

# RSPCA report on animal outcomes from our shelters, care and adoption centres

2020-21

The RSPCA is Australia's oldest, largest and most trusted animal welfare organisation. With this privileged position comes great responsibility. This year we received<sup>1</sup> 103,057 animals into our animal shelters and adoption centres across the country.

We are pleased to report that over the past 10 years we have helped 673,476 animals by rehoming them, reuniting them with their owners or releasing them back into the wild. This includes 303,029 dogs and puppies, and 300,695 cats and kittens who were rehomed or reunited with their owners.

Thanks to a great deal of effort from RSPCA teams all over the country, adoption/rehoming and reclaiming rates nationally have been increasing over time and significant improvements in the outcomes for cats and dogs (including kittens and puppies) have been achieved. This can be attributed to the introduction of new approaches and programs to increase the number of animals rehomed and reunited with their owners and programs to address overpopulation and reduce the number of animals in the community needing to enter our shelters. These include highly visible public initiatives, as well as substantial work behind-the-scenes, such as:

- **Extensive promotion of the wonderful animals we have available for adoption** through [www.adoptapet.com.au](http://www.adoptapet.com.au), social media, events and traditional media.
- **Increasing community awareness and support for the value of adopting animals** from shelters and rescue groups more broadly, including through media stories and events.
- **Additional proactive and creative adoption initiatives**, including national events such as Clear the Shelters, promotions around special days and occasions (such as Valentine's Day), promotions focusing on senior animals, promoting adoption of a mother cat and kitten or two kittens together, as well as setting up adoption centres in shopping precincts and with retail adoption partners such as PetBarn.
- **Working with smaller rescue groups** to extend the reach of adoption initiatives.
- **Providing services to reunite lost companion animals with their owners.**
- **Providing community and shelter-based desexing schemes** to reduce the number of unplanned pregnancies and unwanted animals, including initiatives reaching pet owners experiencing financial hardship.
- **Expanding foster care networks** to cater for greater numbers of animals. Animals cared for in foster homes may include pregnant animals, those with young litters, orphaned kittens and puppies, seniors, those with special needs, those recovering from surgery, those needing to build their confidence or requiring behavioural training in a home setting, and those who don't cope well in a shelter environment.
- **Dedicated behavioural trainers** who put in place behavioural modification and management plans for animals requiring specialist support, and who also provide post-adoption behavioural classes.
- **Advances in clinical veterinary care** including isolation facilities and improved processes in shelter disease management and surgical rehabilitation.
- **Adoption follow-up** with new owners to ensure animals are settling into their new homes and owners are provided with additional information and referral to appropriate telephone or on-site support services.
- **Community information, awareness raising and education** targeting responsible pet ownership and working with local councils, strata committees and landlords to encourage support for pet ownership.

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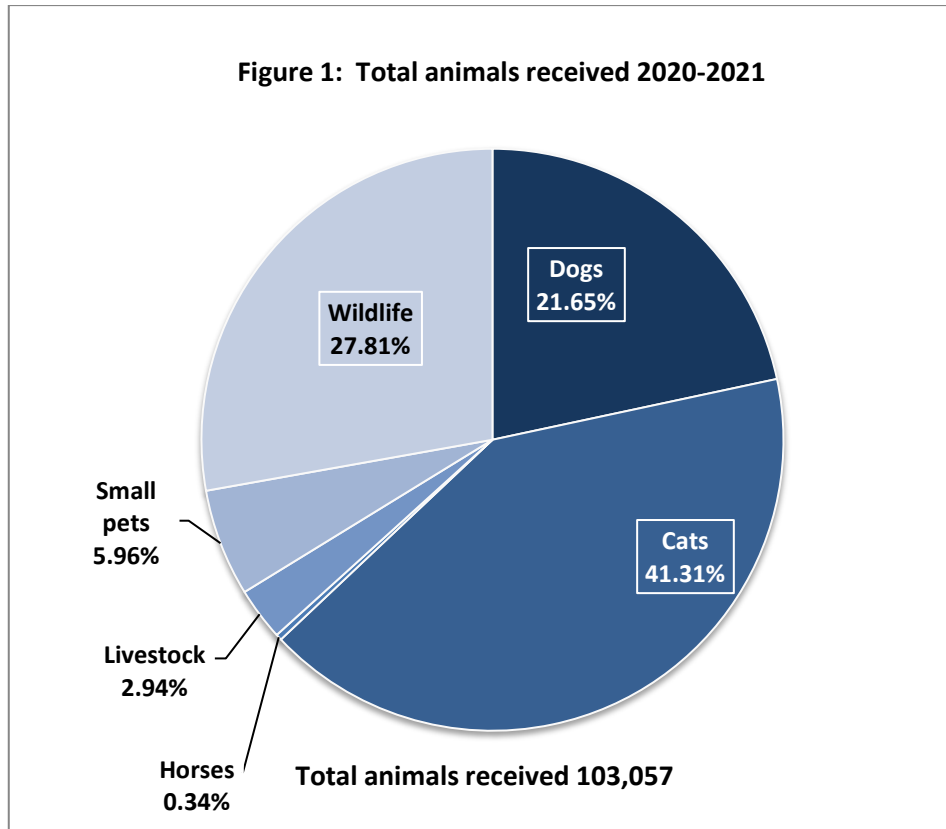
<sup>1</sup> "Received" is used throughout this report to refer to all animals in RSPCA facilities during the 2020-21 financial year.

