

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

2016-17

The RSPCA is Australia's oldest, largest and most trusted animal welfare organisation. With this privileged position comes great responsibility. This year we received¹ 135,872 animals into our animal shelters and adoption centres across the country.

We are pleased to report that over the past 10 years we have adopted out, reunited with their owners or released into the wild 721,156 animals. This includes 377,591 dogs/puppies and 259,203 cats/kittens that were adopted or reunited with owners.

Adoption 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 adopted and reunited with their owners. These include highly-visible public initiatives as well as substantial work behind-the-scenes, such as:

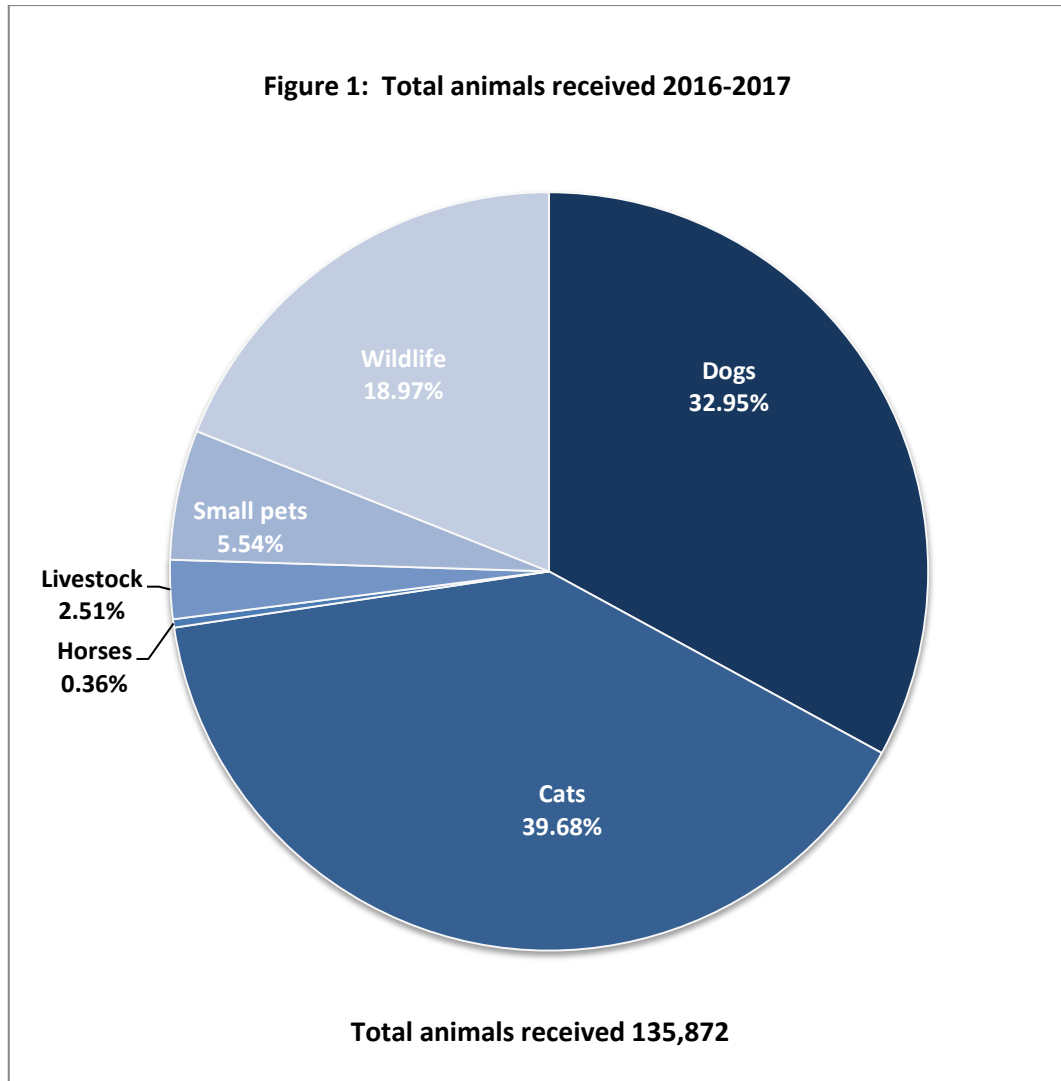
- **Extensive promotion of the wonderful animals we have available for adoption** through www.adoptapet.com.au, social media, events and traditional media.
- **Increasing community awareness and support for the value of adopting animals** from shelters and rescue groups more broadly, including through media stories and events.
- **Additional proactive and creative adoption initiatives**, such as Valentine's Day promotions, promotions focusing on senior animals, and cats adopting a mum and kitten or two kittens together, adoption centres in shopping precincts and pet retail adoption partners including PetBarn.
- **Working with smaller rescue groups** to extend the reach of adoption initiatives.
- **Providing services to reunite lost pets 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 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 that don't cope well in a shelter environment.
- **Dedicated behavioural trainers** that put in place behavioural modification and management plans for animals requiring specialist support, and who also provide post adoption behavioural classes.
- **Improvements in clinical veterinary care** including isolation facilities and processes, in shelter disease management and surgical rehabilitation.
- **Adoption follow up** with new owners to ensure pets 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.
- **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.

¹ Received throughout this report refers to all animals in RSPCA facilities during the 2016-17 financial year.

All animals

In 2016-17, the RSPCA cared for 135,872 animals including 44,770 dogs, 53,912 cats, 484 horses, 3,406 livestock, 7,523 small pets (such as mice, rabbits, guinea pigs, birds, fish and ferrets) and 25,777 native and introduced wild animals such as wombats, kangaroos, possums and reptiles (see Figure 1).

This was a decrease of 1,519 animals or -1.11% from 2015-16 when we received¹ 137,391 animals.



