

Carla and Brett Benson speak out after alleged murder attempt

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Christine Schindler

28 September 2023

On Monday night, May 22, 2023, Carla and Brett Benson were walking...

The victims of an alleged Gympie hit and run have opened up around their road to recovery and the struggle of trying to get their lives back on track four months later.

On Monday night, May 22, 2023, Carla and Brett Benson were walking their two dogs along Sorensen Road on the Southside when they were hit by a car allegedly driven by their neighbour.

Carla, 34, was critically injured while Brett sustained a leg injury. One of their dogs ran away during the incident and was found a week later.

The alleged driver of the car that hit them has been charged with two counts of attempted murder, driving under the influence, and one count of animal cruelty.

That night changed the Bensons' lives.

The fit, active young couple ran a successful cleaning business before the incident, working long hours and making decent money.



Carla and Brett Benson were injured after being allegedly run down while walking their dogs on the Southside, Gympie, on May 22, 2023.

Now, Carla can only move and sit slowly and with pain, while her husband can not bear to revisit the traumatic events of that evening.

His parents, Jeanette and Doug Benson, instead spoke in support of him.

"I would not have expected it to happen to me at any point in my life," Carla said.

The couple now live in Brett's parents' house, with the older couple moving into a caravan to give Brett and Carla privacy and recovery space.



Carla Benson (middle) with her parents-in-law, Jeanette and Doug Benson, who have supported the couple through the last four months after they fell victim to an alleged hit and run on the Southside. Picture: Christine Schindler

The couple are struggling to make ends meet, no longer able to work as cleaners due to their physical injuries and having to spend three days a week at medical appointments.

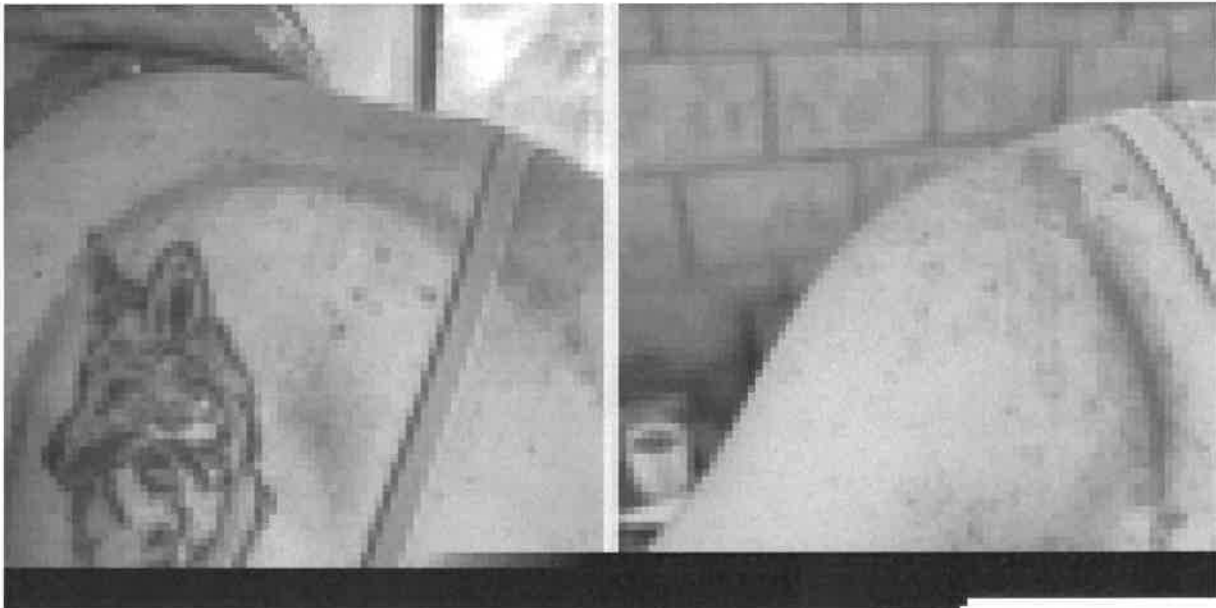
Carla had to be airlifted to the Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital and spent two weeks in an induced coma, undergoing surgeries that lasted up to 10 hours.

When she woke up in hospital, she heard the nurses talking about someone and thought it was her parents-in-law.

"She had a shoulder crushed, almost all her ribs fractured, pelvis broken in two places, three fractured vertebrae, severe facial lacerations and internal injuries," Doug said of his daughter-in-law.

"You see everyday how much they struggle physically, that's not what you want for your son and daughter-in-law," he said.

"The hardest is the day-to-day part of getting dressed and having showers," Doug said.



Carla Benson, victim of an alleged hit and run in Gympie, shows the lasting scars on her body from the injuries. Picture: Christine Schindler

On top of this, they weren't insured for income loss and getting on to Centrelink payments has been a bureaucratic obstacle course.

When Carla did finally get on to Jobseeker, it was suspended and cancelled after three payments.

An admin error on her medical certificate saw her payment get suspended, then for some reason she missed an income reporting deadline, and almost a month later she received a letter saying her payment had been cancelled.

"I don't even understand why I have to report when my medical certificate says I can't work," she said.

She said she had tried to call the number given on the letter "for complex inquiries" but had simply waited on hold for hours only to be told by a machine there was no one available, to call back later, and promptly hung up on.



Carla Benson, four months after being hit by a car, says she has struggled to receive financial support from Centrelink after her payments were suspended due to an admin error on her medical certificate. Picture: Christine Schindler

She said the machine even recognised her number, picking up she had called a number of times that day, but she obtained the same result.

Brett's leg injury affected his whole body, and he was unable to operate at the same level of physicality required to run the cleaning business.

On Thursday afternoon, after speaking to The Gympie Times, Carla said she had a call from Centrelink promising a reinstatement and back pay.

"I appreciate this is a very difficult time for Carla and Brett. I am sorry they've had trouble getting the help they expected from us. We extend an offer to work directly with the Benson's to make sure they are supported and get payments they are eligible for as quickly as possible," Services Australia General Manager Hank Jongen said.

"Unfortunately in some cases our wait times are longer than we'd like, but I can assure every one of our staff are working very hard every day to serve the community and help people get the support they need."

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