- **Monitoring current research and investment in Australian-based research** to ensure evidence-based approaches to animal welfare.
- **Passionate staff and volunteers** who work tirelessly for the animals in their care.

## All animals

In 2020-21, the RSPCA cared for 103,057 animals including 22,311 dogs, 42,572 cats, 348 horses, 3,029 livestock, 6,141 small animals (such as mice, rabbits, guinea pigs, birds, fish and ferrets) and 28,656 native and introduced wild animals (such as wombats, kangaroos, possums and reptiles) (see Figure 1).

This was a decrease of 9,473 animals or -8.42% from 2019-20 when we received<sup>1</sup> 112,530 animals.



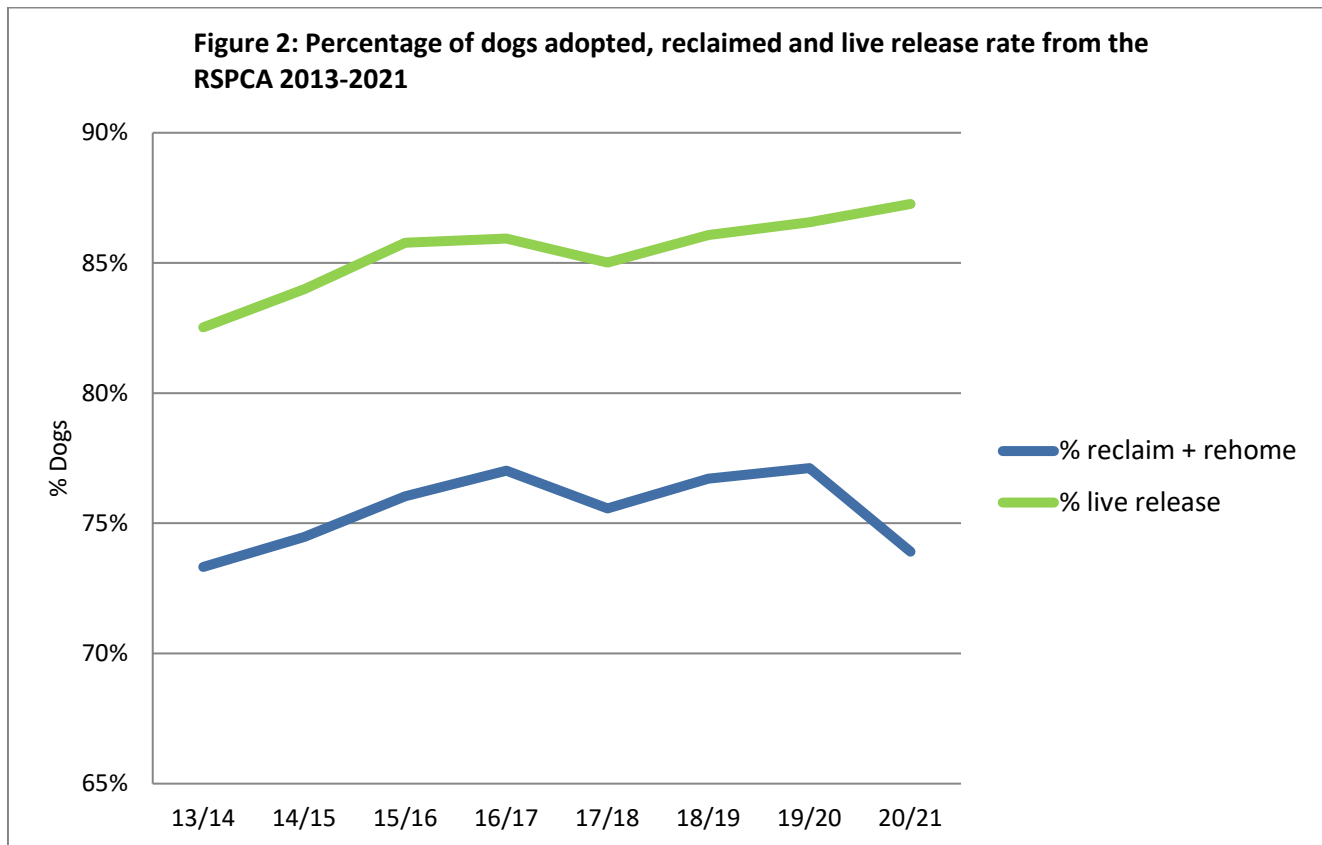
Note: The total number of animals coming into the care of the RSPCA can be influenced by many factors: for example, the COVID-19 pandemic and the number of local council animal management (pound) contracts the RSPCA might manage in any one year.

<sup>1</sup> Received refers to all animals in RSPCA facilities during the 2020-21 financial year.

## Dogs

During the 2020-21 financial year, the RSPCA received<sup>1</sup> 22,311 dogs. Of these, 73.91% of dogs were rehomed or reunited with their owners (see figures 2, 3 and 4).