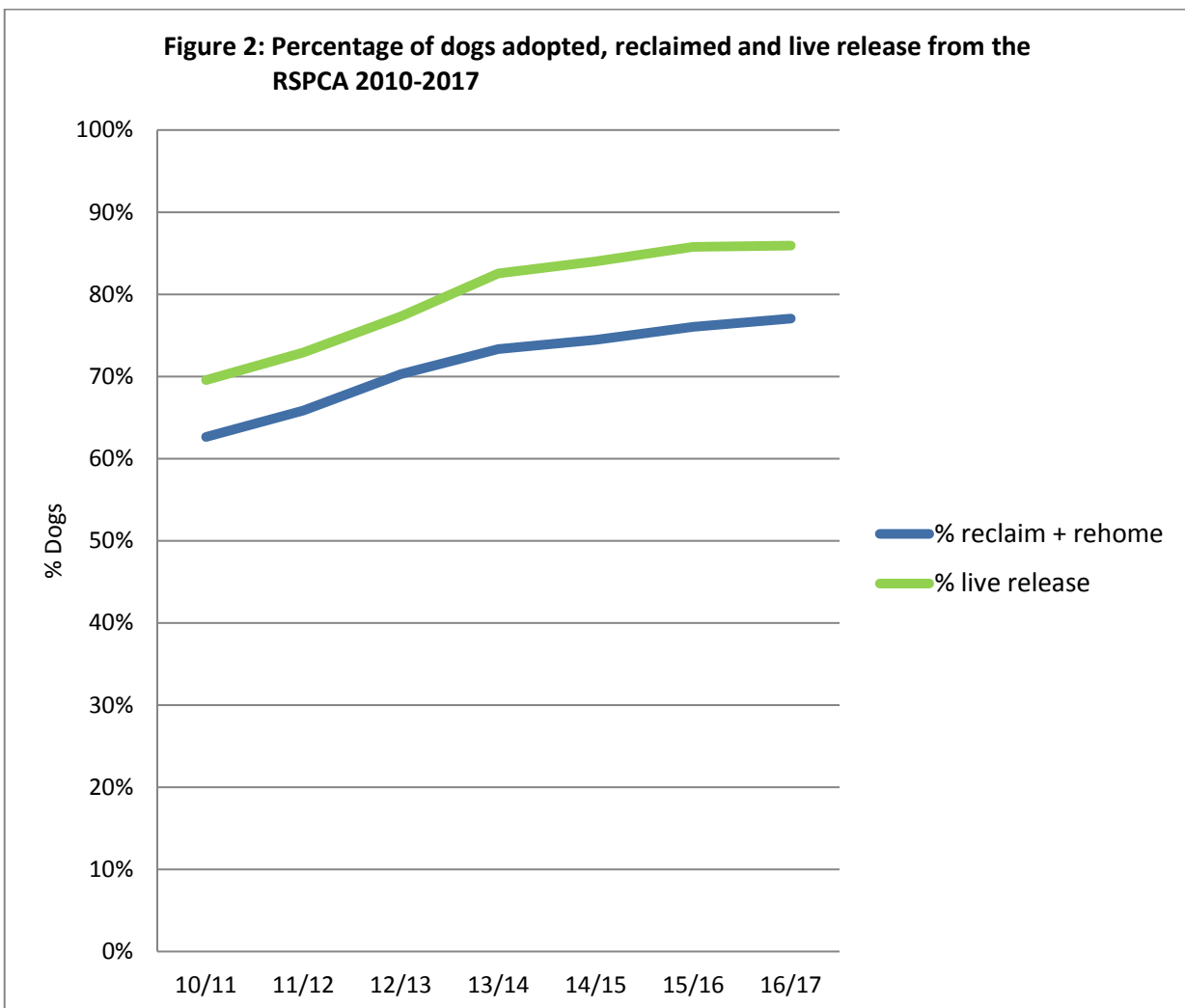
Note: The total number of animals coming into the care of the RSPCA can be influenced by many factors including the number of local council animal management (pound) contracts the RSPCA holds in any one year.

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Dogs

During 2016-17 the RSPCA received¹ 44,770 dogs and achieved the highest adoption/reunited with owners rate to date with 77.02% of dogs being adopted or reunited with their owners (see figures 2, 3 and 4).

An additional measure for monitoring change over time is the live release rate (LRR). The 2016-17 LRR for dogs was 85.94%, which is an increase of 0.16% compared to the previous year. The LRR is the percentage of dogs that 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 2016-2017 financial year.



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Figure 3: Outcomes for dogs 2016-17

