

## **Billy's story by Magda Palmer Cordingley**

As we on Earth look outward to the stars, other beings may be looking inward at us, trying to understand why many humans do not apply a merciful stewardship to other life forms on their beautiful planet. I'm thinking of a certain "Suicide Season" in Darwin, when the combination of heat and 100% humidity overwhelmed both body and brain.

As a Marriage Celebrant, I needed to obtain signatures from a couple. Their home was surrounded by a high wire fence, two brand new, top-of-the-range cars were under cover in an otherwise barren, sun-baked yard littered with rags and empty beer cans. A black dog had cleverly dug a dust bowl in a feeble attempt to cradle her baby from the unrelenting sun. They were sucking pebbles for moisture. The pup's almost hairless body was angry with sores, his eyes were infected and his mother was too weak to stand.

The people had coupled the little mother with a big Mastiff and sold all but one puppy to be raised for dog fighting and pig hunting. The remaining pup was runt of the litter but they planned to feed him up until he was sell-able, and then dump his mother in the bush! Frankly if they hadn't given me both dogs they'd have had to find another Celebrant at short notice!

There are many stories around Annie Rosa and Billy. Their naughtiness caused through exuberant joy at being part of a family, and their willingness to please. Originally they thought they were both called "Annie Rosa and Billy" simply because we called them at the same time! We moved to Kuranda and seven years passed. Annie Rosa was buried on the edge of the rainforest where we later discovered she's been born and Billy has grown into a fine, big caramel coloured boy whose nature is as soft as a slipper.

