

What is the 'Living Safely With Dogs' Preschool Program?

The Living Safely with Dogs Program is delivered to preschools throughout NSW. It targets children in their final year of preschool and teaches them how to live safely with dogs.

A team of trained pet educators and their suitability-tested dogs present the Program at preschools across NSW. The presentations are delivered using chat, role play, story and song.

Children can also visit the interactive Victor and Victoria's Pet Town online and through a tablet device to engage with the program. The program conducts 1,000 visits to nearly 25,000 students annually throughout metropolitan Sydney and country NSW.

Why do I need to know about pet safety?

Australia has one of the highest rates of pet ownership in the world. Most dog attacks involve children in the 0-8 age range and a high number of these attacks also occur in the home environment where children are bitten by their own dog or one known to them.

Educating children and their families ensures the child-pet relationship is not only physically and emotionally rewarding but also a safe one as well.

What do children and parents learn in this program?

The program focuses on teaching preschool children:

- when dogs should be left alone
- things we should not do to dogs
- how can you tell if a dog is happy, scared or angry
- a safe way to approach and greet a dog
- what to do if approached by an unknown or aggressive dog
- choosing an appropriate pet for their family
- the importance of actively supervising your children's interaction with your pets

- the importance of securely separating pets and children when you cannot actively supervise
- basic dog behaviour
- the safety messages that their children have been taught

Each child is given the opportunity to interact with the pet educator's dog. For many children this can be their first interaction with a dog and provides a positive and educational experience for each child.

Who teaches this education program?

The Program is delivered by trained educators accompanied by suitability-tested dogs. Pet educators complete extensive mentoring and professional training and deliver a high quality presentation to children.

Suitability-tested dogs are assessed to ensure they are comfortable in the school environment. The dogs are trained to work under very strict guidelines, ensuring the safety of the children and dogs.

What is Pet Town?

Victor and Victoria's Pet Town is an animated interactive tool for children based on the Program's safety messages. A tablet version has also been developed and is available free-of-charge in App stores.

Children can play games in Pet Town and with Victor the dog and Victoria the cat, collecting rewards along the way. Visit: www.pettown.nsw.gov.au

How much does this education program cost?

Preschools can access the program free of charge.