

# Dog owners need training

## 'Bans not a remedy'

By **Kyle Stevens**

A DOG trainer has called for a national safety awareness campaign following the recent spate of dog attacks.

Bark Busters' Karyn Charlton, who looks after south-west Sydney clients, said pet owners could reduce the number of attacks if they knew some basic dog awareness guidelines.

She believes Australia should follow the US lead and introduce a National Dog Bite Prevention Week, which has been successful in reducing dog attacks.

It follows the attack and death of a four-year-old girl at Warren, near Dubbo, and an attack on a Horsley Park toddler, both last week, and on Bonnyrigg woman Marie Conway a fortnight ago. According to Bark Busters, there are 13,000 dog attacks in Australia every year.

"Following the recent attacks, there are people out there who don't understand dogs or keep them under control," Ms Charlton said. "This is how a normal dog can become a problem.

"I have people bringing in their labrador or beagle because they don't know how to educate them. Dogs are simple-thinking creatures and will react on instinct. We need more education for dog owners and the public on how to manage dogs

better and to explain to them how the dog's mind works."

While dogs have a positive effect on a person's wellbeing and make great companions, Ms Charlton said a few safety tips should be instilled in dog owners and children.

These include never allowing young children to walk or feed the dog unsupervised and not allowing them to discipline a dog or engage in rough play.

Bark Busters has also launched a safety campaign where dog trainers visit schools to educate children about dog safety rules such as never running up to pat a strange dog.

"We need to bring awareness to everyone that while a dog might be nice and cute, they need training like every human being so they know that there are rules.

"Dog owners need to understand how to establish some boundaries for their pet."

She had these tips for anyone who is approached by a barking dog. "Don't run away - just stand there and don't move, otherwise they will chase you," she said.

"Dogs don't have the best eyesight and if you stand still, they are most likely to lose interest and move on.

"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."



**Educate, don't annihilate:** Bark Busters' Karyn Charlton, pictured with client David Tran and dog Sammy, believes that rather than banning certain breeds, there should be more public awareness about dogs.

Picture: Carlos Furtado