

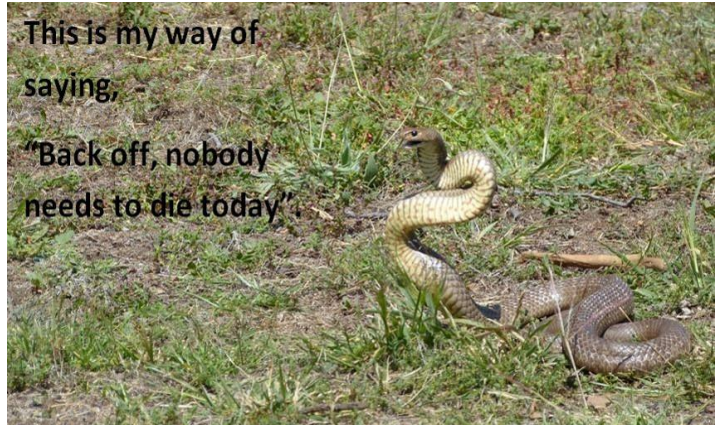
“The Snake Talk” at Wamboin

The first in the Wamboin Community Association's (WCA's) **Spring Talk Series-2017** brought 85 local residents, including 15 youngsters, to the WCA's September General Meeting at the Wamboin Hall on the evening of Tuesday 19th September to hear Wildcare's Snake Coordinator, Wayne Alford, deliver “The Snake Talk”. Wayne kicked off his presentation with a message from our local snakes - **“Back off, nobody needs to die today”**. This was the recurring message throughout Wayne's hour-long talk which provided the members of the audience with numerous strategies for improving our relationship with the snakes who inhabit our area.

Wayne clearly loves volunteering his time to educate our community on how to live with these protected native animals. After describing the features and behaviour of the area's venomous snake species (tiger, brown and red-bellied black snakes), including the differences in their preferred prey, Wayne encouraged everyone to minimise the chances of encounters by doing some really simple things, among them:

- Remove food and water sources and snakes will go elsewhere. Snakes love mice...mice love grain...so check your stables, compost heaps, chook pens, aviaries and grain stores for mice. Both red-bellied black and tiger snakes love frogs so don't have fish/frog ponds and other frog habitats near the house.
- Clean up around your home and patch up holes in buildings. Snakes will live where it's warm and dry such as under half-finished building projects and wood piles. They can get through incredibly small holes into houses or outbuildings so block all potential entry points.
- Keep your 'house paddock' grass short – snakes don't like having to cross open ground where they can be spotted by predators such as kookaburras.
- Use 'mouse fencing' with 5mm apertures to a height of 2 feet (about 60cm) around your 'house paddock' to provide a safe place for your children and your dogs.
- *Never* stick a bare hand into a potential snake hideout such as a woodpile, compost heap, stacked building materials or rabbit burrow.
- Take care with bird netting – it's common for snakes to get caught in netting at ground level.

Appropriate dress seems obvious, but Wayne made sure the children at the front of the Hall understood the importance of wearing solid boots such as gum-boots or elastic-sided leather boots and long pants such as jeans which the snake's short (2-5mm) fangs can't penetrate.



Thanks to his enthusiastic response, Jackson was chosen to be the 'patient' for the First Aid section of the evening. For the purposes of the discussion, Jackson had suffered a bite to the right hand which Wayne bandaged with a proper 'snake bandage', stressing the importance of immobilising the patient and bringing the Ambulance to the patient's location to minimise movement.

The audience asked many questions and Wayne took the opportunity to bust some common snake myths.

'Snakes are out to get you.' WRONG! Humans, even children, are much larger than any of our local snakes and are therefore seen as a potential predator, certainly not as prey! If you do encounter a snake, it is just as surprised as you are and will find the nearest escape route and disappear as quickly as possible.

'Snakes will chase you.' WRONG! Same reason as above, but if a snake feels cornered, as a last resort, it will stand and defend itself (just as the Eastern brown is doing in the photo). Just to be clear, Wayne demonstrated that at a brisk walking pace, no snake would be able to catch a human anyway.