



**BIG RESPONSIBILITY:** Guinea pigs Alvin and Vegemite are looked over by Hannah Davis, 3, Louise Barrow (centre) and Alina Davis at the guinea pig sanctuary.

Photo: Rob Williams

# CREATURES NOT QUICK-FIX PETS

## ■ Guinea pigs recover at shelter

WHILE they bear cute names such as Vegemite, Lollypop, Lu Lu and Binky, the guinea pigs at the newly opened Australian Cavy Sanctuary (ACS) in Camira hides an unhappy history.

ACS Camira Manager Alina Davis, said while the shelter had only been opened for a couple of weeks, it already housed about 22 sick guinea pigs.

“We are dedicated to the on-going challenge of taking a stand for the quality of life, value and respect of all guinea pigs and to be a voice for those unfortunately trapped in helpless situations of abuse and mistreatment,” Ms Davis said.

“We work closely with the RSPCA and I guess we are like a guinea pig RSPCA ourselves.

“We take in sick and surrendered pigs and rehabilitate them over months – when they are healthy

enough we put them up on pet rescue to be adopted out to an approved family who will value them and care for them appropriately.

“We are a non-funded and non-profit shelter and have lately had an awful lot of unwanted, injured and homeless guinea pigs from Ipswich and surrounding areas.”

Ms Davis said the organisation which had branches in Toowoomba, the Gold Coast, Sunshine Coast and Cashmere, was trying to change the concept that a guinea pig was not a disposable children’s toy.

“I think a lot of people think it’s easy an low maintenance,” she said.

“They think they can just chuck them in the back yard and move them around the grass, but there’s so much more to it.

“They think it’s just a quick-fix for the kids to have a guinea pig.

“I think there’s a lot of stuff people don’t realize like they can’t just eat carrots and grass.”

She said her involvement had started almost two years ago when she bought a guinea pig for her young children.

“There was a show on television with guinea pigs and the kids loved it,” Ms Davis said.

“I didn’t know what to do, so I looked up the website and that led to on-line forum and it went on from there.”

Article: Josephine Gillespie