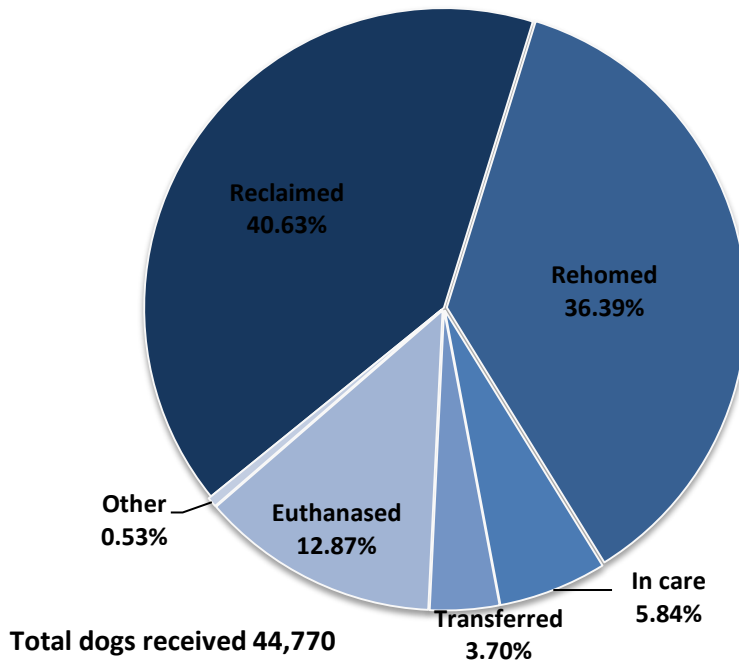
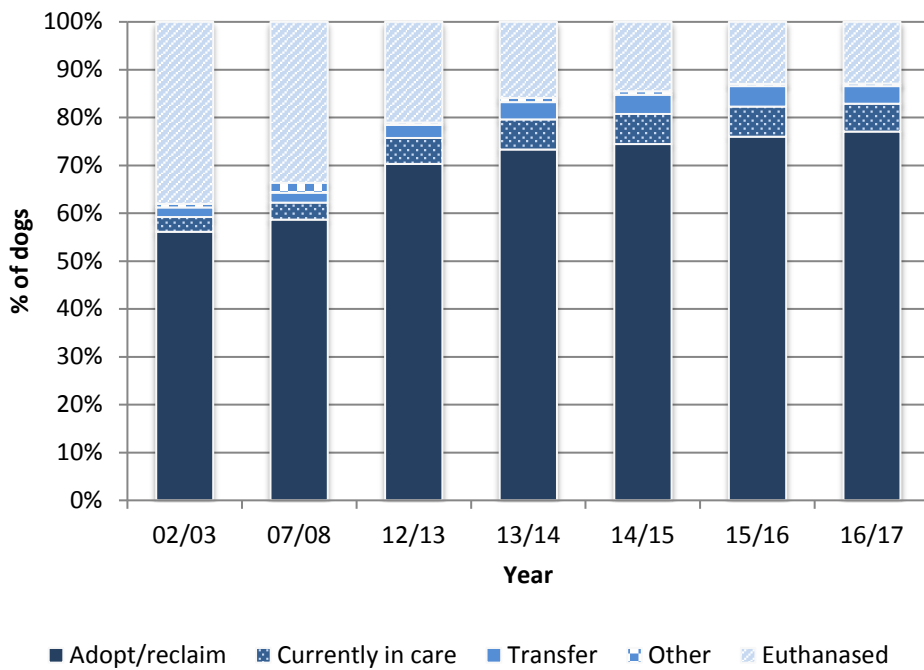


Figure 4: Outcomes for dogs selected years 2002-2017

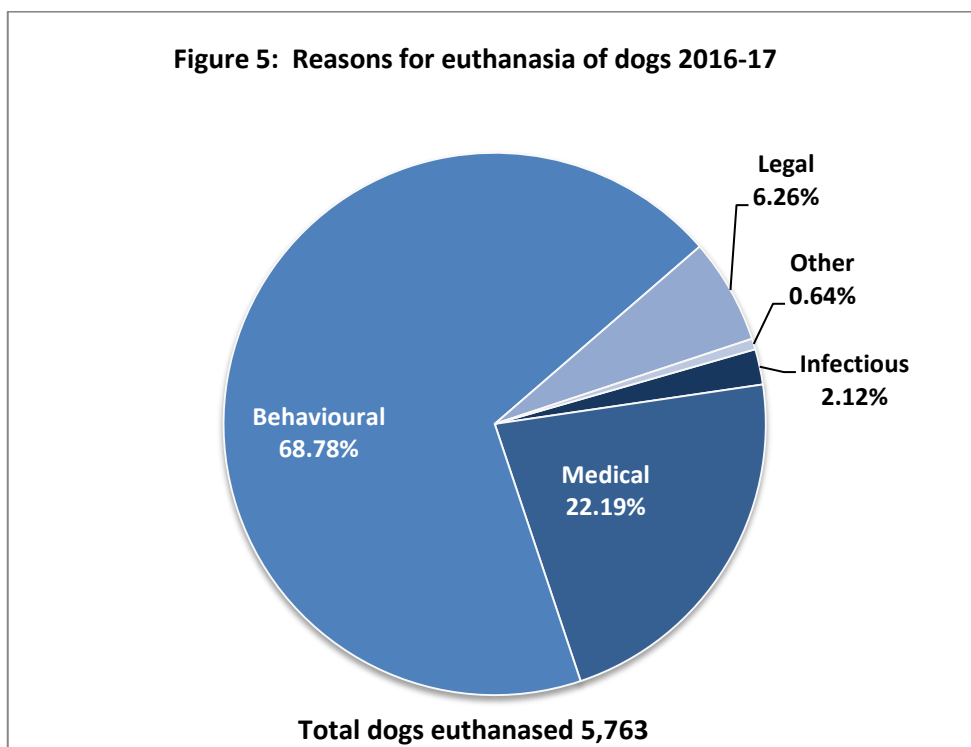


Many more owners reclaim lost dogs from the RSPCA than they do lost cats (18,190 or 40.63% of dogs compared to 2,658 or 4.93% of cats).

The increased use of microchip identification for dogs supports reuniting lost dogs with their owner; while this increase in adoption and reuniting with owners is also the result of our proactive tracing services, care, and rehabilitation activities leading to a decrease in euthanasia.

Sadly, 12.87% (5,763) of dogs/puppies were still humanely euthanased (see Figure 5). We remain focused on adopting all animals that are suitable for adoption.

Of dogs euthanased, the majority of cases are because of severe behavioural issues (68.78%). This includes aggression and severe anxiety that the RSPCA is not able to or has not been able to treat through behavioural modification programs. Such issues can compromise the dog's welfare and quality of life and can be a safety risk to adults, children and other animals.



