

Submission
No 1

**INQUIRY INTO 2022 REVIEW OF THE WORKERS
COMPENSATION SCHEME**

Name: Name suppressed

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Partially
Confidential

I was a NSW police officer for the almost 11 years. I used to thoroughly enjoy my job. I worked in The Hills LAC, PTC (formerly CCU) for several years before moving out to western NSW.

Even as a trained Peer Support Officer (PSO) I was aware that there are things in place to assist officers. But there is nothing to assist officers when something truly does happen. I was subject to of bullying and harassment from all levels upon moving out to western NSW (Castlereagh LAC). I had never had any mental health issues.

I was off work since May 2016. I was declined Workcover due to it apparently being from the complaint process; apparently had nothing to do with the bullying and ostracism that occurred before the numerous unfounded complaints that were all deemed unsubstantiated. To top off not being able to get Workcover, I was also denied income protection until 9months of being off work.

May 2016, I was diagnosed with severe depression, adjustment disorder and anxiety. I was suicidal, in a remote location, continually bullied after becoming ill by the same people. I was scared to walk outside my house, looked at every car that went by to see if it was a police officer to hide. I was denied Workcover payments and income protection. I survived on my 3 months of annual leave until I no longer had any form of income. Even then, at the 9-month mark, I had to fight to get my income protection.

During those 9 months, I had to move 4hours away to seek help, which involved moving my whole family which is stressful in its own rights. I had to pay for that help out of my own pocket, luckily my psychologist understood my situation and allowed payments to be made over time. I was threatened by my superiors for abandonment of duty, whilst suffering severe depression and anxiety with suicidal and homicidal tendencies.

I had to somehow support my family when I was in no condition to even support myself. My husband was working two jobs just so we had a roof over our heads. My credit rating declined as further stress was imposed financially and bills fell behind.

The first nine months was terrifying. So many times I was on the verge of suicide and if given the opportunity, would have committed a heinous offence. The only thing that stopped is that I had no trust in anyone and therefor trusted no one to care for my kids. There was no rationality in my decisions or anyone to support me besides my husband.

After the 9 months I had to fight to get income protection as I had been cleared to work full time only so I could certified to get my gun back and work just so I could get any form of income. I was immediately changed to part time hours as there was no capability of working full-time. After having contacts within the industry, I managed to get some form of income protection and was supported financially but still had the backlog of debt of over 12months before I saw any money.

After almost four and a half years, I finally was cleared by the courts as it being covered by work cover. I was in the aspect of having a competent and caring case manager who wants to help. Something I know that others have failed to have.

Going through the system of fighting to be accepted as workcover, I would not wish the stress on anyone. My psychologist had to argue with my superiors about returning to work as they demanded I return to the place of the incident when my professional told them that I was in no state to be returning there. I was left out to dry by everyone and I am still surprised that I am alive today and not a number. I never had any intent of leaving a job I loved and put over a decade of work into but the system forced me to.

On paper there is support, in reality there is often none. You cannot bring yourself to seek it in the state that I was in, my doctor is the one that told me to take time off work as I continuously wanted to return but he detected the symptoms. I was no clear headed and unable to make decisions and the entire system is telling you that you are a liar and do not deserve to be looked after.

No one from my organisation contacted me or cared for my well-being. My superiors accused me of lying and demanding I will be returning to work. There is nothing in the system stopping them from these interactions.

I was failed by the system. I am still suffering financial, psychological and physical implications of my illness and I am still working on my rehabilitation, knowing that I will never have the same sense of happiness that I once had. I have since suffered separation from my husband and see warning signs of psychologic illness in my eldest child from my instability as a mother.

You are left in the hands of insurance companies whose employees have their own lives and do not realise how much you can rely on the payments and one mistake by them can cause exacerbated stressors. You are forced to write statements by solicitors and insurance companies to be able to get some income trying to put down the incidents when you are in no state of mind to even process what has occurred. I still wonder how I became this way 6 years on.

In conclusion, there needs to be real support, benefits of doubt to the employee, accountability of case managers at insurance organisations and real programs in place to assist people to improve not just systems of medicating and sweeping under the carpet.

If you would like further information, I am happy to supply further information