



Four legged friend finds missing child

It was a happy reunion for a Clackline family when their missing four year old toddler was found safe and well by a State Emergency Service (SES) canine and volunteer dog handler.

The child's parents had put the boy to bed early in the evening on Sunday 16 February, only to discover an hour later that he was gone.

As the family dog was also nowhere to be found, it prompted the realisation they may have wandered off together.

The property was a small hobby farm with paddocks, horses and three large dams, and fears for the boy's safety increased as darkness fell.

WA Police were called in to co-ordinate a search and, as the hazard managers, they requested the assistance of SES volunteers and trained search canines.

Members of the community used social media to spread the word, and hundreds of people also assisted with the search for the child.

Mundaring SES volunteer Lin Booth was appointed SES Commander at 8.45pm and SES units were deployed from Northam, Mundaring and Swan, along with York Volunteer Emergency Service and the SES Canine Unit.

"After a briefing the searchers went straight to work, including SES dog Jemma and her volunteer handler Leonie Briggs as well as Karma and handler Stephanie Briggs," Lin said.

Leonie, who is also an SES Canine Section Manager, said that both dogs and handlers began scouring different parts of the home paddock, each accompanied by a police officer.

"After initially tackling the paddock, we then searched around the dams," Leonie said.



"Once these areas had been cleared, we approached a vacant house on Great Eastern Highway about 800 metres from the boy's home.

"Jemma and I scouted around the exterior and when we checked the verandah she began barking repeatedly.

"After looking through a window we spotted the child who appeared to be asleep.

"The police officers were able to enter the property through an unlocked door where the boy was sleeping soundly with his dog close by."

Leonie said it was a good outcome that was achieved quite quickly.

"The important thing was that both the child and dog were found unharmed and no worse for the experience, which was a great relief to his family."

The SES Canine Unit is always looking for handlers and dogs. Anyone who wants to find out more can call Leonie Briggs on 08 9293 3458.