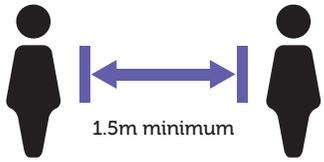


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SHEPPARTON News

FRIEND IN NEED

COMPANION DOG HELPS POLICE OFFICER COMBAT PTSD AND HE WANTS TO HELP OTHERS ACCESS SUPPORT



Constant comfort: Shepparton police Senior Constable Liam Murdock with his dog Gypsy the Samoyed who helps him with his post traumatic stress disorder. Picture: RODNEY BRAITHWAITE

By LIZ MELLINO

For Shepparton police officer Liam Murdock his dog Gypsy is not just a dog — she is a support system.

Like many emergency service workers, Senior Constable Murdock suffers from post traumatic stress disorder because of the challenges he has faced in his line of work.

He knows first hand the daily struggles of someone suffering from PTSD, but he also knows the positive impact a companion dog like Gypsy can have on your mental state.

“I think mental health issues get hidden away and people try to be very strong about it and I think in doing that you don’t then allow yourself to heal from it,” Sen Const Murdock said.

“I had a lot of bad stuff happen in Melbourne and I was struggling a little bit — when you get home at night some people drink and I don’t, so my thing is my dog.

“I needed something, so when I’m not feeling well she senses it and comes up and just gives you a nudge and it sort of gives you that grounding.”

Sen Const Murdock has had Gypsy, a Samoyed and ex-show dog, for five years after moving to the Goulburn Valley to get away from the “large volume of people” in the city.

He and his wife Melissa dedicated many hours training her with obedience and agility after joining the Wangaratta Kennel and Obedience Dog Club.

Sen Const Murdock said the club, which covers north-east Victoria, had become a centre of excellence for dog training and was now working to provide programs to help people struggling with mental health to receive an assistance dog.

It is a topic that is close to his heart and one he is determined to help others overcome.

It was only fitting that when he heard Police Legacy was sourcing a companion dog for Alex Prestney, the brother of Josh Prestney who was one of the four police officers killed in the Eastern Fwy collision in April, he knew he wanted to help.

“I knew what Alex Prestney was going to be going through with his brother... so we (WKODC) thought we would help out and contact our sponsors and try and get some assistance for him,” Sen Const Murdock said.

“We got a year’s worth of free supply from Prime 100 of food and a crate as well for his dog to be looked after... he doesn’t have to think about anything now he can just sit there like I do with Gypsy and just let her ease the pain a little bit — it makes it a little bit easier each day.”

Sen Const Murdock said the club also worked with the Code 9 Foundation to help assist Alex. “The Code 9 Foundation is a group set up to help emergency service workers in relation to mental health — and a lot of people are obviously experiencing that,” he said.

“People don’t want to admit they have problems, but I think if you admit it and you have got some ways of dealing with it then it helps an enormous amount.”

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12° TODAY Partly cloudy

14° TOMORROW Partly cloudy

14° WEDNESDAY Partly cloudy

WEATHER Page 2

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