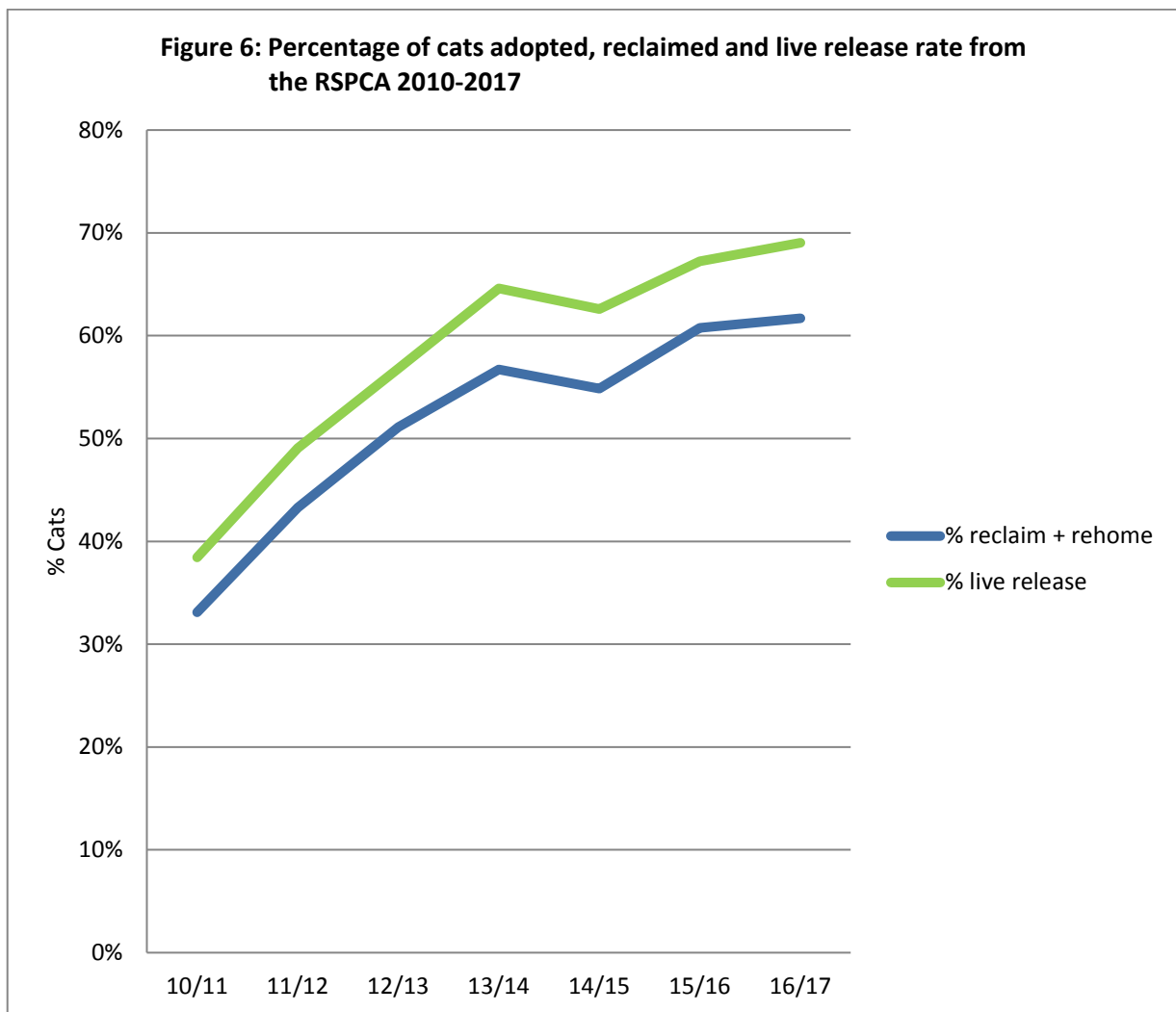
Cats

A higher proportion of cats and kittens have been adopted by the RSPCA and reclaimed by their owners this year than in any previous year, 33,253 cats (61.68%), reflecting the success of new adoption approaches and programs (see figures 6, 7 and 8).

An additional measure for monitoring change over time is the live release rate (LRR). The 2016-17 live release rate for cats and kittens was 69.05%. The LRR is the percentage of cats that 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 cats received¹ (not including those currently in care or categorised as 'other') for the 2016-17 financial year.

Despite a higher percentage of cats and kittens being adopted and reclaimed than in any previous year, unfortunately, 27.01% (14,563) of cats/kittens were still humanely euthanased (see Figure 9). This is a decrease of 1,642 cats from the previous year.

With the increasing uptake of microchip identification for cats, we are hopeful to see an increase in the number of lost cats that are reunited with their owners over the coming years.



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Figure 7: Outcomes for cats 2016-17

