



25 July 2024

## **Submission on the excessively high number of greyhounds euthanased by University of Queensland's Pets for Life Program**

The Coalition for the Protection of Greyhounds is concerned that the University of Queensland (UQ) is failing in its responsibility to meet community standards around the rehoming of greyhounds.

Recently the University of Queensland agreed to conduct a review into their partnership with Racing Queensland. UQ accepts over a hundred discarded greyhounds from the Qld Racing industry each year, euthanasing the majority of them within weeks.

As emphasised in CPG's previous submission, CPG and the community is concerned that UQ is acting as a euthanasia channel for greyhounds unwanted by the racing industry.

UQ has refused to stop accepting discarded greyhounds from the Queensland racing industry until the review is complete. Given this may take up to 6 months, this could mean that another 50 greyhounds are euthanased by the UQ School of Veterinary Science, Pets for Life Adoption Program (UQ Pets for Life).

CPG received a response from UQ Pets for Life which does not explain the incredibly high euthanasia rate for greyhounds. Nor does it reassure CPG or the community that UQ is operating in an ethical manner and in the best interest of greyhounds.

CPG has responded to the main points in the UQ Pets for Life correspondence below. This serves to make it very clear that the UQ Pets for Life program is failing against every measure and standard expected of an ethical and responsible rehoming organisation.

CPG forwarded the UQ Pets for Life response to two of the main community greyhound rehoming organisations in Qld and their responses are included below along with a number of questions for UQ Pets for Life. These have been posed by CPG and the Queensland greyhound rehomingers and seek to ascertain why the UQ Pets for Life has a rehoming failure rate that is uniquely high across Queensland animal welfare groups.



## Total failure in adoption rehoming

**UQ Pets for Life:** Adoption Rehoming is the primary goal of our licensed adoption centre. Regrettably, many racing greyhounds do not pass the suitability assessment, which is conducted by qualified behaviourists who work with the animals over several weeks.

**Queensland greyhound rehomer:** *We have not found that "many" greyhounds are unsuitable for rehoming. In fact, our experience tells us that it is rare that a greyhound cannot be successfully rehomed if given appropriate veterinary care, basic training, behaviour support, time and patience.*

*Greyhounds need and deserve more than 'several weeks' to assess their suitability. They need to be in home environments where they can decompress, gently adapt to pet life and be slowly introduced to new experiences and socialised at their pace. Greyhounds need to be in a pet home environment, it is unfair to assess them for suitability if they are not in the environment they are being assessed to live in.*

*Feedback from foster carers determines the type of support they need to help them adjust and only after that support has been provided should any assessment be done. The assessment needs to be focused on the type of home they need, including people, other animals, dwelling type, yard, busy, quiet, easy going, strict boundaries etc. One key to a greyhound's "suitability" is finding the right match.*

### Questions for UQ Pets for Life regarding suitability assessments

- Where are the greyhounds housed while in UQ Pets for Life, eg are they in kennels or foster homes?
- How much decompression time are they given before assessments?
- What training, socialisation and support are they given before the assessments?
- If they 'fail' an assessment what action is taken to work with them and provide additional training and support before a reassessment?
- Are the greyhounds given support in the way of medication?
- Does suitability assessment focus on temperament and behaviours in isolation, rather than whether the greyhound can be successfully rehomed if the right home is found for them?
- On average, how long does UQ Pets for Life work with a greyhound before deciding that they are not suitable for any type of pet home and should be euthanised?



## Excessively high euthanasia rate

**UQ Pets for Life:** In relation to outcomes from UQ’s rehoming program, the submission presents comparative data from the RSPCA. That data appears to relate to all dogs and is not specific to greyhounds from the racing industry. If you do have specific data from other programs, we would appreciate it if you could please share those sources to inform our deliberations.

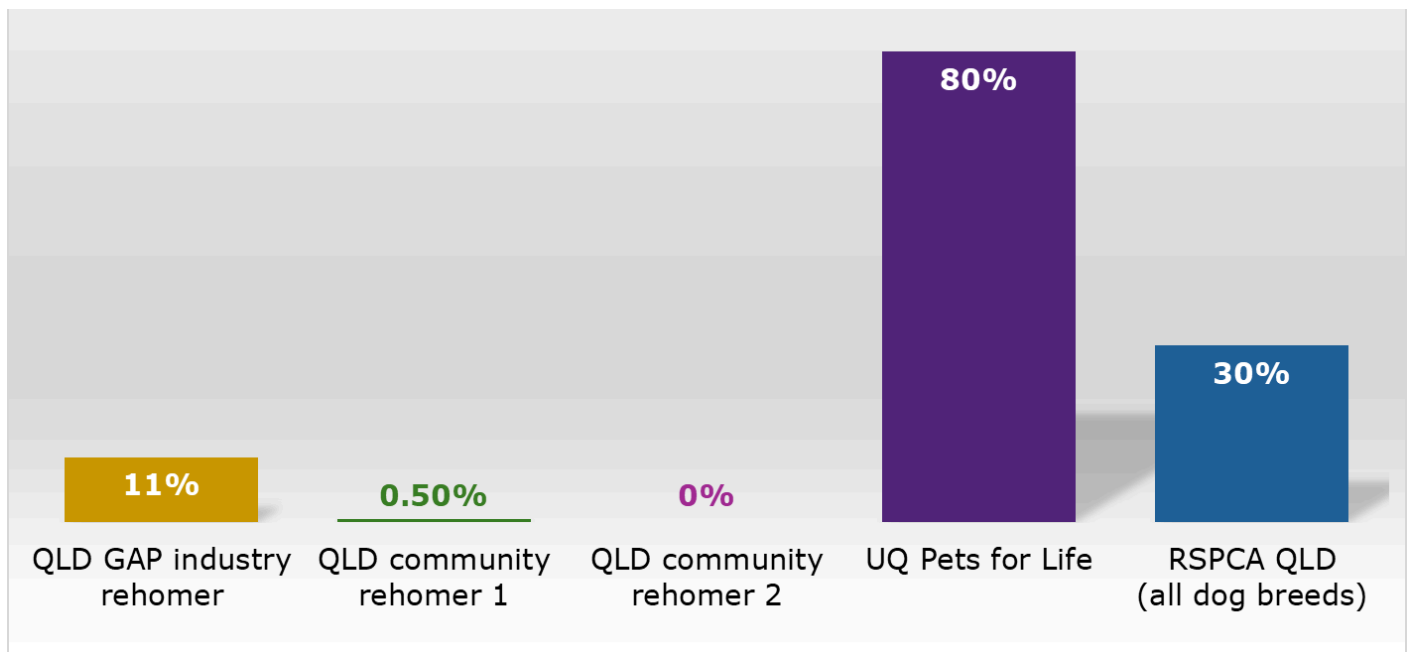
**CPG:** The chart below compares the greyhound euthanasia rates for a number of Queensland greyhound rehoming groups and includes that of the RSPCA for comparison.