One measure that is used for monitoring shelter outcomes over time is the live release rate (LRR). The LRR is the percentage of dogs who were adopted, reclaimed by their owner or transferred to a rescue group or other non-RSPCA facility as a percentage of the total number of dogs received (not including those currently in care or categorised as 'other') for the 2021-2021 financial year. The 2020-21 LRR for dogs was 87.26%, which is an increase of 0.70% compared to the previous year.



Many more owners reclaim lost dogs from the RSPCA than they do lost cats (8,478 or 38.00% of dogs compared to just 2,519 or 5.92% of cats).

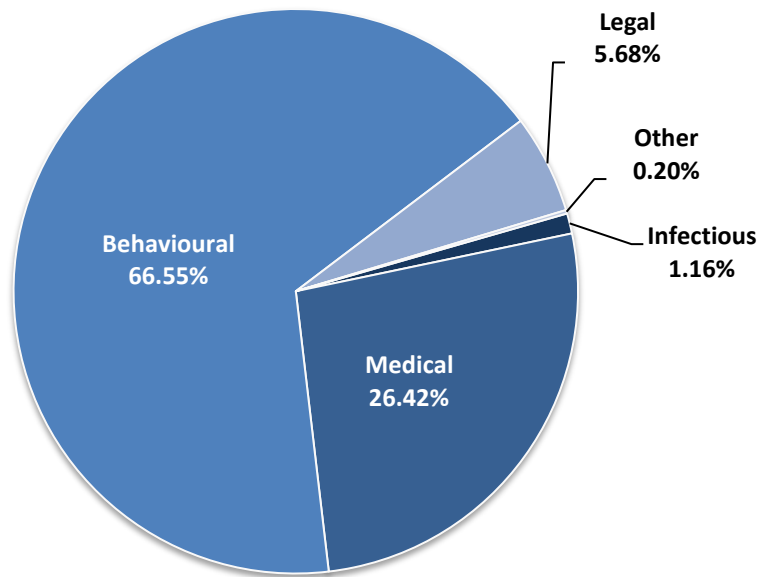
The increasing numbers of dogs identified with microchips facilitates reuniting lost dogs with their families.

Unfortunately, despite our best efforts to rehome dogs and help return them to their families, 11.21% (2,502) of dogs/puppies were euthanased (see Figure 5). We remain focused on rehoming all animals who are suitable for rehoming.

Of the dogs' euthanased, the majority of cases were euthanased due to severe behavioural issues which made them unsuitable for rehoming (66.55%). These included aggression and severe anxiety that the RSPCA was not able to successfully treat through behavioural modification programs. Such issues can compromise the dog's welfare and quality of life, as well as being a safety risk to adults, children and other animals in the community.

<sup>1</sup> Received refers to all dogs in RSPCA facilities during the 2020-2021 financial year.

