day.

Veterinary medicine has changed just as dramatically. Diseases such as distemper in dogs and feline enteritis in cats were once devastatingly common. The arrival of effective vaccines in the 1950s transformed animal health, making these illnesses increasingly rare.

The tools available to veterinarians have evolved too. From the expansion of medicines in the 1960s to ultrasound, orthopaedic surgery, CT scans, MRI imaging and specialist care, today's veterinary hospital would be almost unrecognisable to those early horse doctors.



The patients may have changed. The technology has certainly changed. But one thing hasn't. For 90 years, Lort Smith has been here for animals and the people who love them. Helping write Melbourne's story, one furry, feathered and scaled patient at a time.



Billie's Emergency Delivery

Three-year-old French Bulldog Billie is recovering well after being rushed to Lort Smith Animal Hospital for an emergency caesarean section following an unexpected pregnancy.

Billie had been in labour for more than eight hours without delivering any puppies when her human, Michelle, realised something was wrong and brought her to Lort Smith's North Melbourne Hospital.

After assessing Billie, the veterinary team diagnosed her with dystocia, a condition where a dog is unable to deliver puppies naturally. Without urgent intervention, dystocia can put both the mother and puppies at serious risk.

Billie was taken straight into surgery.

"It was truly a whole-team effort," said Lort Smith Chief Veterinarian Dr Jess. "Our surgeon carefully delivered each puppy while our nursing team stood by ready to

warm, stimulate and care for the newborns as they arrived."

Thanks to the swift action of Michelle and the skill of the veterinary team, Billie came through the procedure safely and seven puppies were delivered.

As part of the surgery, Billie was also desexed, preventing future unplanned pregnancies and reducing her risk of developing serious reproductive health conditions later in life.

Following surgery, Billie and her puppies remained under close observation before being cleared to return home together.

Michelle says Billie has recovered well from her ordeal.

"She's doing amazing and has been such a great mum,"

— Michelle, Billie's loving mum

While Billie's story had a positive outcome, it also serves as an important reminder of the risks associated with unplanned pregnancies.

French Bulldogs are among the breeds more likely to experience complications during pregnancy and birth, often requiring veterinary intervention. In some cases, delays in treatment can have devastating consequences.

"Cases like Billie's are an important reminder of the benefits of desexing your pets," Dr Jess said. "Desexing helps prevent unwanted litters, reduces the risk of reproductive disease and can spare pets from potentially life-threatening complications during pregnancy and birth."



Lort Smith's North Melbourne Hospital and General Practice is open for emergencies from 8.00am to 10.00pm, 365 days a year, providing urgent care when pets and their people need it most.



From Wobbles to Waggles

When Tiny Tim, the little seven-year-old Maltese, arrived at Lort Smith, his future was uncertain.

Transferred from a local animal facility after living on a breeding property, Tiny Tim's coat was heavily matted and he carried the quiet caution of a dog who had not always known comfort. But beneath the tangles was a gentle soul. After a full groom and desexing procedure, his sweet personality began to shine. He loved pats, happily offered a paw to shake, and slowly learned that people could be trusted.



Not long after arriving, staff noticed something wasn't right. Tiny Tim moved with an unusual gait and sometimes wobbled on his hind legs. Further investigations revealed the cause: severe, painful disease in both hip joints.

To give him the comfortable life he deserved, Tiny Tim underwent major surgery on his right hip, followed by months of rehabilitation. Then, he bravely faced a second operation on his left hip.

Throughout every step of his recovery, foster carer Maggie stood by his side. From lead-only walks and home physiotherapy to endless patience and encouragement, she gave Tiny Tim the consistency and love he needed to heal.



The transformation has been remarkable. At his final veterinary revisit earlier this year, Tiny Tim showed excellent recovery, with strong muscle development, good mobility and no sign of ongoing lameness.

Today, the little dog who once lived with pain and uncertainty is thriving. Comfortable, confident and full of life, Tiny Tim has found the happy ending everyone hoped for - a loving forever home. Thanks to the dedication of his carers, veterinarians and foster family, he now spends his days surrounded by comfort, security and love, a testament to the life-changing impact of a second chance.

Leaving a kind and thoughtful gift in your Will to Lort Smith is one of the most valuable ways that you can make a difference to the lives of animals in need of urgent care and new homes.



Your legacy will help:

- Veterinary care for the pets of people who are struggling financially, protecting the bond people share with their pets, keeping them together.
- Find surrendered pets their loving new forever homes.
- During times of crisis, provide a temporary safe haven for pets of the most vulnerable members of our community.

Contact our friendly Gifts in Wills team to receive more information or for an informal chat:
bequests@lortsmith.com
or call direct on 03 9287 6417



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24 Villiers Street
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Fundraising enquiries: 03 9287 6419
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