



disseminate statistics, trends and benchmarks regarding aggressive incidents of all kinds.

10. In each case where an aggressive dog incident has occurred and come under the jurisdiction of a local authority, fines should be charged to the owners of the dog or person responsible, sufficient to cover (among other things) the cost of incident recording at the local authority as well as associated state and national registry expenses
11. Legislation should be enacted preventing people who have bad records relating to aggressive dog incidents from keeping dogs (for a specified period of time)
12. A standard range of post-aggression incident measures related to the grade of attack e.g. signage, muzzling, fencing, penalties and public liability etc will allow consistency in the handling of aggressive dog incidents by different local authorities across Australia
13. There should be uniformity between all states and territories in Australia in the way aggressive dog incidents are handled in general terms including investigation, recording and reporting
14. All Animal Management Officers (AMOs) and other relevant authorities should be encouraged to promote measures designed to improve safety aspects of dog ownership to thereby minimise the risk of aggression incidents
15. After an aggressive dog incident, a veterinarian of the authorities' choice, at the expense of the owner, should whenever possible be asked to examine the dog in question to check its state of health and add this data to the incident record
16. All AMOs and other relevant personnel should be appropriately trained to ensure a good understanding of all the following:
  - Causes of aggression
  - Types of aggression
  - Signs of aggression
  - Prevention of aggression
  - Dealing with aggression incidents
  - The National Policy on Dog Aggression.

### Coordination imperative

The Urban Animal Management Advisory Group of the AVA has developed the following standard template approach to the handling of dog aggression incidents that fall under the jurisdiction of local authorities Australia wide. This position statement is based heavily on the opinion and recommendation outcomes from delegate workshops at the National UAM conferences in Melbourne (2001), Alice Springs (2002) and Caloundra (2003). The emphasis is on interstate cooperation.

All the following are important reasons why Australia's approach to "aggressive dog" incident minimization should, if possible, be nationally coordinated by the use of a minimum standard process template:

1. **Microchips** - Microchip ID for dangerous dogs will fail to reliably link animal to owner in a *national* context in the absence of nationally uniform methodology for the use of microchips in this application

2. **Interstate mobility** - Like all other pet animals, "aggressive dogs" will also be moving from town to town and state to state all the time. Declarations of dangerousness and the consequential owner constraints must be consistent wherever the dog subsequently goes, *anywhere* in Australia
3. **Clarity of responsibility** – Responsibilities of dog owners and local authorities with respect to dog aggression response and prevention will, through uniformity, have greatest clarity if "aggressive dogs" incident processes are consistent across all interstate and inter-municipal boundaries
4. **Cost effectiveness** - Public awareness programs about this subject will be more cost efficient if everyone is working to the same plan
5. **Data integrity** - The recording of details, after aggressive incidents have occurred, will provide poor reference data in a national context *unless* everyone is working with the same framework of attack definitions and the same framework of circumstance/situation factor descriptors.
6. **Data analysis** - More data means better statistics. Better understanding of dog aggression means better options for aggression prevention, including better legislation & regulation. The "pooling" of data from different databases can provide better quality statistics but only if standard data gathering technique is used.
7. **Performance benchmarking** - State and Municipal dog aggression management performance should be benchmarked and useful benchmarking depends on having a coordinated approach that provides uniformity of assessment and recording methods. (see The template - grading of Dog Aggression incidents )

It is recognized that Local, State and Federal Governments or departments have legislation or By Laws facilitating or enacting the Declaration of a "Restricted Breed" or "Dangerous Dog". These include Guard or patrol dogs or other dogs that has undergone any part or form of attack training. Dogs within these categories and those of a declared restricted breed may never have been associated with a reported aggressive dog incident.

For these categories of "restricted" dogs it is advised that the following consequential measures may mandatorily be required by legislation:

1. Identification using an Australian Standard microchip with data on an accredited registry.
2. Owner obligation to undergo an approved training course in responsible ownership.
3. Dogs to be kept while on the owners property in a specified enclosure
4. Handlers of Patrol Dogs be obliged to be appropriately trained
5. Desexing, muzzling in public, special visual collar markers, extra degrees of physical restraint in public places etc. may also be required

### Issues relevant community self regulation (non legislative codes of practice) re dog aggression minimization

- **Dog breeding** - Only dogs of an acceptable temperament should be bred for sale to the general public.
- **Dog showing** - Dogs that behave aggressively during any aspect of showing or judging, should be disqualified from competition and should prompt consideration that the breedline in question might be discontinued
- **Temperament in breed standards** - Breed clubs should enter into a code of practice that ensures as much attention must be given to temperament as it presently is to conformation and training
- **Pounds and Shelters** - All dogs re-homed by pounds and shelters should pass temperament tests
- **Dog Purchase** - Prospective dog owners should be encouraged to evaluate the requirements and therefore the suitability of the potential pet dogs prior to purchase
- **Public awareness** - Information relevant to socialization, obedience training, competent/responsible dog ownership, owner obligations and responsibilities, local dog laws, basic animal welfare and bite risks should be available to all dog owners and especially with all puppies purchased
- **Puppy socialisation** - Puppy school and normal positive socialisation experiences with other people and other animals during the critical interval of the socialization period of puppy development is necessary and should be encouraged
- **Obedience training** – All dogs should be obedience trained sufficient to give owner/handlers adequate effective control of them
- **Environmental enrichment** – All dogs need to be provided with an adequate activity program to minimize stress and tension that can lead to aggression
- **Education of children** – Instruction should be provided to children on how to behave around dogs.
- **Reality check** - Dog owners should be educated that all dogs have the potential to bite.
- **Guard dogs** - Owner/handlers should have appropriate qualifications and the dogs should be trained and restrained properly at all times

