

Dog safety awareness urged

By Laura Speranza

AN increase in dog attacks in Fairfield has prompted calls for an annual canine safety awareness campaign.

Dog training company Bark Busters says a nationwide dog bite prevention week would help raise awareness of dog attack risks.

It follows the attacks on a Horsley Park toddler and Bonnyrigg woman Marie Conway a fortnight ago.

Both dogs were destroyed by Fairfield Council following the attacks.

Karyn Charlton, a dog trainer and canine behavioural therapist with Bark Busters, said it was important that dog owners, parents and children, in particular, were educated about dog safety.

A study published in the *Medical Journal of Australia* showed nearly 60 per cent of dog attacks involved children aged under 14.

Around 35 per cent of people bitten by dogs in Australia were attacked in their own home, while 24 per cent were bitten in a friend's home.

Ms Charlton said a safety and awareness campaign was necessary to reduce the number of dog attacks in Australia.

A similar campaign run in the United States each year was producing positive results, she said.

"[This] is a crucial step in raising awareness around the serious problem of dog bites.

"Dog bites are a perennial problem – but they don't have to be.

"Parents should never assume



Educate, don't ban: David Tran of Cabramatta West and dog Sammy are under the tuition of Bark Busters' Karyn Charlton who believes that rather banning certain breeds there should be more public awareness about dogs.

Picture: Carlos Furtado

their children are safe around dogs, even if the dog is familiar.

"The best way to prevent your child – and yourself – from being bitten is for everyone to learn important dog safety rules."

Ms Charlton said dog owners should also be educated about how to manage their pets.

There have been four dog attacks in NSW in the past month, two of which occurred in Fairfield.

On July 10, two-year-old Jacob

Kent was playing on the lawn of his Horsley Park home when he was bitten on the chest, head, back and thigh during a savage attack by a Japanese akita.

Police said the dog had escaped from the backyard of a house 100 metres away.

He needed surgery on his leg.

Two days later, a woman was attacked by a German shepherd while she was walking along a street in Bonnyrigg.

Marie Conway, 37, suffered puncture wounds, cuts and bruising to her ankle.

She also underwent surgery for the bites on her arm and thigh.

Last week, a four-year-old girl died after being mauled by three crossbred hunting dogs in the central western NSW town of Warren.

The same day, a three-year-old Cambridge Park boy was bitten on the face by a neighbour's dog.

Safety tips from Bark Busters

- NEVER pat a strange dog, even if its owner is present.
- Stay away from a dog while it's eating and sleeping.
- Stop your bike if chased while riding.
- Never retrieve a ball from someone else's yard, even if you know the dog.
- Stay away from a dog that has puppies.
- Stay away from a dog that is tied up.
- Never pull a dog's tail or ears or engage them in rough or aggressive play.
- Never tease a dog or make it angry.
- If a dog runs at you barking, stand totally still and cover your face with your hands.
- If knocked to the ground by a dog, roll into a ball, cover your face with your arms and stay as still as you possibly can. Don't try to get up.
- A baby should never be left alone with a dog and young children should never walk or feed the dog unsupervised.