As shown in the chart below, one major Queensland community greyhound rehomer reports that of the over 1600 greyhounds accepted into their rehoming program over the last seven years, none were euthanased as “unsuitable to rehome”.

Another Queensland greyhound rehomer states that one of the 207 greyhounds they have accepted for rehoming over the past six years was euthanased due to being considered “unsuitable to rehome”. They add that the greyhound’s behavioural issues were believed to be the result of an underlying medical issue affecting her brain. Another two greyhounds were euthanased by the rehomer due to health issues that impacted their quality of life.

**Queensland greyhound rehomer:** *Xena was in care for 10 months, initially receiving basic training, followed by specialist behaviour assessment and ongoing care which included medication and tailored behaviour training. This is the quality and extent of care and commitment necessary to truly determine whether a greyhound is 'suitable for rehoming' or whether the very difficult decision needs to be made to euthanise.*

The Racing Queensland rehomer GAP reports that they accepted 294 greyhounds for rehoming in FY23 and euthanased 35 dogs over this period.



### Euthanasia of Queensland ex-racing greyhounds accepted for rehoming by agency



## Questions for UQ Pets for Life regarding excessive euthanasia rates

- Can UQ Pets for Life break down 'unsuitable for rehoming' into sub-categories with examples?
- How many greyhounds are euthanised for health issues?
- Are greyhounds euthanised with treatable medical conditions eg pannus, hookworm, heartworm?
- Are greyhounds euthanised for for treatable injuries eg fractures?
- How many greyhounds are euthanised for behaviour-only reasons and what behaviours are included eg prey drive, fear reactivity, resource guarding, sleep startle, anxiety and being too timid?

## Confirmation of greyhounds used as teaching, research or training tools

**UQ Pets for Life:** While waiting for adoption, a small number of suitable greyhounds support veterinary education through non-invasive activities, including in the teaching of animal handling techniques and behaviour observations. Currently there are four research projects involving greyhounds (and other dogs), which are non-invasive studies aimed at improving health treatments for animals. For the avoidance of doubt, only animals that are deemed suitable for rehoming may enter these programs, and this activity does not impact their suitability for adoption.

**CPG:** Can UQ confirm that those greyhounds designed "unrehomable" by UQ Pets for Life are not involved in any research programs, either invasive or non-invasive. In addition, can UQ confirm that the greyhounds designated as "unrehomable" are not used as teaching or training tools.

## Lack of ethical decision making

**UQ Pets for Life:** Our review is expected to take 3-6 months to complete, and during this time the current program will continue. Importantly, this will ensure any sudden withdrawal does not create a gap that impacts negatively on the welfare of the animals, or place additional strain on animal welfare agencies including volunteer-run charities.

**CPG:** CPG is in the process of informing all welfare groups including community greyhound rehomingers that UQ Pets for Life is euthanasing greyhounds to avoid placing additional strain on their agencies and charities. We will ask them to contact UQ Pets for Life directly with their response.

## Questions for UQ Pets for Life regarding ethical decision making

- Which animal welfare groups has UQ Pets for Life contacted to ascertain if they are willing to take one or more greyhounds to avoid greyhounds being euthanased unnecessarily?



This submission shows that UQ Pets for Life is euthanasing ex-racing greyhounds unnecessarily and unethically. UQ Pets for Life should immediately stop euthanasing greyhounds and implement appropriate rehoming assessment and adoption regulations.

This includes rules around housing, decompression periods, training, socialisation and support to maximise the potential for rehoming each greyhound.

Once again, CPG urges University of Queensland to live up to its mission statement and *"deliver for the public good through excellence in education, research and engagement with our communities and partners: local, national and global."*

There is nothing that contributes to the public good through your partnership with Racing Queensland, financially, ethically or morally.

CPG looks forward to your earliest response to this submission and is keen to provide any additional information required.

**Coalition for the Protection of Greyhounds, 25 July 2024**

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