**Figure 5: Reasons for euthanasia of dogs 2020-2021**



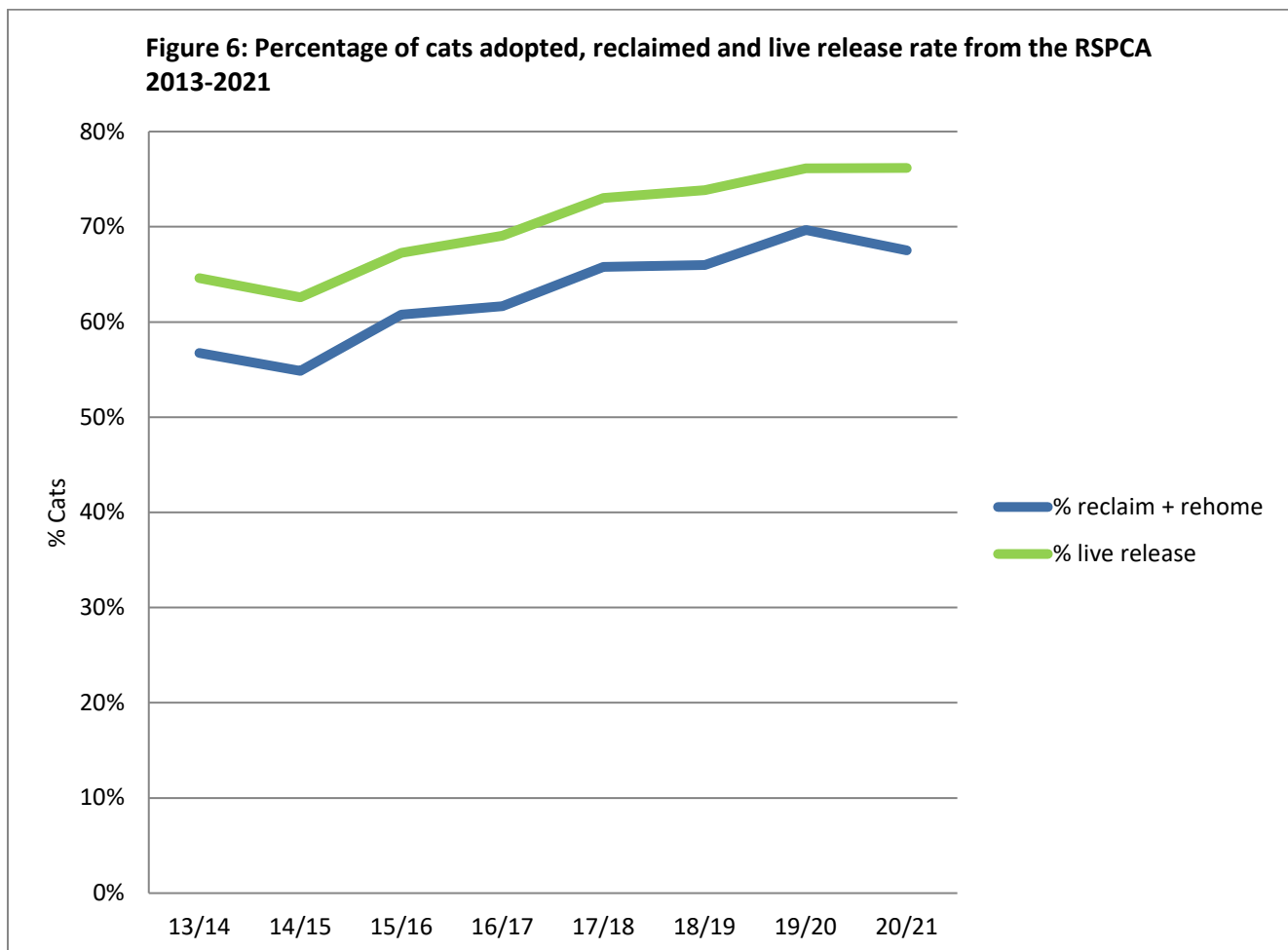
**Total dogs euthanased 2,502**

## Cats

The proportion of cats and kittens who have been adopted by the RSPCA was 67.52% , (28,746 cats) (see figures 6, 7 and 8). The proportion of cats who were reclaimed by their owners this year increased compared to the previous year to 5.92% (2,519 cats), possibly due to the increasing uptake of microchip identification for cats, which facilitates reuniting cats with their families.

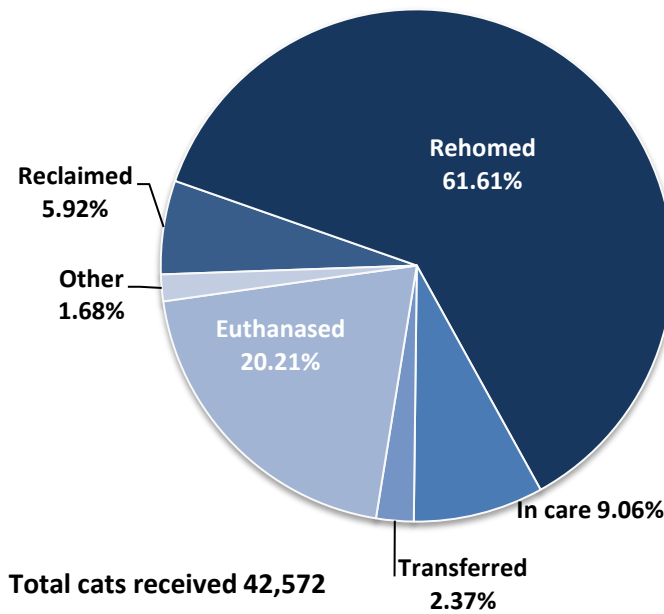
One measure that is used for monitoring shelter outcomes over time is the live release rate (LRR). The LRR is the percentage of cats who were rehomed, reclaimed by their owner or transferred to a rescue group or other non-RSPCA facility as a percentage of the total number of cats received<sup>1</sup> (not including those currently in care or categorised as 'other') for the 2020-21 financial year. The 2020-21 live release rate for cats and kittens was 76.18%.

Unfortunately, despite our best efforts to rehome cats and help return them to their families, , 20.21% (8,604) of cats/kittens were euthanased (see Figure 9), similar to last year (21.41%).

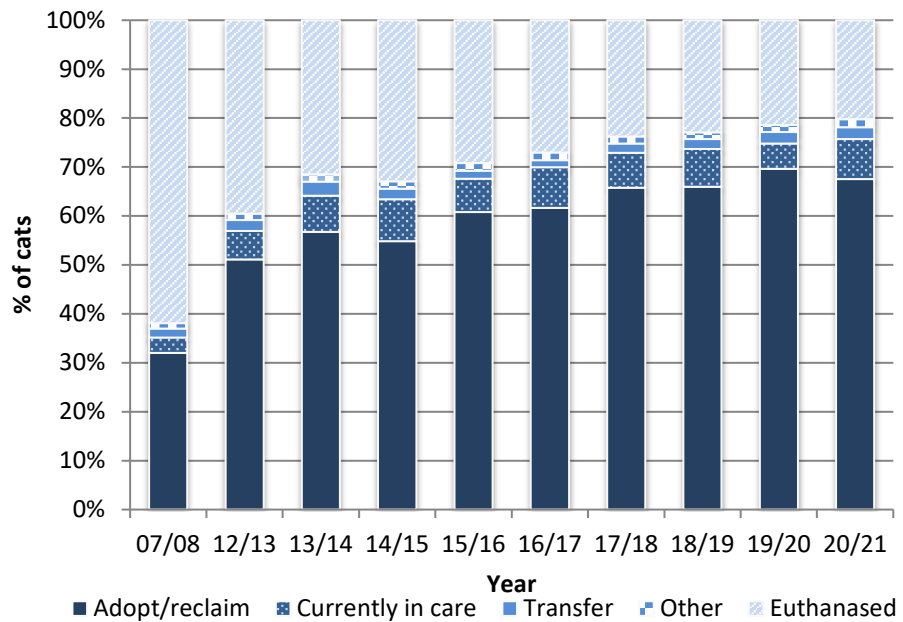


<sup>1</sup> Received refers to all cats in RSPCA facilities during the 2020-21 financial year.

