

\$60,000 for dog-bite victim's 'frightening' experience

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A woman who was bitten by a dog three years ago has been awarded more than \$60,000 in the ACT Supreme Court.

Annette Helen Dryden, a 60-year-old public servant, was doing some work at the business she ran at the Canberra racecourse on the morning of May 28, 2005, when she leaned down to pat the dog of an acquaintance, Katrina Bowditch. The dog, a medium-sized red heeler named Xeena, was wearing a new coat, and Ms Dryden admired it as she went to pat the dog.

She did not know at the time of the dog's dangerous propensity, and was shocked when Xeena attacked her, biting her on the right forearm and coming into sharp contact with her right eye.

In a hearing before Master David Harper last week, Ms Dryden said she had immediately experienced an excruciating pain in her arm and eye and been advised to go straight to hospital.

Ms Dryden eventually had to travel to Sydney to have repairs done to a laceration on her eye and a damaged tear duct.

Minor complications in the surgery meant she had to undergo a second operation some time after the first.

She said she still had to use eye drops regularly, and was self-conscious and embarrassed by the visible scar on her forearm.

She said her social life and self-esteem had been affected.

She often became verbally aggressive towards friends and family, and was now permanently afraid of aggressive dogs.

A friend who gave evidence last week said Ms Dryden had become a different person since the dog bite.

In handing down his judgment yesterday, Master Harper said he accepted that Ms Dryden, although psychologically vulnerable, was an honest person.

He accepted the dog bite had been a frightening and painful experience. He awarded her \$60,238 in damages.

This included past and future loss of enjoyment of life, treatment and medical expenses and minor loss of earning capacity.

He also ordered that Ms Bowditch pay Ms Dryden's legal costs.

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