

# 210 children hurt in dog attacks

## PETA RULE

More than 200 children who were victims of dog attacks were admitted to Princess Margaret Hospital last year, an increase of almost 50 per cent on 2004.

The big rise has concerned child safety and animal experts, who say dog owners should never leave children unsupervised with pets.

In 2005, 210 children were admitted to PMH with injuries from dog bites, compared to 142 in 2004. It was the biggest number of admissions since 2000.

A WA study for the Injury Control Council in 2004 found that two-thirds of dog bites to children occurred in either the victim's home or a friend's house.

Former RSPCA instructor Kathy Kopellis McLeod said more emphasis should be put on teaching adults and children how to act around dogs.



**John Bowler: The Minister has moved to restrict some dog breeds.**

"Just like we teach road safety skills to reduce accidents, we need to educate people how to interact well with dogs, so that the potential for attacks and injuries are slashed," she said.

"Most children don't know that approaching a dog that is eating can often be confronting for the pet, even if the child is being careful."

In July, a 10-year-old boy's hand was bitten by a pit bull terrier and in October, a Merredin school-girl underwent a series of operations on her face after being attacked by her next-door neighbour's mixed-breed kelpie cross.

RSPCA spokeswoman Emma-Jane Morcombe said many children did not have pets in the home so when they came into contact with dogs at parks, beaches or at other people's homes, they did not know how to behave.

"Children will often rush up to the dog or perhaps even cuddle them, which may trigger the dog to lash out in fear," she said.

Local Government Minister John Bowler moved last year to restrict certain dog breeds.

Owners of American pit bulls, Japanese tosas, presa canario and Argentinian and Brazilian fighting dogs have until March to sterilise their pets under new laws.