MANAGING AN UNIDENTIFIED DOG POLICY

There may be occasions when an uninvited dog manages to enter the Service playground. To ensure children are not placed at risk, all precautions will be taken to minimise the likelihood of this situation, and should it occur, all staff will respond immediately in accordance with this policy.

NATIONAL QUALITY STANDARD (NQS)

QUALITY AREA 2: CHILDREN'S HEALTH AND SAFETY		
2.2	Safety	Each child is protected.
2.2.1	Supervision	At all times, reasonable precautions and adequate supervision ensure children are protected from harm and hazard.
2.2.2	Incident and emergency management	Plans to effectively manage incidents and emergencies are developed in consultation with relevant authorities, practiced and implemented.
QUALITY AREA 7: GOVERNANCE AND LEADERSHIP		
7.1.2	Management Systems	Systems are in place to manage risk and enable the effective management and operation of a quality service.

EDUCATION AND CARE SERVICES NATIONAL REGULATIONS	
104	Fencing
168	Education and care services must have policies and procedures

RELATED POLICIES

Administration of First Aid Policy Child Safe Environment Policy Health and Safety Policy	Lockdown Policy Supervision Policy

PURPOSE

We aim to ensure that all children, educators, families, and visitors remain safe from unexpected situations such as an uninvited dog entering the playground.

SCOPE

This policy applies to children, families, approved provider, nominated supervisor, students, visitors, management and staff of the Service.

DEFINITIONS

A companion animal is a dog, cat or other animal prescribed by the regulations and includes pets, working dogs on rural properties, guard dogs, police dogs, and corrective services dog (*Companion Animals Act 1998*).

Approved animal welfare organisation means the Royal Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (RSPCA), and the Animal Welfare League.

IMPLEMENTATION

There are many reasons why an uninvited dog may enter a Service playground, whether a companion dog, or a stray. It may be that the dog has been frightened by a thunderstorm and escaped his yard and somehow found his way into ours. It could be that a hungry stray has been attracted to the smell of food scraps, or it may be that a friendly but lonely neighbourhood dog has been attracted to the yard by the sounds of children playing. However regardless of the cause, our Service will take immediate action to ensure the children's safety.

In Australia dogs must be registered and micro-chipped. If a dog is then 'lost', the dog can be reunited to its owner by scanning and reading the microchip, which can be done by the local council, a vet, or an approved animal welfare organisation. However, the owner must legally notify the local council within 72 hours of the dog known to be missing so that it can be placed on a 'lost dog register'. It is therefore always best to make the local council the first point of contact should an uninvited dog make its way into a Service playground.

Note some councils will ask you to bring the dog to them. However, as dogs are prohibited to be in some public places, including Education and Care Services, unless they are an approved companion dog; council will come and collect the dog if made aware of the situation. [Section 14 of the Companion Animals Act (1988)]

Dog body language: Signs that a dog may be scared or aggressive.

- Shrill barking
- Teeth bared (may or may not be growling)
- Closed, tight mouth
- Stiff, rigid body with legs braced
- Tail held rigid in any position, between the legs, or a slow stiff wag

- Ears back against the head or flattened (ears pricked up or forward demonstrate interest in something – continue to use caution)
- Hackles raised
- Staring directly at you
- Approaching you with head lowered

As a dog's intent and behaviour can change rapidly, it is always best to exercise caution when the safety of children is involved and treat all dogs as dangerous unless extremely obvious that it is friendly (loose body movements, tail wagging and held high, 'bounding' and 'jumping' on the spot, or not hesitating in enthusiastically approaching people).

Source: Best Friends Animal Society (2018); Dog's Home (2014); Pet Source (2010).

THE APPROVED PROVIDER/ NOMINATED SUPERVISOR / MANAGEMENT WILL ENSURE THAT:

- daily checks are made of the outdoor learning environment to ensure fencing is intact, gates locked and there is no sign of an unidentified dog or animal on the premises
- any outdoor area that is used by children is enclosed by a fence that prevents the intrusion of unwanted dogs and/or other animals
- following the entry of an uninvited dog into the playground, immediate steps will be taken to secure the fencing to eliminate the possibility of this situation being repeated
- the external rubbish bin is not filled to a point that the lid will not securely close, and all staff are aware to tightly bag all food scraps before placing them in the bin to avoid attracting hungry strays
- educators are proactive in ensuring all children use the playground rubbish bins if eating outside
- all staff follow the policies and procedures of our Service

IN THE EVENT OF AN UNIDENTIFIED DOG OR OTHER ANIMAL ENTERING THE PREMISES THE RESPONSBILE PERSON AND EDUCATORS WILL:

- calmly guide children indoors by approaching groups of children and giving instruction to quietly move inside: Shouting to all children or using a bell could frighten the dog (If a dog has entered the yard during or just after a thunderstorm, the children will likely already be inside).
- if the position of the dog is preventing the children's re-entry to the building, children will be guided quietly via the emergency playground exit to enter the building from the front door
- implement 'External threat' procedures (*See Lockdown Policy*)
- contact local council for assistance

