



BEST BUDDIES

Minato, 4, and Meryl Kelly, 88, have been developing a special bond thanks to the Adopt a Grand-Buddy program. REPORT PAGE 7

Picture: PENNY STEPHENS

Reprieve for frisky fidos

Escapee dogs could avoid pound

Lucy Callander

"HOUDINI hounds" won't be impounded under a new scheme that would see the escapees returned to their owners rather than sent to the pound.

The service would only apply to registered dogs that have a clean record with no escapes recorded in the previous 18 months.

Kingston Council has asked officers to investigate the initiative along with a raft of changes to fines and fees.

Councillors voted to investigate dumping fines for first time offenders as long as the dog was registered and could be returned home rather than taken to the Lost Dogs Home in Cranbourne West.

They also supported reducing registration fees for dogs over 12 years old, providing more "robust" dog tags and investigating alternative temporary pound facilities in Kingston such as vet clinics or doggie day care centres.

Cr Georgina Oxley proposed the changes after public feedback.

"For a lot of people pets are part of the family and when they do go

missing it's devastating both for the humans and the pets," Cr Oxley said.

"I think it's important that when a dog goes missing we return them home as soon as possible."

Cr David Eden said he had spoken to pensioners who had to pay up to \$700 in council fines and fees from the dog pound.

"That's a big hit for a lot of people," he said.

"I think we need to look at more flexible arrangements. The police wouldn't arrest your kid if they were wandering on the street and put them in a jail cell and then ask you for \$700 to get them back."

The proposed changes struck a chord in the chamber with councillors unanimously backing the plan.

Cr Rosemary West said she had compared notes with Cr Oxley on their "Houdini hounds".

"My dog climbed a tree to climb over the guinea pig hutch and jump down off the letter box several times and I've been giving boxes of chocolates to people who would very kindly collect her and ring me," Cr West said.

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CHELTENHAM

Taking care factor to new level

Buddy program connects seniors and preschoolers in bid to avoid injuries

Lucy Callander

THE very young and the young-at-heart are joining forces to help preschoolers and seniors avoid the ouchies.

KIDS Foundation last week launched its Connecting Generations — Adopt A Grand Buddy program in Cheltenham.

The 12-month program aims to encourage the older generation to share their wisdom with children about avoiding injuries.

Freedom Aged Care residents will buddy-up with youngsters from North Cheltenham Preschool to complete a series of activities focusing on socialisation, physical movement and safety awareness. "We're not an

organisation that's about bubble-wrapping and helicopter parenting, we're very much about let's get the kids out there doing activities, having experiences, so they can really make judgments themselves," KIDS Foundation founder and director Dr Susie O'Neill said.

The program aims to teach the children about more than just safety. "We thought why don't we teach them how to have great relationships with — and respect — the elderly, their parents and other friends?" Dr O'Neill said.

KIDS is planning to roll out extra programs to aged care centres across Melbourne this year.

Details: kidsfoundation.org.au



Meryl Kelly, 88, with her buddy Minato from North Cheltenham Preschool. Picture: PENNY STEPHENS

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