

## Time to put on your walking shoes this Sunday

*Million Paws Walk celebrates its 21<sup>st</sup> birthday with a champion fundraiser who walked 75 km to join in the very first Walk*

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It's 21 years since RSPCA South Australia held its first Million Paws Walk and 76 year old Di Keach will be a VIP among the crowd celebrating the milestone on Sunday. In 1997, when Di heard about the proposed event, this sprightly, retired nurse and sheep farmer decided to go that bit further to raise funds for the Society.

"It was before emails took off, so I wrote to all my family and friends and asked if they would sponsor me to walk from my home, to the event, and then back again," Di recalled.

This might not sound such a big effort, except that Di's home was, and still is, in Goolwa and the very first Million Paws walk left from Victoria Park Racecourse, meaning the then 55 year old completed a 150km round trip. Her efforts raised \$5500 for the Society, thanks largely to enthusiastic support from schools and businesses along the way.

"I was already reasonably fit, being a nurse and a farmer you do quite a lot of walking, but I did put in some extra training.

"I finished the walk in under 13 hours, so I was pretty pleased with myself."

Family members brought Robbie, Di's Cairn Terrier, to meet her at the event and the two did the MPW together before Di left alone for the walk home. She'd love to start the walk from home again this year, but feels that with two artificial knees she might be pushing her luck. However, she'll be there for the start with her current canine companion, an energetic two year old Jack Russell Terrier cross called Florence.

Since that epic walk, Di has remained a passionate supporter of animal welfare organisations, raising more than \$20,000 from her roadside plant stall outside her Currency Creek farm on the main Adelaide to Goolwa road. In 2005 she was awarded an Order of Australia medal for services to animal welfare organisations and the Country Fire Service.

Kate Jones, Million Paws Walk event organiser, said the Society could not achieve its mission of caring for and protecting animals in need without dedicated supporters like Di Keach.

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“We are wholly reliant on donations from the South Australian community to care for about 10,000 abandoned, abused, sick, lost, injured, stray or surrendered animals each year and a lot is riding on this Sunday’s event achieving its fundraising target.”

“So far nearly \$75,000 has been raised towards the \$170,000 target, so there’s less than \$100,000 to go.

“We’d love to see as many people and their pooches as possible come out and enjoy this relaxing walk through our city’s river park, as well as all the other activities we have planned.”

More than 5,000 people and their dogs are expected to attend nine walks taking place across South Australia on Sunday May 20, walking together to help animals in need and to fight animal cruelty.

At the Adelaide event in Bonython Park, participants will have the choice of a 2km or 4km walk, and there will be fun for the whole family after, including:

- A dozen different food trucks and coffee vans
- Exhibitors including Hills Pet Nutrition, The Body Shop and Ultimutt Treats.
- Main stage entertainment including musicians, competitions, raffles and prizes
- Force-free dog training demonstrations
- Free vet checks
- Aussie Pooch Dog Wash where all proceeds will be donated to RSPCA SA
- Doggy competitions such as ‘best trick’ and ‘best pup cake’ where you can make a pup cake from the Woofery.
- Dog Yoga (aka ‘Doga’)
- Kids’ corner including Plaster Fun House, flower crown making, rock climbing, and giant games.
- RSPCA Op shop, RSPCA retail and MPW merchandise store, RSPCA campaigns booth
- RSPCA Op Shop human fashion shows

### **RSPCA South Australia Million Paws Walk 2018**

**SUNDAY May 20**

- **Time:** Gates and on-the-day registration open 8:00am, walk commences 10:00am
- **Locations:** Adelaide - Bonython Park, and regional areas - Berri, Wallaroo, Port Augusta, Victor Harbor, Murray Bridge, Port Lincoln, Second Valley and Port Pirie.
- Register for the event at =[www.millionpawswalk.com.au/sa](http://www.millionpawswalk.com.au/sa)

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