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## Police dog attacks, but the law lacks bite



Adrian Beadle shows his shirt torn in the dog attack.

Photo: Ben Rushton

Edmund Tadros  
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ADRIAN BEADLE was playing hide-and-seek when he first saw the dog emerge from the bushes in Sydney's south-west.

The dog, believed to be a member of the NSW police dog squad, did not take kindly to the intrusion of the 13-year-old. Slobbering and growling, it attacked Adrian, biting him on his wrist, side and back as he struggled to scramble away.

Pale with fear, bleeding and with his clothes torn, Adrian managed to get away from the animal. Using photos, he would later identify it as a German shepherd that was "pretty big - about a metre high and a metre long".

Police were called, and officers from Sutherland Local Area Command began investigating the attack. That was in November 2005.

During the investigation Adrian's parents, Peter and Margaret, said they were told by the investigator that the dog that attacked their son belonged to the NSW police dog squad.

Dr Beadle said he believed the dog had escaped from its handler's backyard.

A NSW police spokesman told the *Herald* that the dog allegedly involved in the attack had been retrained and that the senior constable involved had been disciplined.

The office of the Director of Public Prosecutions was set to begin a case against the senior

constable involved under the Companion Animals Act 1998 tomorrow. But the prosecution is not proceeding. Last week a prosecutor told Adrian's parents this was because police dogs and handlers were exempt from the act.

A spokeswoman for the office of the Director of Public Prosecutions said she could not comment on the reasons the case was not being pursued.

Dr and Mrs Beadle are furious about the decision. Adding to their frustration are comments from the Minister for Local Government, Kerry Hickey, who is the minister responsible for the legislation. His spokesman told the *Herald* that the exemption was only for when a police dog was on official duty.

Dr Beadle wants the laws tested in court. "I would rather have a magistrate decide how the law should be interpreted," he said.

"My son - who is six foot [183 cm] tall - now has permanent disfigurement on his chest and backside. It's a travesty of justice and makes me lose faith in the whole system."

Mrs Beadle added: "Why should the charges be dropped? If it had been a smaller child, that kid could have died."

A NSW police spokesman said police would not be reviewing their guidelines for the home kennelling of dogs by handlers.

Mr Hickey's spokesman said police dogs were exempt from prosecution when their dog attacked another person or animal under the Companion Animals Act.

"This makes perfect sense because otherwise police would be open to prosecution every time a police dog restrained a fleeing suspect," he said. "However, this only applies when the animal is on official duty."

For his part, Adrian, now 15, wants the dog that attacked him put down. "It was a pretty vicious dog, and it wasn't particularly trained."

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