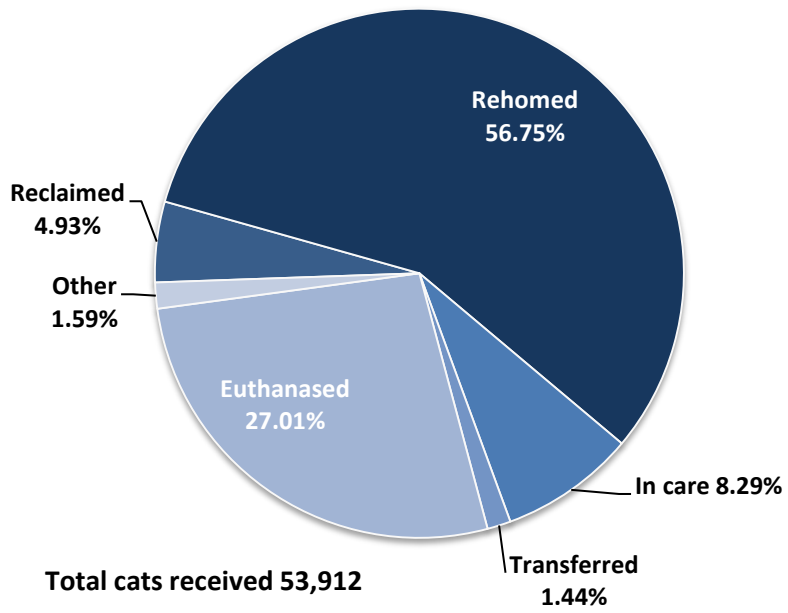


Figure 8: Outcomes for cats selected years 2002-2017

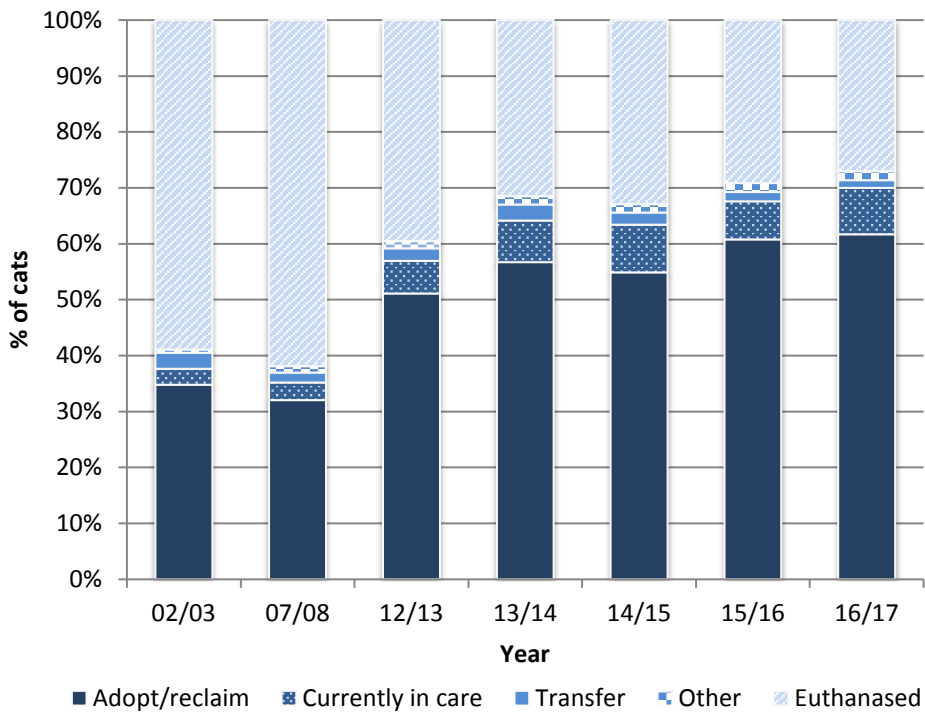
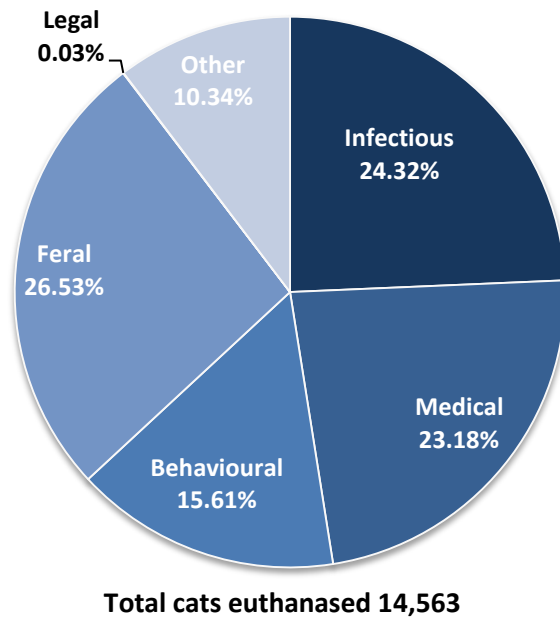


Figure 9: Reasons for euthanasia of cats 2016-17



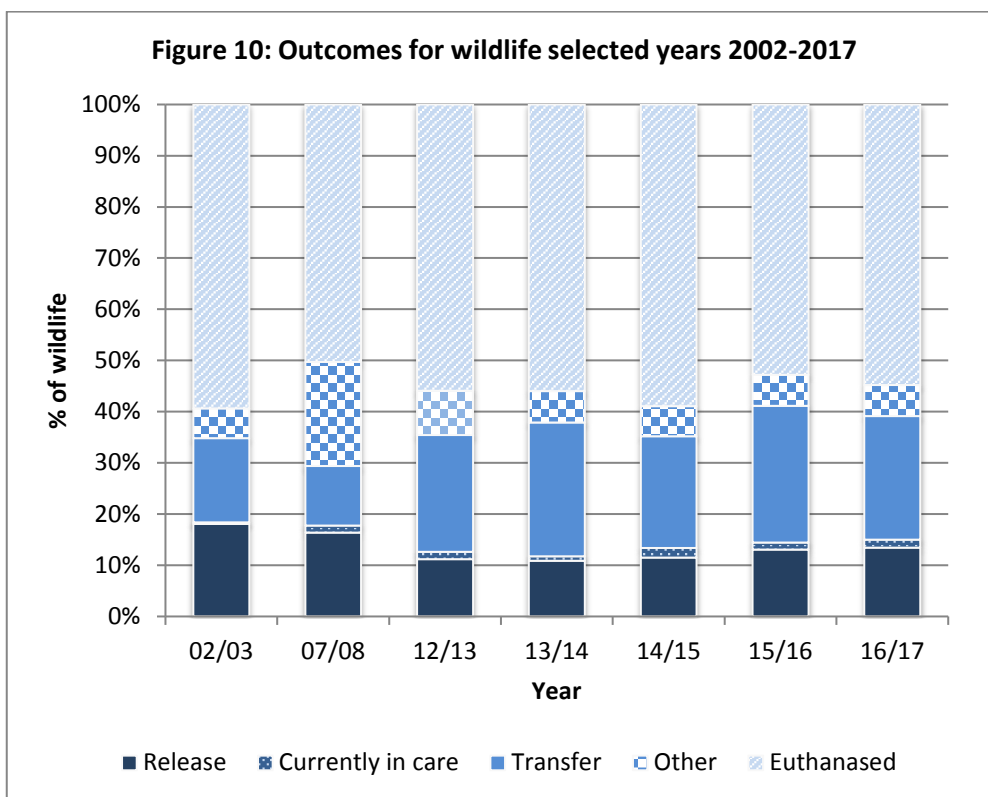
Note: Some RSPCA facilities record feral cat euthanasia as 'other' rather than 'legal'.