For extremely friendly dogs only:

- children will still need to return to inside the Service premises to ensure their safety following the *Lockdown Policy* and implement the Service's own Lockdown Procedure
- a friendly dog will generally come running to you if you beckon: Stand still and speak softly to the dog and offer the back of your hand for him to sniff. Remain motionless while you allow the dog time to explore your hand. Always remain wary to ensure he continues to display signs of non-threatening behaviour.
- check to see if the dog is wearing a collar and tag. If so, the owner can be contacted. Whilst waiting for the owner to collect the dog, secure the dog in a location away from the playground, ensuring the dog has shade and fresh drinking water. If the owner offers a reward, do not accept it: Part of belonging to a community is doing the 'right thing' without expectation of a reward for doing so.
- if the phone number on the tag is incorrect, or the owner does not answer the phone nor return your call within a reasonable time frame, call your local council and advise them of the situation.
- if the dog does not have a tag, call your local council and advise them of the situation.
- do not allow the dog to be taken into the custody of any staff member or family with the intent of displaying 'found' posters in the community as this frequently attracts persons who dishonestly claim ownership of expensive breeds to then sell.

FOR ALL OTHER DOGS:

- avoid confronting the dog: Do not try to chase it out of the playground or touch it
- contact the local council immediately and advise them of the situation. Ensure that you tell them the dog is in an early education and care service
- ensure the children remain inside until the dog has been collected
- provide support for children who are afraid of dogs.

EDUCATORS WILL:

- discuss with the children how to behave with a dog or puppy (e.g. calmly, no aggressive patting, no pulling tails, use quiet voices, etc.) as part of the curriculum to minimise the risk of provoked dog attacks outside the Service
- develop children's understanding that the owner should always be asked before patting a dog
- teach children how to tell if a dog is happy, scared, or aggressive *but* ensure they know never to approach a strange dog.

IN THE EVENT OF A DOG ATTACK ON A CHILD OR ADULT

- contact emergency services 000 for assistance
- activate the service Lockdown procedure and ensure children and other adults are not in immediate danger
- stay as calm as possible, try not to scream, shout or be aggressive to the dog
- don't move or move slowly to avoid the dog from attacking further if possible
- try to stay as still as possible or curl into a ball, instruct the child or adult to stay as still as possible or to curl into a ball
- provide emergency first aid to the child or adult as soon as the danger from the dog attack is over (See *Administration of First Aid Policy and Procedure*)
- the Approved Provider will contact the regulatory authority within 24 hours when there has been an emergency that has posed a risk to the safety and wellbeing of the children

STATE-BY-STATE DOG REGISTRATION AND MICROCHIPPING REQUIREMENTS

VICTORIA (VIC)
• Dogs must be registered with the local council by three months of age • Section 10C of the *Domestic Animals Act 1994* requires dogs to be micro-chipped as a condition of registration.

Source: RSPCA Australia

CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT/REFLECTION

The *Managing an Unidentified Dog Policy* will be reviewed on an annual basis in conjunction with children, families, educators, staff and management.

SOURCE

Australian Children's Education & Care Quality Authority. (2023). *Guide to the National Quality Framework.*
Best Friends Animal Society. (2018). *Dog body language.* https://bestfriends.org/resources/dog-body-language
Companion Animals Act 1998. https://legislation.nsw.gov.au/view/whole/html/inforce/current/act-1998-087
Dog's Home. (2014). *Don't pet that dog: 3 signs most people don't know.* https://www.dogshomepa.org/dont-pet-that-dog-3-signs-most-people-dont-know/
NSW Government. Office of Local Government: https://www.olg.nsw.gov.au/public/dogs-and-cats/information-for-the-community/lost-and-found-cats-and-dogs
RSPCA Australia: www.rspca.org.au
Royal Society for the Protection of Animals NSW (RSPCA): www.rspcansw.org.au
Victoria State Government: *Stray cats and dogs. https://agriculture.vic.gov.au/livestock-and-animals/animal-welfare-victoria/animal-welfare/stray-and-unwanted-animals/ive-found-a-lost-stray-or-injured-animal*

REVIEW

POLICY REVIEWED BY	Krystle Hills	Manager	23/04/2025
POLICY REVIEWED	April 2025	NEXT REVIEW DATE	April 2026
MODIFICATIONS	• Policy reviewed, links checked		

POLICY REVIEWED	PREVIOUS MODIFICATIONS	NEXT REVIEW DATE
21/02/2024	• annual policy maintenance • edited section re: contacting council [Companion Animals Act] • removed information about state by state micro-chipping information. Services should contact local council as specified in policy • sources checked for currency	JANUARY 2025
JANUARY 2023	• annual policy maintenance • minor formatting edits within text • additional information regarding what to do following a dog attack • hyperlinks checked and repaired as required • continuous improvement/reflection section added	JANUARY 2024