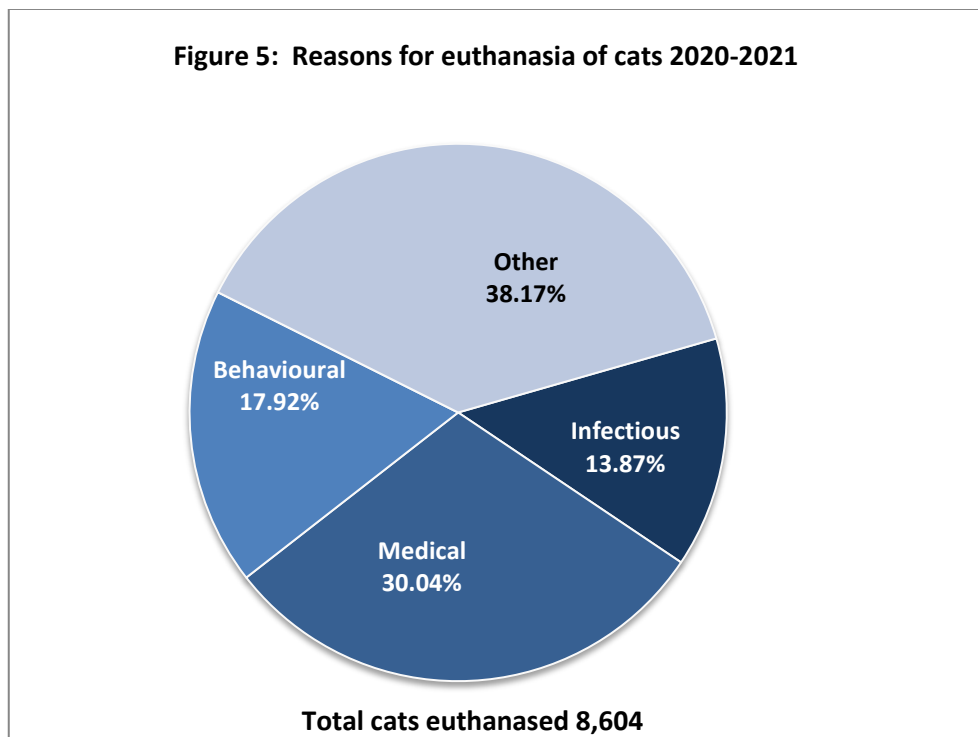
**Figure 7: Outcomes for cats 2020-2021**



**Figure 8: Outcomes for cats selected years 2007-2021**



**Figure 5: Reasons for euthanasia of cats 2020-2021**



## Wildlife

The number of wildlife presented to the RSPCA has significantly increased in the past decade, since 1998-99 (8,374 animals in 1998-99 to 28,656 animals in 2020-21).

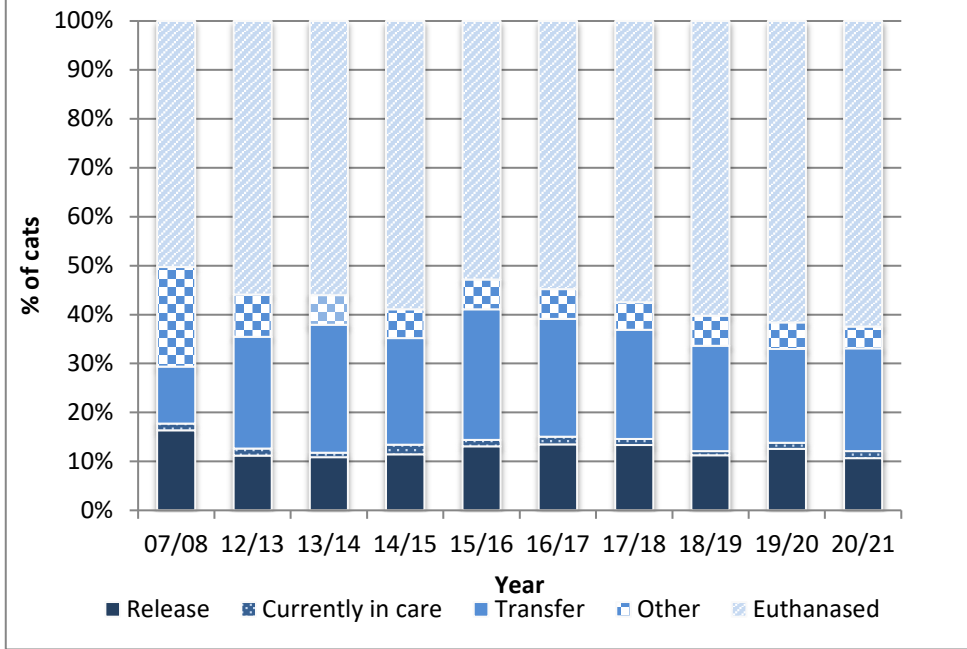
Usually, wildlife (native and introduced) is presented to the RSPCA by members of the community and private veterinary clinics because they have been injured or orphaned. In particular, RSPCA QLD operates specialist wildlife clinics and receive, treat, rehabilitate and re-release wildlife.