Wildlife

The number of wildlife presented to the RSPCA has significantly increased since 1998/99 (8,374 animals in 1998/99 to 25,777 animals in 2016-17).

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. RSPCA QLD operates specialist wildlife clinics and receive, treat, rehabilitate and re-release wildlife.

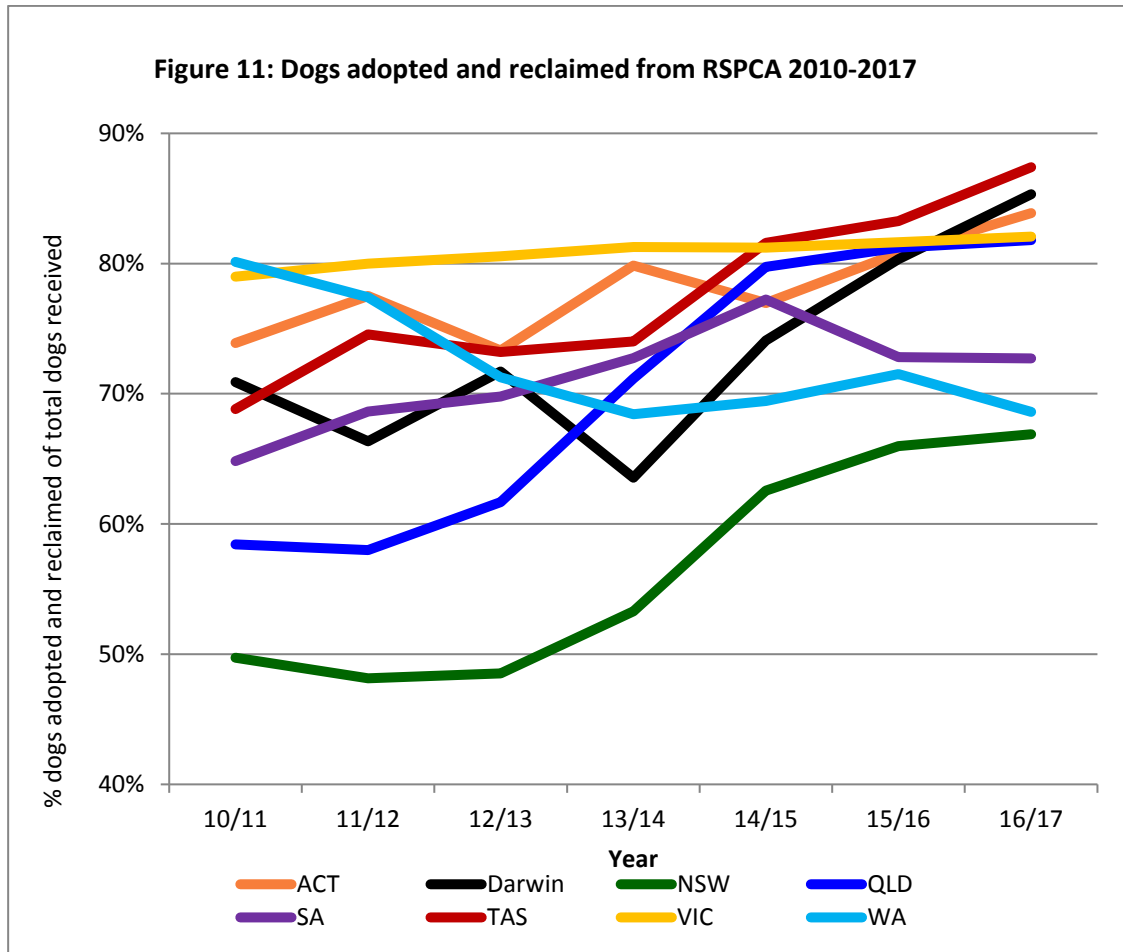
In 2016-17, the RSPCA re-released 13.4% (3,467) of wildlife received¹ following treatment and rehabilitation and transferred 6,207 (24.1%) to specialist groups or other non-RSPCA facilities. Unfortunately, many of the injuries can cause significant pain and suffering and/or compromise survival in the wild and the RSPCA plays an important role relieving this suffering through humane euthanasia. In 2016-17, 54.8% of all wildlife received was humanely euthanased (see Figure 10).



