

MEDIA RELEASE

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Date: 08/06/2025

Resilience Shines at the 29th Australian Kelpie Muster

Despite over 40mm of rain soaking the region, the 29th Australian Kelpie Muster proved a powerful display of resilience, community spirit and celebration in Casterton this King's Birthday Long Weekend. Against a backdrop of much-needed drought-breaking rain, attendees, competitors, and volunteers came together to deliver a vibrant and unforgettable event, true to the nature of the Australian Kelpie.

Blue skies greeted early crowds on Saturday morning for the annual street parade, before grey clouds rolled in, bringing with them water relief and welcome laughter. Undeterred, locals and visitors embraced the weather with a smile, united in their support for the farming community and the working dog that continues to inspire them.

"The spirit shown by everyone this weekend was extraordinary," said Association President Karen Stephens. "Despite the rain, our crowds turned out in force, our volunteers didn't miss a beat, and our competitors showcased the best of the Kelpie working dog ability and community pride."

The 2025 Street Parade winners showcased the community's humour and creativity, with Casterton Memorial Hospital's 'Bowel Scan' float taking first place, Casterton Sporting Motorcycle Club in second, and Casterton Childcare in third.

The competition fields saw thrilling performances across all major events:

- In the **Brewster Walsh & Waters Kelpie Dash**, **Matt Haines and Charlie** shaved 0.5 seconds off the 2024 winning time to take first place with a run of **4.45 seconds**, followed closely by **Joel Smith** with **Walker**, **Mel Tovey**, and **Prim**.
 - The **TDC Kelpie Hill Climb** resulted in a rare tie for first, with both **Colin Dansey and Champ**, and **Matt Haines and Charlie** blitzing the course in **31 seconds**.
 - **Charlie**, handled by **Matt Haines**, soared to victory in the **Vickery Brothers Kelpie High Jump**, clearing an impressive **2.21 metres**, just ahead of **Joel Smith** and **Walker**.
 - The **Elanco Stockman's Challenge** saw **Ryan Lenehan** win the Dog Section, with **Jim Moore** taking out the Horse Section. Overall placements went to **Ryan Lenehan (1st)**, **Damon Peacock (2nd)**, and **Tam McMahon (3rd)**.
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With standout performances in the Dash, Hill Climb, and High Jump, **Matt Haines and Charlie** claimed the coveted **2025 Bendigo Bank Kelpie Triathlon** title, edging **Joel Smith and Walker** out by just one second. **Rob Wekenborg and Jet** secured third place in a strong field of working dog athletes.

"The Muster is only possible because of the dedication of our volunteers, our supporters' generosity, and our competitors' commitment," Stephens added. "To see so many smiling faces in such wet conditions is a testament to the heart of this community and the Kelpie itself."

Through pouring rain and shining moments, the Australian Kelpie Muster again proved why it is a beloved national celebration. The dedication of those involved, from early morning setup crews to

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determined competitors, ensured that even in the wettest of years, the Muster spirit ran high, and so did the laughter.

Sunday's Australian Premier Working Dog Auction lived up to its reputation with had a large range of dogs from across Australia purchased from the auction arena and online. For the first time in 29 years, the top price was tied with two south-west locals selling for \$17,500.

Casterton's own Jack Leonard achieved top honour as a third-time Highest Priced Vendor with the sale of **Lot 21 – Billy**, a two-year-old black and tan Kelpie, who impressed buyers with his strong, reliable work ethic. Billy is an experienced dog who excels in yard work with a powerful bark, light-footed backing, and calm stock sense. He is obedient, composed, and proven in paddock mustering and lane work.

Lot 25—Beloka Skye, offered by Ash Caruana of Penshurst, achieved reserve ahead of the 2025 Australian Premier Working Dog Auction. Beloka Skye (Beloka Roy x Beloka Tilly) is a red and tan female Kelpie aged two years and eight months. Skye impressed with her stylish movement, quick cover, trained command response, and natural instinct for work. She barks freely on command, is CA tested clear, and travels confidently on Ute, bike, and buggy.

Continuing his high prices for pups, Welshpool's Paul McPhail had a strong interest in the young talent. Lot 53—Lily, a five-month-old red and tan Kelpie, impressed buyers with her confidence, athleticism, and fearless approach. Despite her young age, she already shows strong heading instincts with natural hold and cover.

Auction results highlight the strong demand for well-bred Kelpies and reaffirm Casterton's Australian Premier Working Dog Auction reputation as a leading sale for working dogs.

We look forward to 2026, and as the Association prepares for its 30-year celebrations, we invite everyone to return next June for what is set to be another record-breaking event.

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