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TOO DANGEROUS TO LOVE
By ROSS CURNOW

THEY have been compared to lions and crocodiles, banned in Britain and parts of the US, and muzzled in New South Wales and other parts of Australia.

They have terrorised Melbourne neighborhoods, mauled pedestrians in Sydney, and even killed an elderly woman outside her home in Brisbane.

And the american **pit bull** terrier attacked again this week, mauling a South Caulfield man and an elderly Japanese woman in separate incidents.

In the first attack, the victim was the owner clipping its toenails. In the other, the elderly woman was attacked by three **pit bulls** while walking through a park.

Both are recovering from serious injuries.

RSPCA executive officer Richard Hunter said the association had warned against allowing the **pit bull** into Australia 12 years ago, and still wanted the dog banned in Melbourne.

He said Victoria's new Domestic Animals Act should have at least labelled the **pit bull** a dangerous dog.

"We have always said you should judge a dog on the deed and not the breed," Mr Hunter said.

"But the exception to this is the **pit bull** terrier, which should be declared a dangerous dog because of its breed.

"It's specifically bred for its aggression and fighting qualities and it is wrong to treat it as a family pet. "

Mr Hunter said the **pit bull** terrier was a cross between other dogs such as the english **bull** terrier and the mastiff, and was brought out from the US in the early 1980s.

He said it was originally bred in the 1920s or 1930s for fighting and was known for its aggression and strength.

Recent attacks include the death of an elderly woman outside her Brisbane home on December 27, and the assault on an 86-year-old Hampton woman, who suffered cuts and a broken wrist on March 6.

A **NOTHER pit bull** attacked three pedestrians outside a video store in Carlingford, Sydney, on January 21, while eight-year-old Russell Schofield needed emergency surgery on his arm after being attacked in a park on April 10.

The Herald Sun has also received calls from residents concerned about the frequency of **pit bull** attacks in Melbourne.

One caller from Romsey, north-west of Melbourne, said his neighborhood had lived in fear of three **pit bull** terriers which had killed two dogs and a pet sheep recently.

He said the animals had been ripped to pieces and said he feared for elderly residents and children at a nearby creche.

The Lost Dogs' Home also believes **pit bulls** are a risk and has advised people not to buy the dog.

General manager Dr Graeme Smith said they were more dangerous than other breeds because they gave no warning before attacking.

"When other dogs attack, you get some sort of warning that they're about to attack but these dogs just go," he said.

"Something switches on in their brain and they go crazy and they can cause very serious damage to people and other animals. "

He said the Lost Dogs' Home was planning an amnesty on **pit bull** terriers so owners could have them put down free.

Dr Smith has also written to the State Government requesting a summit of councils, animal welfare people and breeders to look at dangerous dog legislation and see if modifications are needed.

Only individual dogs with a history of breaking bones and severing skin are branded as dangerous under the Domestic Animals Act.

"The definition of a dangerous dog is too narrow," he said.

"It's got to cause serious injury to someone before it's declared dangerous.

"We feel there should be other methods where they can be declared dangerous. "

END OF STORY

Caption: DANGEROUS:THIS AMERICAN PIT BULL TERRIER MAULED AN ELDERLY WOMAN TO DEATH.

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