

Facility: Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre
Media: The Queensland Times
Published Date: 29 April 2013

Hairy four-legged friends help prisoners' rehabilitation

Videos available online here: <http://www.qt.com.au/news/prisoners-rehabilitate-with-four-legged-help/1846703/>



MAN'S BEST FRIEND: Suzi, a belgian shepherd dog, meets an inmate at the Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre

WACOL prisoners have been given a new lease on life with the help of some hairy four-legged friends.

The Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre inmates have taken surrendered animals into their care as part of a new rehabilitation program.

The program, run in partnership with RSPCA Queensland, places dogs with prisoners undergoing drug rehabilitation, for six to eight weeks at a time.



Resident dog Chika with her guardian at the Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre. A partnership between Arthur Gorrie and the RSPCA have placed surrendered dogs in the care of prisoners who are undergoing drug rehabilitation.

Prison services manager Sue Noordink said the two-month-old program was proving a success.

"It's been absolutely amazing because the inmates don't see kindness as a weakness anymore," she said.

"When you're a drug addict you become very narcissistic and this program also gives them a nice opportunity to look after someone else."

Ms Noordink said nine prisoners were selected to be primary handlers.



An inmate walks terrier Norton. Norton was adopted by a prison guard when the dog left the guardianship of the inmates at the Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre. A partnership between Arthur Gorrie and the RSPCA have placed surrendered dogs in the care of prisoners who are undergoing drug rehabilitation.

They completed an animal training course and obtained certificates in first aid and occupational health and safety.

"The guardians are responsible for feeding, cleaning and looking after the dogs," she said.

"However all of the prisoners interact with the dogs."

Prisoners who spoke to The QT about their new pets, said the animals had been welcomed to the family.

"We're supposed to be tough but the dogs have softened us up," a heavily-tattooed prisoner said with a laugh.



Kayla with her prison guardian at Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre. Kayla's guardian has also adopted the American staffy cross. A partnership between Arthur Gorrie and the RSPCA have placed surrendered dogs in the care of prisoners who are undergoing drug rehabilitation.

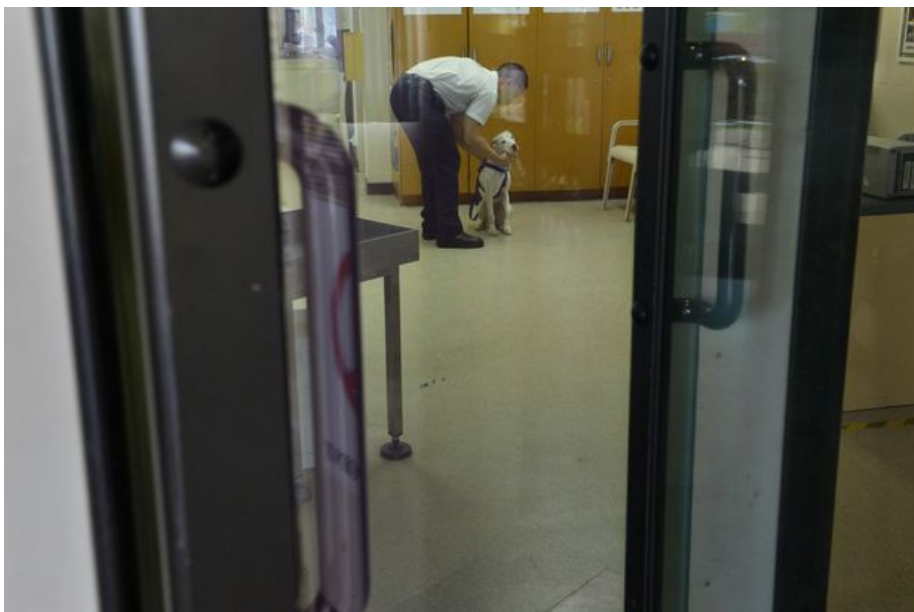
"They've brought out the kids in us and we all get along much better.

"We've also become very protective of the dogs and they take priority over inmates now.

"If someone has a problem with the dogs, he has to leave."

Another prisoner said his dog, an American staffy, had become his best friend - literally.

"I'm adopting him when I get out of here. I've become very attached to him," the man said.



Blizzard a dalmatian cross waits in the Arthur Gorrie Correctional Centre reception with a prison guard on a meet and greet day. A partnership between Arthur Gorrie and the RSPCA have placed surrendered dogs in the care of prisoners who are undergoing drug rehabilitation.

Prison programs officer Lael Bruckner said the arrival of the animals heralded the start of new lives for the prisoners.

"They are showing more love, empathy and respect to their own person and to everyone around them," she said.

"The dogs have also given them a sense of purpose because they feel they are giving back to the community by helping these animals."

RSPCA animal rehabilitation co-ordinator Emma Ginsberg said the animals chosen for the program were either too young for adoption, were injured or had behavioural problems.