



Media Alert

24 February: A Day to Honour Our Other Heroes

One of the world's leading authorities on animals in war wants all Australians to give their pets a special rub or pat on Monday 24 February, the National Day for War Animals. And with more than 24 million pets in Australia, that's a lot of petting.

Nigel Allsopp, CEO of the Australian War Animals Memorial Organisation, lecturer and children's author, says most people recognise the strong emotional connection between people and animals, but few really take time to think of the special bonds, or amazing deeds, of the animals serving alongside our military.

"The National Day for War Animals, or the Purple Poppy Day as most people know it, is an opportunity for people to remember and honour the extraordinary loyalty and courage of the many animals who have served, and who continue to serve, with our armed forces," he said.

"This day, which is marked by wearing a purple poppy, is our chance to show that we care about all animals – great and small – and will honour their memory as a part of our national story. So when you cuddle your dog or cat on the day, just remember the other animals who lived a very different life in the service of our nation."

Through AWAMO Mr Allsopp has been instrumental in raising funds to establish more than 30 memorials to war animals in Australia and overseas, including on the battlefield at Pozieres in France. AWAMO also funds training for special dogs to care for today's veterans suffering emotionally as a result of service, and supports other charities training companion and assistance dogs for veterans living with post-traumatic stress.

One charity dedicated to training dogs for veterans and serving members of the military is Young Diggers. Charity Director Carolyn Shedden, says dogs can make an instant improvement to a lives of people living with the hardships of PTSD – both military and frontline emergency personnel.

"When we match someone to their dog you can see them come out of their shell," she said. "The dog helps them to get out into society, for walks or to take their dog to our training sessions. Most importantly their dog gives them new confidence. Watching the trust and love that develops between them is one of the most beautiful things you can witness."

Ms Shedden says the dogs are also helping to heal wounds within families impacted by PTSD.

People can support the work of these charities by purchasing a purple poppy at www.ThePurplePoppy.com.au .



Honouring our animals. Helping our diggers.
www.ThePurplePoppy.com.au