In 2020-21, the RSPCA re-released 10.7% (3,058) of wildlife received<sup>1</sup> following treatment and rehabilitation and transferred 6,018 (21%) to specialist groups or other non-RSPCA facilities. Unfortunately, many of the animals' injuries can cause significant pain and suffering and/or compromise their survival in the wild. Therefore, the RSPCA performs a difficult but valuable role relieving the suffering of injured wildlife through euthanasia. In 2020-21, 62.5% of all wildlife received was euthanased (see Figure 10).

<sup>1</sup> Received refers to all wildlife in RSPCA facilities during the 2020-21 financial year.

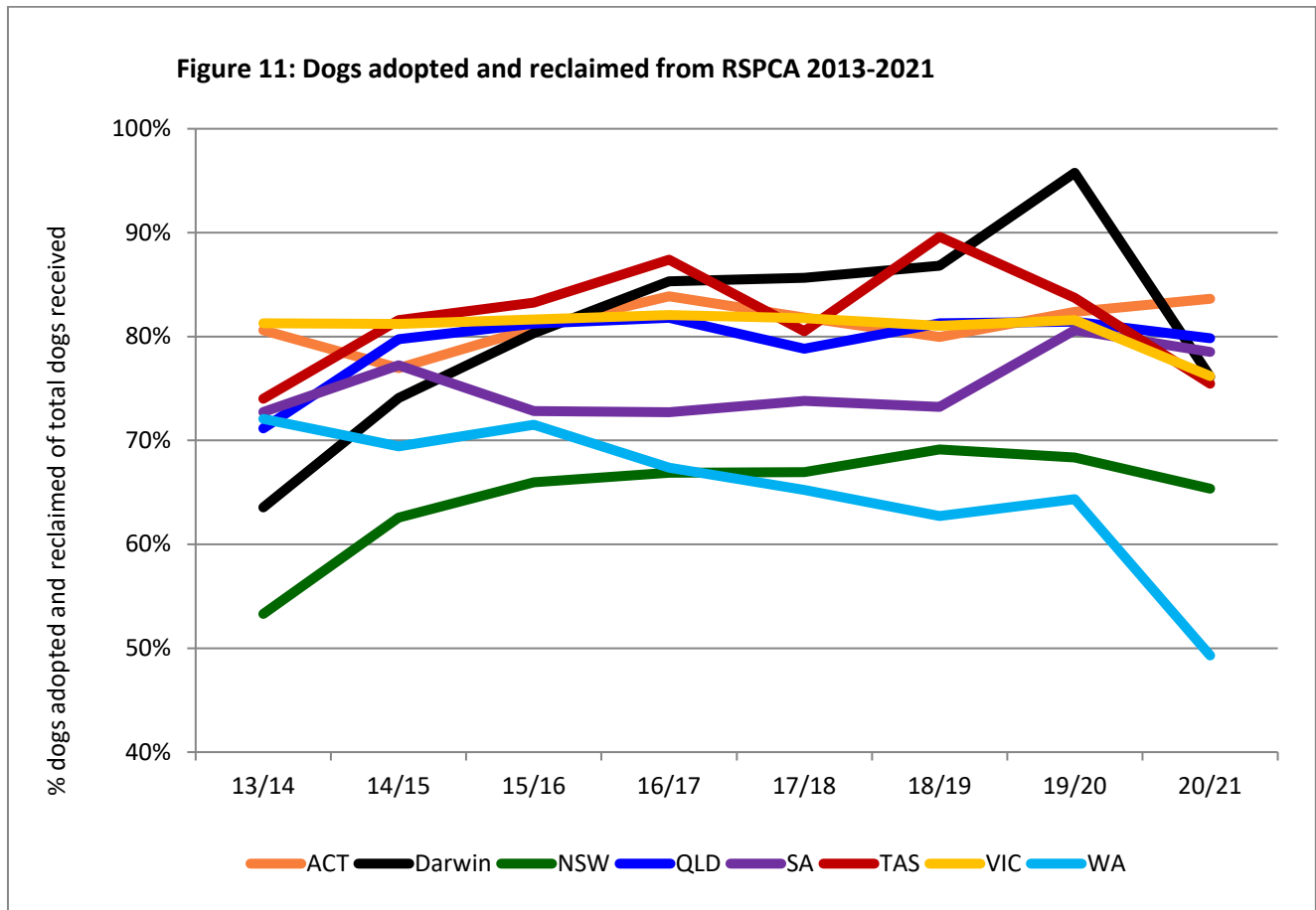


**Figure 8: Outcomes for Wildlife selected years 2007-2021**



## Trends by state/territory RSPCA

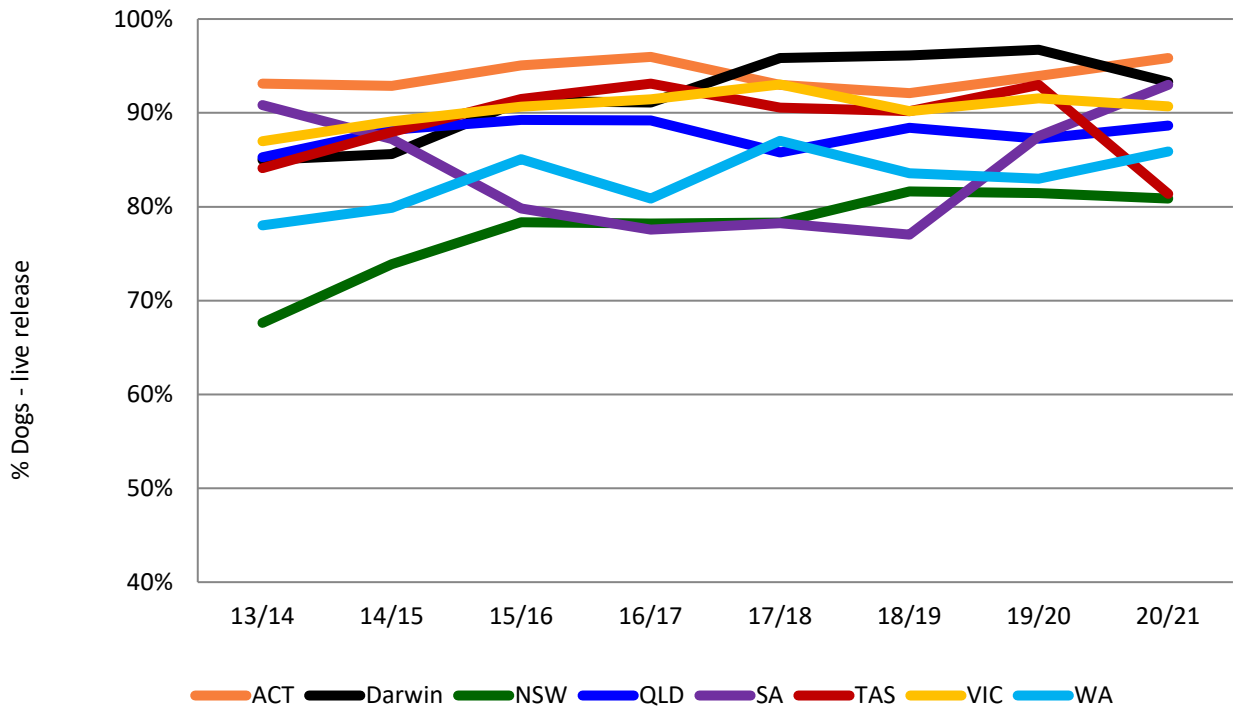
Dog rehoming and reclaim by owner rates by state are shown in Figure 11 and live release rate by state in Figure 12.



<sup>1</sup>Note: Some RSPCA facilities may have a larger proportion of animals currently in long-term care which can influence the adoption and reclaim rate.

<sup>1</sup> RSPCA NSW numbers do not include Council animals for FY 2011-2014.

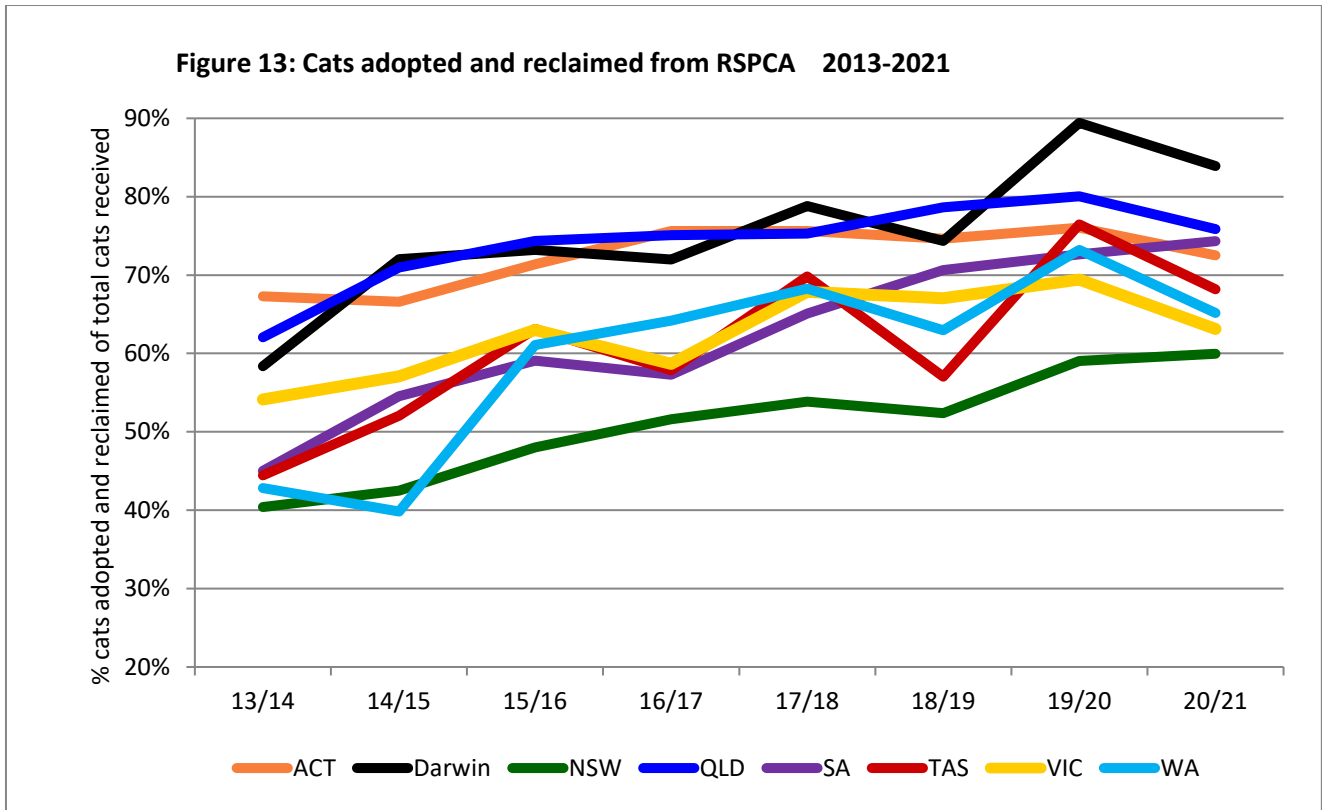
Figure 12: Dogs - live release rate from RSPCA 2013-2021



