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Judge's ruling damns solicitor, real estate agent

'Naive woman held to ransom'



Solicitor George Harrison plans to fight Supreme Court decision over property deals.



MR CAMERON

By LISA CARTY

Solicitor George Harrison and real estate agent Don Cameron exploited the ignorance of a middle-aged Wollongong woman and "held her to ransom" over two property deals, a Supreme Court judge has found.

The woman did not know that the main reason the men pressured her to prematurely sell the first property was that Mr Harrison had escalating financial difficulties centring on a \$1.5 million offshore loan, the judge said. Later they manipulated her into investing in a second development, the construction of commercial offices in Kembla St, Wollongong.

Judge Cliff Einstein, sitting in the equity division, delivered his 342-page judgment into the complex

Delcie Schipp v George Harrison and Don Cameron case in Sydney on July 9.

Mr Harrison and Mr Cameron last night said they were shocked by the judgment and planned to appeal (see story below).

The judge said the men had regarded Mrs Schipp, the ex-wife of former Wollongong alderman Harry Schipp, as "a very weak and naive and vulnerable person who would simply be taken for granted and was obviously way out of her depth in the commercial dealing which was involved".

Mr Harrison and Mr Cameron had taken "unfair and unconscionable advantage" of her weaknesses and

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Shocked Harrison, Cameron plan appeal

By LISA CARTY

Judge Einstein's damning report into the long-simmering feud between Wollongong divorcee Delcie Schipp and businessmen George Harrison and Don Cameron was a shock and would be appealed, the men said last night.

Mr Harrison, a solicitor, and Mr Cameron, a real estate agent, said they had been thunderstruck by the 342-page judgment which said they had lied on oath and bullied a vulnerable woman

over two business deals. Mr Harrison, a prominent Labor Party member and part-owner of the Lagoon Restaurant, said he could not believe that Judge Einstein had so strongly discounted his evidence, the evidence of Mr Cameron and the evidence of seven other witnesses they called in support.

"It was obviously a stressful and expensive case but at all times we were confident of winning," Mr Harrison said.

"I cannot explain what a shock this judgment

was but I have every confidence that we will win on appeal and restore our reputations."

Mr Harrison said he never expected the matter to get to court because Mrs Schipp had been paid the money she was owed after the sale of the land in Thirroul before agreeing to invest money in the second project in Wollongong.

On that occasion she had been one of a number of people, including himself, who had lost money, he said.

He and Mr Cameron vehemently denied any

wrong-doing and continued to claim, as they had in court, that Mrs Schipp was experienced in business because of her previous partnership with former Wollongong alderman and businessman Harry Schipp. This was found by Judge Einstein to be untrue.

Mr Cameron said he was devastated by the finding. He had expected a victory. "No-one has been crooked," he said. "Nothing underhanded was done and I am terribly shocked."

Mrs Schipp declined to comment.

Ruling damns solicitor, agent

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had dominated her throughout the course of their business association in the late 1980s.

The first time Mr Harrison met Mrs Schipp, in November 1987, he "closely examined Mrs Schipp in relation to her personal circumstances and ascertained that she had assets and funds to invest and was essentially alone and divorced and unhappy and without the protection of close family or advisers", the judge said.

The case was sparked by a falling-out over land in Mary St, Thirroul, on which the trio proposed to build three luxury units, and the

Kembla St commercial development which followed. On 32 sitting days the judge heard evidence which led him to conclude that at times Mr Harrison and Mr Cameron had been "content to lie under oath" about their relationship with Mrs Schipp.

Mr Cameron and Mr Harrison were "unsatisfactory and unreliable" witnesses who sometimes "fabricated" their evidence, Judge Einstein said. The judge said that at one stage during their business association, feelings between Mrs Schipp and the men ran so high they launched a verbal attack on her which was "so threatening" that "she either passed out or

came close to passing out and had to be helped into a chair". During the case Judge Einstein heard how Mrs Schipp had bought the Thirroul land for \$150,000 on the understanding that Mr Harrison and Mr Cameron would organise the development.

They planned to split the profits three ways but ultimately Mrs Schipp sold the land in its undeveloped state after Mr Cameron and Mr Harrison persuaded her the development was no longer viable. Although the development did not occur, each took a \$40,000 cut of the profits from the land sale, a result which made Mrs Schipp feel she had been "ripped off".

Despite that she agreed to join them in the Kembla St development because she had yet to receive her money from Mary St, and felt she had to "hang in there" in order to recover her original investment.

In evidence, Mrs Schipp said she agreed to the second investment, even though she felt she had been cheated out of \$80,000, because: "... there was a lot of manipulating going on".

Judge Einstein said there was no doubt Mrs Schipp was deserving of "relief" - it was now a decision of what relief to grant.

He adjourned the case until August 7.

Mother saves tiny twins in swamp



Papua New Guinea villager Ita with her one-month-old twins. She held them as the tidal wave swept them into a swamp at Sissano, then held on to a tree until they were rescued.

Dead threat to the living

AITAPE.- On Papua New Guinea's devastated north coast the dead now threaten the living.

Four days after a 10m high tsunami washed away villages where up to 10,000 people lived, international rescuers are racing to find the injured and missing before disease does.

Decomposing bodies were posing a major health risk, district relief co-ordinator Julian Yohrin said yesterday.

Corpses were so rotten they fell apart when recovery teams tried to pull them from the waters of Sissano lagoon in PNG's West Sepik province where the tsunami struck on Friday evening.

Mr Yohrin and other rescue workers fear outbreaks of diseases spawned by the decomposing bodies may kill hundreds more among the battered survivors of the disaster.

"There's still a lot of bodies floating in the water," Mr Yohrin said.



Australian army medical staff in a makeshift tent attend to a tidal wave survivor.

"They are contaminating the water."

Crocodiles were feasting on the corpses clogging the mangrove swamps and lagoons.

Authorities cannot determine how many bodies remain in the lagoon, or how many people were killed or injured in the disaster.

PNG Prime Minister Bill Skate said yesterday at least 1200 people were dead and up to 6000 others remained unaccounted for.

Terrified, dazed survivors continued to hobble out of the jungles and mangrove swamps behind the coast, many with serious wounds and injuries which have become

infected in the tropical heat.

"They are walking out of the bush with broken arms, broken legs, head injuries," said Lieutenant Brad Slater, an Australian army officer in charge of logistics at an emergency field hospital.

Many survivors are suffering from pneumonia after spending hours in the saltwater or endemic tropical diseases such as malaria.

"They all have fevers because they all have cuts somewhere on the skin and they are all infected and we don't have any antibiotics," said Australian doctor Les Thompson at Sissano.

One Australian army nurse said she had been too busy caring for the injured to consider the enormity of what had happened.

"It's mainly fractures, tibia fractures, femur fractures ... some quite bad skull lacerations," said Debbie Brearley at Vanimo, adding some amputations had been necessary. "We've done a lot of surgery."

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