

Top dog earns breed's highest honour

Police dogs, like their handlers, are a hard-working breed that rarely receive the recognition they deserve.

However, the German Shepherd Dog Council of Australia has recently created a national award to recognise the important role these dogs play in protecting the community.

This year the council nominated Queensland Police Dog Duke for its annual service award – the highest honour awarded to a German Shepherd in Australia.

Handler Senior Constable Jason Austin, Redcliffe District Dog Squad said he was excited to receive the news and extremely proud of his four-legged partner.

“Duke is a credit to the Service and to his breed,” Senior Constable Austin said.

“The award is an outstanding opportunity to highlight his achievements and the wider contribution dog squads make to crime management in this state and elsewhere.”

Assistant Commissioner Pat Doonan, North Coast Region said the award was a credit to the QPS and also recognition of Senior Constable Austin's handling abilities.

Duke's service record speaks for itself. Since 2001 he and Senior Constable Austin have tracked and found 219 offenders or missing persons.



Photo by Jodie Richter, The Courier-Mail

The award-winning Police Dog Duke.

Senior Constable Austin was also one of two officers to receive the QPS Valour Medal after Duke's apprehension of a murder suspect at Norman Park in 2002.

Other career highlights for the pair include:

- the search and location of four alleged arson offenders at Caboolture in 2004. Two of them were chased through smoke into the hands of waiting officers in the inner cordon
- assisting with security duties while at CHOGM on the Sunshine Coast in 2002
- tracking and locating a man who allegedly escaped from Redcliffe Station while being interviewed in January last year
- intercepting one alleged armed robber and tracking another before finding him hiding in a drain following a hold-up at Kippa-Ring. All the weapons and stolen property were also located.

Duke's award was presented at the recent opening of the German Shepherd Dog Club Queensland Championship Show at Durack.

The award will mark a fitting finale to Duke's career as he is due to retire from operational duties in March 2007, but in view of his previous performance it is likely there will be plenty of work for the old dog yet.

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