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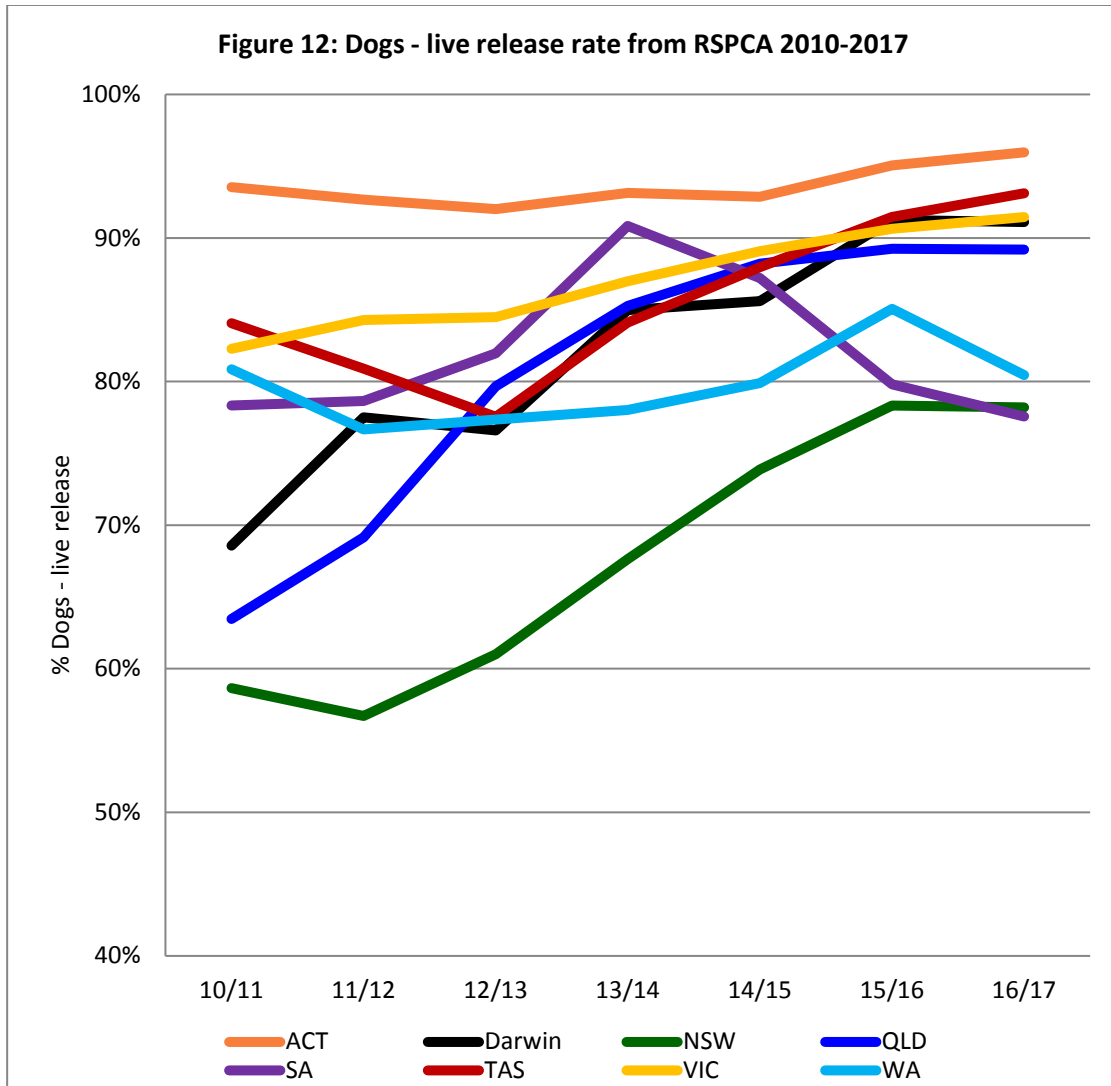
Trends by state/territory RSPCA

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



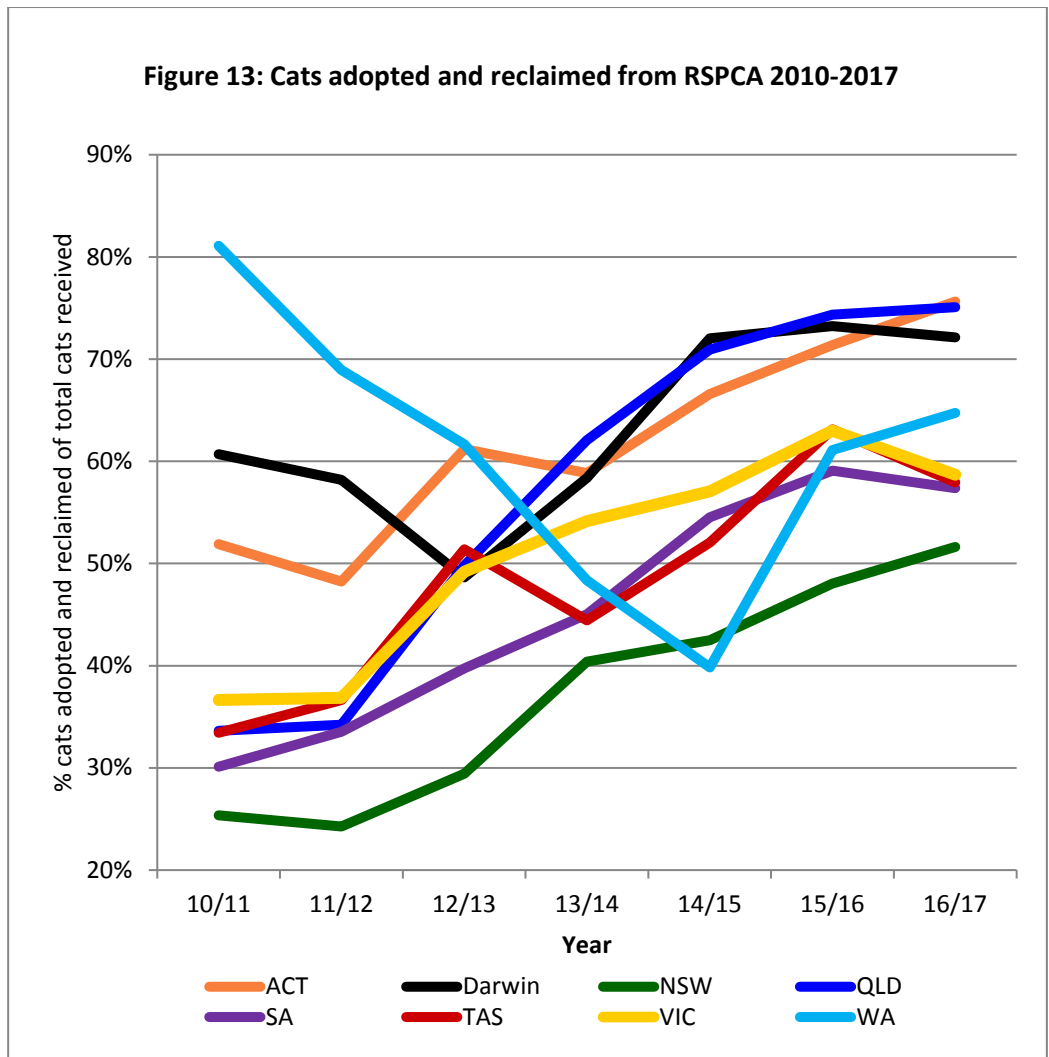
Note: Some RSPCA facilities may have a larger proportion of animals currently in long-term care which can influence the adoption and reclaim rate.