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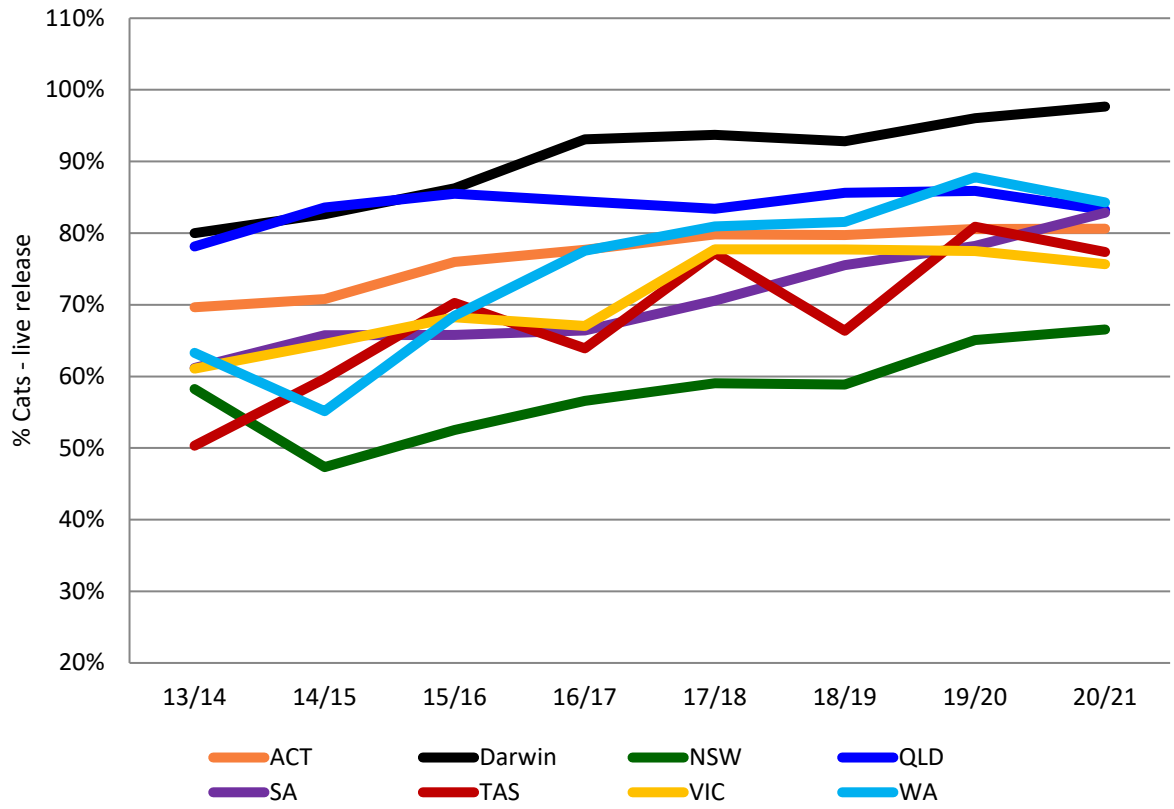
<sup>1</sup> RSPCA NSW numbers do not include Council animals for FY 2011-2014.

Cat rehoming and reclaim by owner rates by state are shown in Figure 13 and live release rate by state in Figure 14.



Note: Some RSPCA facilities may have a larger proportion of animals currently in long-term care which can influence the adoption and reclaim rate.

Figure 14: Cats - live release rate from RSPCA 2013-2021



## **Cruelty complaints**

Separate to the RSPCA's adoption and advocacy work, the RSPCA's Inspectors are authorised by the state/territory governments to enforce animal welfare legislation (except in the NT, where enforcement is the sole responsibility of the Northern Territory Government).

In 2020-21, RSPCA Inspectors investigated 55,922 complaints of cruelty reported by members of the public, the majority of which were in relation to dog, cat, horse and livestock welfare. This is a decrease of 1,988 from the previous year. In addition, RSPCA Inspectors revisited 17,379 complaints/incidents.

This year, the RSPCA laid 3,812 charges and finalised 426 prosecutions of which 413 were successful.

END OF REPORT