

## PURPOSE

Maroona Primary School is committed to providing a safe and healthy environment for students, staff and volunteers. This policy aims to clearly define the risk of snakes at the school, procedures for preventing snake bite, the appropriate medical response to snake bites, and a framework for the appropriate education and training of students, staff, parents/guardians and visitors on minimising the risk of snake bite.

## SCOPE

This policy applies to all school activities on and off-site, including camps and excursions. It is applicable to all students, parents, staff, contractors, volunteers and visitors to Maroona Primary School.

## POLICY

Maroona Primary School is located in a bush setting in which it is known that snakes inhabit. Several species of snake have been observed over the past 25 years. They are most prevalent in the warmer months (September to April) but could be encountered on a sunny day at any time of the year. Unprovoked, snakes rarely attack humans and are generally shy, timid animals that will avoid conflict if given the opportunity. It is recommended that particular care be taken in warm weather, near long grass or hollow logs, near water or near rocks in sunny positions. Snakes are protected under the Wildlife Act 1975, and should not be harmed or killed. Bites can occur if people try to kill snakes.

### Implementation of Policy

Maroona Primary School is responsible for:

- supplying a First Aid Kit to administer first aid in response to snake bites or for any other purpose which includes pressure immobilisation bandages (also known as compression bandages) for medical treatment of snake bites;
- ensuring first aid staff are appropriately educated on procedures to prevent snakebite and to deliver First Aid in response to a Snake Bite (see below);
- ensuring a sufficient number of staff hold Level 2 First Aid;
- following all procedures as set out in the school OHS Policy including notice of notifiable incidents, appropriate record keeping in the event of an incident, maintain first aid kit etc.);
- encouraging parents, through this policy, to teach students snake bite prevention behaviours outside of Maroona Primary School.
- continually practising and educating students on snake bite prevention behaviours while at the school, without fostering an unnatural fear or paranoia of snakes. This includes practising and highlighting to students the following key points:

### Snake Bite Prevention Behaviours

(Source: Victorian Poisons Information Centre, Austin Health)

- Leave snakes alone
- Wear adequate clothing and stout shoes (not sandals/thongs) in 'snake country'
- Never put hands in hollow logs, holes or thick grass without prior inspection
- When stepping over logs, carefully inspect the ground on the other side\
- ensure students are reminded on a regular basis that if they encounter a snake, to move away quietly and report the sighting immediately to a teacher;
- calmly moving students away from the snake in the event that a snake is encountered at school [Staff must not attempt to touch or harm the snake];
- administering first aid in the event of a snake bite as follows:

## First aid for snakebite

(Source: [Victorian Poisons Information Centre \(VPIC\)](#), Austin Health, and Australian Venom Research Institute, Melbourne University)

- Stay calm and call or send someone to the Office for help. Phone for an ambulance.
- Reassure the patient and encourage them to remain calm and still. Do not move the patient.
- Do not attempt to catch or kill the snake.
- DO NOT WASH the bite. Traces of venom that are left on the skin can be used to identify the snake, and therefore the type of antivenom that should be used if required.
- Venom is injected deeply so there is no benefit in cutting or sucking the bite. A tourniquet is not an effective way to restrict venom movement.
- The most effective first aid for snakebite is the pressure-immobilisation technique. Refer to [Snake Bite Fact Sheet - St John's Ambulance](#) for instructions on the application of this technique. The principle is to minimise the movement of the venom around the body until the victim is in a hospital by applying a firm bandage (or suitable alternative) to the bitten area and limb, and to immobilise the victim. When applied properly, this method can trap the venom in the bitten area for many hours. The victim might not suffer any effects of the venom until the compression is released in hospital where antivenom can be administered if required.

Parents/guardians are responsible for:

- teaching their children snakebite preventative behaviours outside of school, for example, on family walks in the bush;
- reading and being familiar with the policy;
- bringing relevant issues to the attention of leadership.

## Snake Sighting Procedures

1. Ensure the safety of other staff and students by removing them from the area.
2. Monitor the snake from a safe distance if possible
3. Send someone to notify the principal or their delegate, the location of the snake.
4. Leadership will determine if a snake catcher is needed.
5. A sign is placed up in the area indicating that a snake has been sighted here today.

Notify teachers by placing a notice on the COMPASS news feed.

## COMMUNICATION

This policy will be communicated to our school community in the following ways:

- Available publicly on our school's website
- Included in staff induction processes
- Reminders in our school newsletter.

## FURTHER INFORMATION AND RESOURCES

[Wildlife Act 1975](#)

[Victorian Poisons Information Centre \(VPIC\)](#)

[What snake is that?](#)

## POLICY REVIEW AND APPROVAL

Policy last reviewed	February 2024
Approved by	School Council
Next scheduled review date	February 2026