ANIMALS Australia is seeking funding from state governments and greyhound industry bodies to build and staff a rehabilitation facility for the dogs of suspended trainers, following philanthropist Jan Cameron’s donation of a 250ha property.

The animal welfare organisation approached Kathmandu founder Ms Cameron earlier this week, after horrifying footage of greyhounds being live-baited with possums, piglets and rabbits screened on Four Corners, resulting in the suspension of more than 30 industry identities in three states.

Ms Cameron wrote to racing ministers and industry bodies in Queensland, NSW and Victoria yesterday, offering to make her property in Dysart, Tasmania, available to ensure dogs that can no longer race as a result of the scandal can be rehabilitated and rehomed.

The proposal is contingent on government or industry funding, with racing ministers and industry bodies yet to indicate their willingness to commit.

Ms Cameron, a philanthropist who has been involved with animal welfare initiatives for some time, said her offer was conditional on Animals Australia running the facility.

“Like all Australians, I was utterly shocked and appalled at the cruelty exposed this week but my thoughts also immediately went to the dogs who are victims too and who deserve a second chance,” Ms Cameron said.

While Racing Queensland has seized 70 dogs and is monitoring a further 72, hundreds of animals in other states remain in the custody of suspended trainers, many of whom are facing life bans from racing if found guilty of live baiting.

Animals Australia spokeswoman Lisa Chalk said she expected more than 300 dogs would be in need of a home as a result of the scandal.

The Victorian government this week committed $3 million in funding to Greyhound Racing Victoria, while Racing Queensland has pledged $2m for welfare initiatives.
Greyhound Racing NSW, which had its board sacked by NSW Racing Minister Troy Grant in response to the scandal, spent $3.7m on animal welfare and adoption initiatives last year.

Ms Chalk said she was hopeful that some of the millions of dollars being made available to deal with live baiting could go towards the proposed facility.

She said it currently cost $3000 to rehabilitate an ex-racing greyhound to the stage where it was ready to be rehomed.

Currently more than 80 per cent, or 10,000 dogs, exiting the greyhound industry each year are destroyed.

Ms Chalk said she was confident the proposed facility represented a worthy use of taxpayers’ money.

“What Australians are likely to view dimly is the millions of dollars of taxpayer funding that has gone into promoting and supporting the greyhound industry in past years — without ensuring appropriate oversight of their activities,” Ms Chalk said.

“Even if state governments aren’t willing to contribute, the greyhound industry in itself clearly has the capacity to contribute the funds necessary.”