



'Out of control' dog attacks kids

Braden Quartermaine

May 26, 2007 04:00pm

Article from: AAP

AN out-of-control american bulldog mauled four people, including two children, in a Wembley Downs park.

A seven-year-old junior soccer player and a four-year-old boy were among those savaged, as was a coach who came to the rescue.

The dog is now in the City of Stirling pound and its fate will be decided in court. Parents of the injured children are demanding it be put down, but its owner says he will fight for its life.

The attack at Butlers Reserve last week was watched by scores of children, many of them screaming and in tears, who were at Wembley Downs Soccer Club training. Some are receiving counselling at school.

Under-8s player Luke McManus, 7, was the first to be attacked. His father, Craig McManus, said yesterday Luke was so shaken he was now scared about playing soccer.

"This dog basically ran straight at the kids ... and just jumped straight on to Luke and grabbed him," Mr McManus said. "He had about 16 cuts on his shoulder. He also got bitten on the top of his skull.

"While the physical side of things is improving, I think he's going to be a bit scared of dogs for quite a while until he gets his confidence back."

Luke's sister Katie, 6, has been traumatised by watching the attack on her brother and has been having nightmares.

Timothy Gillman, 4, was the second child attacked. He suffered injuries to his face, chest and back.

His mother, Philippa, praised the coach who grabbed him from the dog's grasp, saying he saved her son from much worse.

Mrs Gillman said Timothy also was suffering psychologically.

"Now he's terrified of being down there," she said. "Even little dogs were coming up to him the other day, and he was freaked out. It's quite sad, really.

"You try to not really let them know it could have been even worse."
Parents of both injured children want the dog put down.

"I'm a dog lover," Mr McManus said. ``So I have nothing against dogs, but I definitely think that any dog that goes around biting kids at a park has to be destroyed. You just can't potentially risk that again."

But the dog's owner, Peter Clark, of Wembley Downs, said yesterday: ``I'm going to fight to the end to keep my dog. He's part of my family, and anyone who feels the way I do would do the same."

Mr Clark, who expressed sympathy for the people who were bitten, said the dog became excited by the soccer balls.

"If this was an aggressive act on his behalf, he could have honestly deranged (sic) these children because he's a very powerful dog," he said.

"All the commotion possibly got to him and he just probably freaked out more than anything else.

"This is definitely a one-off thing. He's actually very friendly."

The one-year-old dog was being led on a leash by Mr Clark's mother, but broke away.

Many dogs run free at the park during the training sessions and the club is urging the local council to change the law and make it compulsory for dogs to be leashed.

Virginia Tobar, who has four children playing at the club, said the law should be changed immediately.

"There are a lot of angry parents and, consequently, lots of arguments between parents, coaches and dog owners at soccer training sessions," she said.

A City of Stirling spokesman said Mr Clark's dog would remain in the pound until a court decided its fate.

He said multiple attacks by a dog were very rare.

"The dog's in custody and the ranger's report is still being done," the spokesman said.

"We're still collecting statements from witnesses.

"The council can't make a decision on the fate of the dog; the owner can and the courts can."

The american bulldog is bigger than an american pitbull, and stands taller and is stronger than the english bulldog.

The breed was established from bulldogs being used for herding in Alabama and are known for being powerful and determined.

Search for more stories on this topic on [Newstext](#), our news archive service. [Click here](#)

Copyright 2007 The Sunday Times. All times AWST (GMT + 8).