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Family devastated after guide dog killed in Bellfield

LOCAL NEWS 10 AUG 12 @ 10:18AM BY ADRIAN BERNECICH

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Andrew Close, with his guide dog Matilda who was attacked and killed yesterday.

UPDATE 2.28pm: BANYULE Council has impounded three pit-bull terriers believed to be involved in a vicious attack that resulted in the death of a beloved Bellfield guide dog.

The council is investigating the incident, which also left the family's other dog with serious injuries.

Allan Close, 25, was walking the family's cocker spaniel Bosley, 8, and his brother Andrew's black labrador guide dog Matilda, 4, on Plunkett St, Bellfield at 8.40pm yesterday.

Mr Close was planning to surprise his 23-year-old vision-impaired brother who was taking a class at Hall's Taekwondo on Bell St and walk home with him and the dogs afterwards.

But when Mr Close was confronted by three pit bull terriers at the southern end of the street, his plans changed.

He said one of the dogs came over to sniff Bosley before sinking its teeth into the cocker spaniel, prompting Matilda to flee towards Bell St where she was run over by a car.

"The owner came to get the dog off Bosley but it took some time, once the pit bull was restrained they just left," Mr Close said.

He said it took about 20 minutes to realise what happened to the guide dog, later finding her lying motionless on the busy road.

Police from West Heidelberg took Matilda to the emergency vet in Plenty Rd but she died from multiple injuries.

Mr Close said he took Bosley to a Bundoora vet for emergency surgery.

Mr Close suffered a minor cut to his left hand.

His brother Andrew, who is a former Heidelberg Leader sport star, said he was very upset when he was told about Matilda.

He said she was a great dog, which he often took to the football for Essendon games and even took her to Sydney.

Matilda was nearly five years old and had been his Seeing Eye Dog since 2009.

Vision Australia seeing eye dog manager Leigh Garwood said he had spoken with the family offering support.

"It is shocking to hear about this attack. Attacks like this can have such an impact on someone's life," Mr Garwood said.

"We will ensure Andrew receives all the emotional support he needs. Every one of our Seeing Eye Dogs is a much loved part of a close knit family and it is a terrible loss for our community."

Council spokesman Dave Bell said the pit bulls, which had been registered with the council, had been taken the RSPCA in Burwood East.

Banyule Mayor Tom Melican said the incident was "very upsetting" and the council was offering counselling to the affected residents.

Council officers are continuing to investigate.

The future of the animals will not be known until investigations are complete.

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