¹ RSPCA NSW does not include Council animals for FY 2011-2014.



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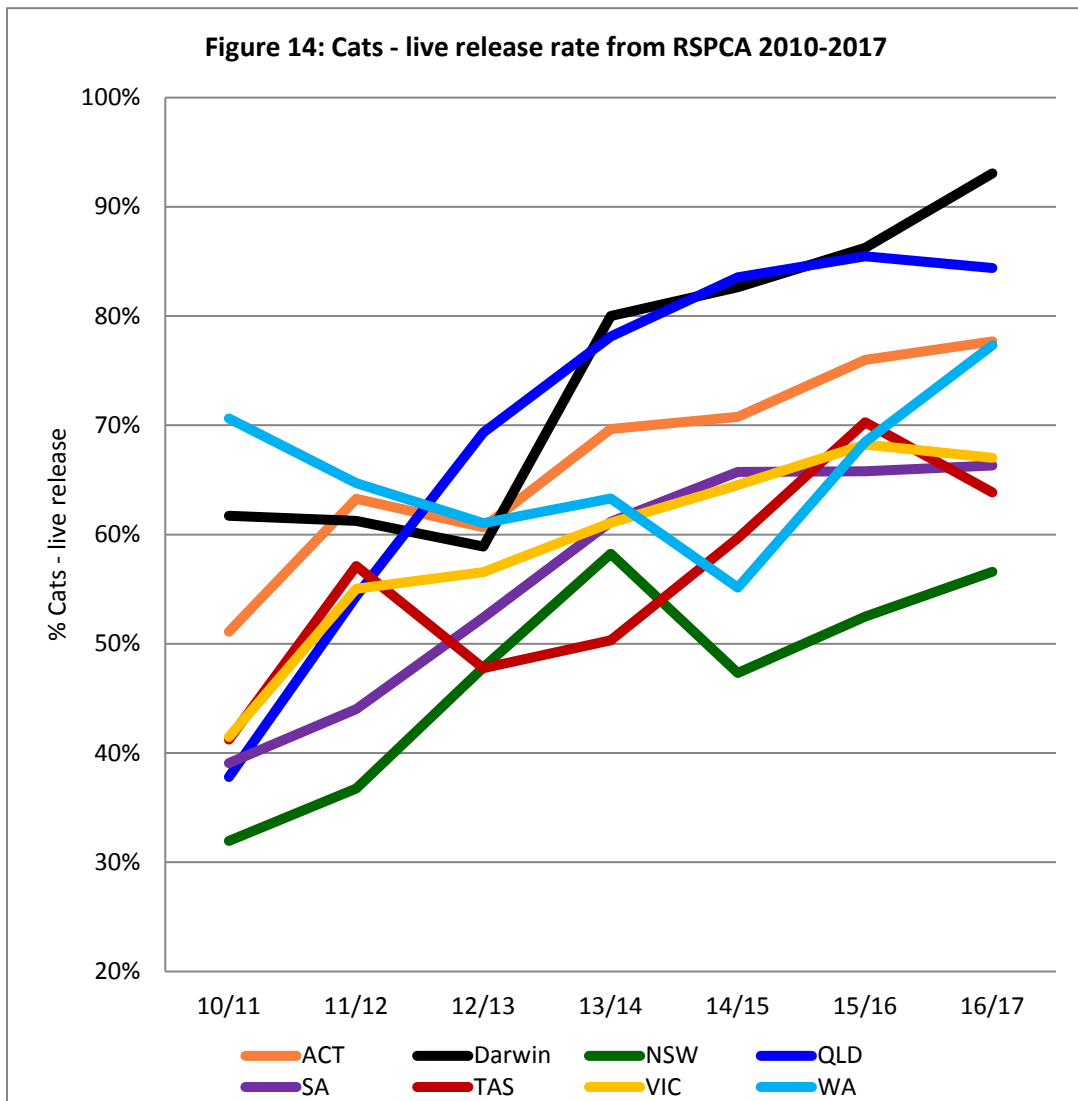
Cat adoption and reclaim by owner rates by state are shown in Figure 13 and live release rate by state in Figure 14.



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

¹ RSPCA NSW does not include Council animals for FY 2011-2014.

Figure 14: Cats - live release rate from RSPCA 2010-2017



Cruelty complaints

Separate to the RSPCA's adoption and advocacy work, the RSPCA's 98 Inspectors are authorised by the various state/territory governments to enforce animal welfare legislation (except in the NT, where enforcement is the sole responsibility of the Northern Territory Government).

In 2016-17, RSPCA Inspectors investigated 55,405 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 7,158 from the previous year. In addition, RSPCA Inspectors revisited 7,283 complaints/incidents.

This year, the RSPCA laid 900 charges and finalised 340 prosecutions of which 321 were successful.

END OF REPORT