

News National

# Comcare accused of unethical behaviour when dealing with police officers' claims

The insurer caring for cops hurt in the line of fire has been accused of denying, delaying and aggravating their injuries.



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Brad Turner a former AFP officer served in dangerous hotspots in PNG before being diagnosed with PTSD and depression. Picture: Supplied

The insurer charging \$42 million a year to care for cops hurt on duty has been accused of aggravating their injuries with “adversarial, confrontational and deceitful behaviours”.

Comcare, which has already been accused of unethical behaviour for doctor shopping to knock out claims, is under attack for pushing police already suffering psychological injuries to the brink of suicide.

“Cops are being put through the wringer,” solicitor and former AFP officer David Healey who has acted for hundreds of former colleagues said.

Mr Healey, from David Healey Solicitors, said it is always the same story: cops have to battle to get treatment with Comcare denying, delaying, and even doing “periodic reviews” which can reverse previous decisions to accept a claim.



Brad and Vanessa Turner at their Brisbane home. Picture: Richard Walker

“It is a moral injustice, and some of the behaviour is just disgusting,” Mr Healey said.

Police, lawyers, the AFP Association (AFPA) and the AFP Former Members Association (AFPFMA) are all calling for officers to receive mental health care plans similar to Australian Defence Force members.

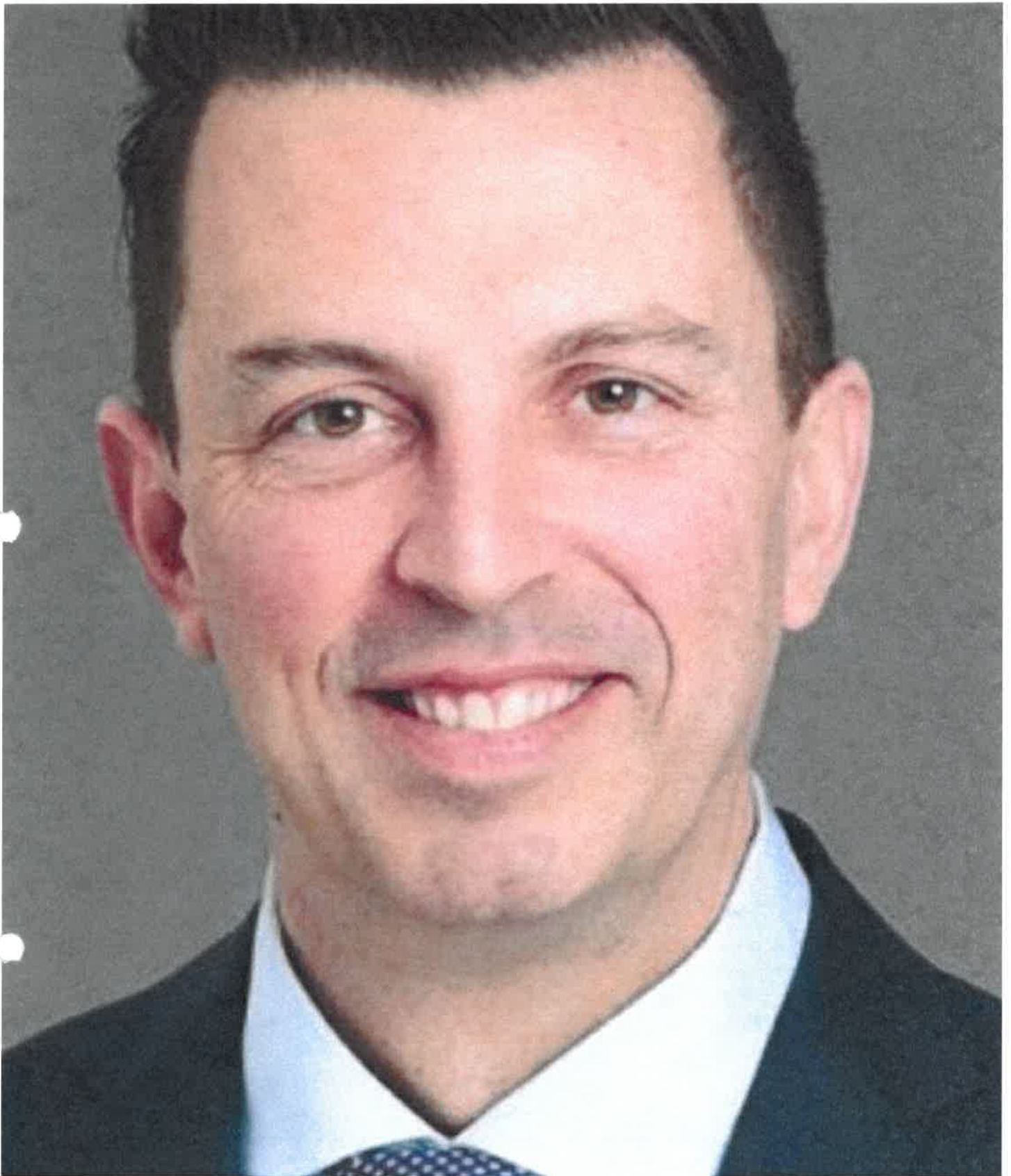
The AFPA wants a “blue card” for police like the Defence Veterans Association’s (DVA) White Card which accepts “non-liability claims” for a mental condition by anyone who has served even just a day.





Brad Turner a former AFP officer served in dangerous hotspots in PNG before being diagnosed with PTSD and depression. Picture Supplied





Lawyer David Healey said cops are being put through the wringer by Comcare. Picture: Supplied

Former officer Kylie Walls said despite her well-evidenced PTSD claim, Comcare litigated against her using expensive private law firms and doctor shopped while she was left without pay funding her own medical treatment.

Former AFP officer Brad Turner said the DVA rescued him when he was suicidal and couldn't get Comcare to fund a lifesaving treatment because it was for depression and not considered a compensable condition of PTSD.

“If I did not have prior military service and the DVA to help, I would be dead by suicide like so many other officers subjected to this system,” Mr Turner said.



Former traffic cop Kylie Walls who was diagnosed with PTSD had to fight for compensation. Picture: Justin Benson-Cooper

AFPA President Alex Caruana said there have been some improvements in the timeliness of Comcare decisions, but members are still being declined treatment for PTSD symptoms because they fall outside Comcare guidelines.





Alex Caruana, President of Australian Federal Police Association (AFPA) wants better treatment for police. Picture: NCA NewsWire/Gary Ramage

AFPMA President David Savage said “part of the problem is the way Comcare approaches cases in a confrontational and adversarial way. It shouldn’t be a battle.”

A Comcare spokeswoman said: “We recognise that the process for workers’ compensation can sometimes become adversarial ...”

She said psychological claims can experience delays for reasons including obtaining sufficient clinical information to meet “legislative tests”.

AFP premiums paid to Comcare jumped from \$33 million in 2017 to \$42 million in 2021, more than \$6000 a year for every employee.

The AFP said it is investing \$65 million in Shield, a program putting health centres in each regional command.

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