



Lucky: Sniffer dog Jack, with Steve Randi, survived a bite from a red-bellied black snake. Picture: ANDREW TAUBER

Snakes are not to be sniffed at

A DRUG detection dog has been branded a miracle mutt after fighting his way back from the cusp of death when bitten by a poisonous snake.

Jack the labrador retriever has sniffed out his share of drug stashes and an echidna, but when he picked up a red-bellied black snake last week the 20-month-old super sleuth finally bit off more than he could chew.

Nathan Mawby

Benalla vets advised Jack's owner, Steve Randi, 37, to have him put down.

But Mr Randi reckoned this was one dog who hadn't quite had his day.

"I honestly believe his job's not done here, he's got more to do," he said.

"He's like one of my children."

With Jack bleeding and slipping in and out of

consciousness, Mr Randi made a 200km mercy dash to the Animal Accident and Emergency centre at Essendon Airport.

His treatment, including four shots of anti-venom and seven packs of blood and plasma, was worth almost \$12,500.

But in an early Christmas miracle vets gave Jack a tentative all-clear on Saturday.

He's not out of the woods

yet with a month of rehab before he can get back to drug detection hunts at concerts, drug rehab centres and in the homes of parents concerned their children may be using drugs.

In the meantime, Mr Randi is advising all dog owners to be wary around long grass, waterways and to avoid quiet spaces, after Jack was bitten during a training run.