

Bluey's story by Leslie Sparkes

Bluey has been with us for almost two years. We got him from an ad on Gumtree from a girl in Innisfail who had purchased him from a dealer a month ago and then discovered that the apartment she just rented in Cairns didn't take pets.

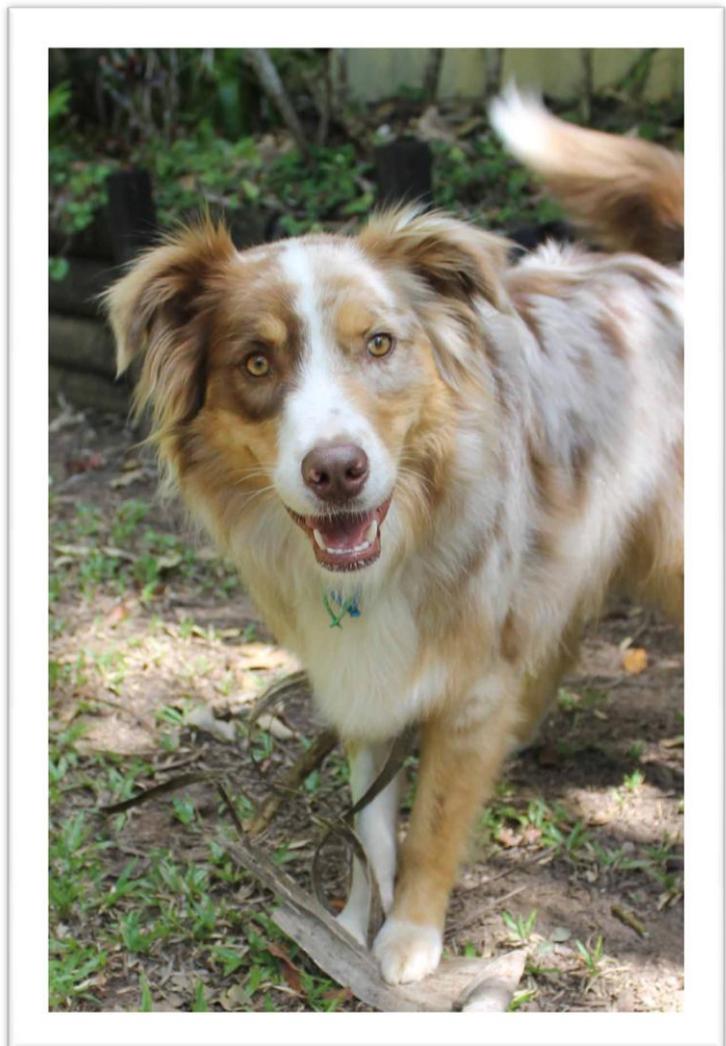
I was hoping that the arrival of Bluey would perk up my elderly dogs as introducing short visits from friend's dogs for a few days did seem to get them going. It soon became evident that my poor old dogs were past it and their quality of life was so poor compared to three month old Blue. We had to put them down. It was a very sad time but made better by the ever happy Bluey.

Bluey can only be described as exuberant, fun loving, and too smart for his own good. He's also one of these dogs that loves a challenge and likes to figure things out. He can open the latch on the gate although he doesn't go outside the gate. He can open car windows to say goodbye to my husband when we drop him off at work. He likes to be in the centre of everything and for the most part, he is.

Bluey, along with Coco, (who I'll talk about in a minute), may be one of the most photographed dogs in Cairns. We walk on the Esplanade every day and tourists, mostly Asian, take photos of us as we walk by. Sometimes they ask to pose with us. I used to find it strange and then remembered how many times I've travelled to far-away places to take photos of people I've never met and thought of these photos as "getting the feel of the place". I'll have to rethink that as it does feel strange from the other side of the lens.

Both Bluey and Coco are Australian Shepherds which is funny because most Australians have never heard of the breed. They are popular in the States mostly for herding cattle and sheep but are now common pets.

If you see us on the Esplanade feel free to come up and say 'hi', but don't be surprised if Bluey jumps to lick your face when you're giving him a pat. He is very comfortable getting attention from strangers. I know when we walk by and I hear someone say "beautiful" as we pass, that they are not talking about me.



Coco's story by Leslie Sparkes

Coco has been with us for a year and a half and is the same age as Bluey. I got Coco because we've always had two dogs and I thought it would be good to have them grow up together. Coco is also an Australian Shepherd who was meant to be a show dog but looked too much like her mother so the breeder decided to sell her when she was 6 months old. I don't think she was socialised well when she was younger as she has a fear of other dogs which makes dog walking a constant teaching experience. You can keep her under control but you have to be vigilant. Most people who see us wouldn't know a problem exists as they appear very well trained.

I can only say that Coco is my sweetheart. She is very affectionate and loving and likes to follow you around the house and be with you. She tries to inadvertently climb into your lap slowly and by stealth – first just one paw, then both paws with no weight then slowly leaning in. She also likes to nudge your hand with her nose if she wants a pat. She has perfected her signature move, the "Coco slump", where she raises her nose until it's straight in the air and then slumps down along your legs until she's on her back at your feet.

She was never interested in playing with toys until recently when Bluey broke his leg. For three months she was the stronger and more agile dog and she loved it. She engaged him with toys and they found a new way to play together. She was top dog for a period of time. They actually play together better now than previously and she's even started to play with toys with me when Bluey is doing his own thing. She's a more confident dog. Now if I can only teach her to catch instead of having balls rebound off her head.

