



Saturday, 8 September 2007

## Dog attack traumatises boy

**A young Kaukapakapa boy with special needs has been traumatised by a dog attack.**

Damian West needed facial surgery after he was savaged by a bull mastiff on Saturday.

The eight-year-old, who has developmental delay - meaning his intellect matures slower than his body - was walking on the corner of Rimu and Makiri streets with a group, including his 19-year-old brother, when he went to pat the dog.

It jumped the fence and sunk its teeth into Damian's face.

The mastiff, which backed off when Damian's older brother ran over, left deep gashes in his right cheek and by his ear.

Damian was taken to Starship by helicopter and arrived at 2pm on Saturday.

His mother Toni Brooks was told surgery would be at 6pm, but by 8pm he still hadn't had his wound cleaned or been given painkillers.

Eventually he was given internal and external stitches.

Ms Brooks says Damian doesn't like dogs, so she was suprised to hear he went over to touch it.

"Now he is absolutely terrified, and even gets scared when he hears a dog barking," she says.

When asked about the incident Damian freezes up and refuses to talk. He will be seen by Victim Support staff, who will help him with the trauma.

Ms Brooks was shocked when she reached the hospital: "My first thought was: 'Why Damian?' He has a birth mark on his left cheek and now he is going to have nasty scars on his right."

The mastiff, a family pet, was signed over to Animal Control by its owner.

"We still haven't heard from the owner. Where's my apology?" says Ms Brooks.

Helensville police referred inquiries on to the Rodney District Council.

Council acting communications manager Mark Hanson says the police will likely make a decision on whether to prosecute this week.

If the police deem the injuries serious enough the owner could be looking at three years in prison or a \$20,000 fine.

If the injuries aren't considered major the prosecution will be in the hands of the council and the fine could be up to \$3000, Mr Hanson says.

A decision has yet to be made on whether the dog will be put down.

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