

EDITORIAL

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NEWS

Dog owners accused

AARON LANGMAID

A SWAN mauled in a dog attack at Elsternwick Park was hurt because park users vandalised a protection fence, a resident says.

Elwood's Liz Zulinski, who has watched over the swans for 11 years, said dog owners who cut holes in the fence to allow their pets to swim in the pond were to blame for the attack.

Ms Zulinski said two adult swans from Albert Park Lake had been nesting at Elsternwick this year.

The mother swan was attacked on September 1 while trying to protect her four cygnets.

"People have come to the park with pliers and snipped the fence open to let their dogs swim, when there is a dog beach 10 minutes away," Ms Zulinski said.

"Park users witnessed this attack. They saw the blood in the water, but failed to contact anybody about it."

Ms Zulinski said Bayside Council, which built the fence around the pond, needed to ensure the birds were protected. She said domestic pets in the park needed to be on leashes.

The swan and her cygnets,



Gill Donath with the injured swan.

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which were rescued on Father's Day by wildlife group Aware, are being cared for by Langwarrin animal rescue volunteer Gill Donath.

"There is not much difference in size between a swan and a toddler," Mrs Donath said. "I don't think I could trust a dog again once it had attacked a swan ... it's just a stepping process isn't it?"

Bayside Mayor John

Knight said he was appalled by the incident.

"The fence around the lake was put there to protect the swans," Cr Knight said.

"The dog jumped over the fence and attacked. Council implores dog owners to take responsibility for their dogs, particularly in off-leash areas.

"Council is reviewing the matter to minimise the risk of this occurring again."