

# A policeman is suing officers and the state, claiming: **Bullies stole my life**



**Ahead of their time:** Kyle Gass and Jack Black warm up for last night's concert. Picture: DARREN McNAMARA

A VICTORIAN policeman who claims extensive bullying and harassment drove him out of the force is suing nine former colleagues and the state of Victoria for damages.

Sen-Constable Phillip Cochrane, formerly stationed at the Melbourne East police station, claims years of psychological and emotional abuse by several colleagues and superiors led him to develop serious psychological problems that forced him out of the job in 2003.

Mr Cochrane is seeking damages and compensation for loss of earnings in the Supreme Court civil action.

A statement of claim lodged with the court by his lawyer, Lisa Treeby, of Arnold, Thomas and Becker, alleges nine officers contributed between 1999 and 2003 to the onset of Mr Cochrane's psychiatric disorder and early retirement.

The state of Victoria, as employer of Victoria Police, is also being sued for allegedly not ensuring proper care was taken of Mr Cochrane.

The alleged bullying included derogatory remarks concerning Mr Cochrane's mental toughness, stonewalling of possible promotions, assigning untrained recruits to Mr Cochrane in dangerous situations and unwarranted discipline, according to the court claim.

Mr Cochrane, 36, was

**Brendan Roberts**

diagnosed with post-traumatic stress disorder in 2003 and suffers severe depression, anxiety and panic attacks.

He believes it is unlikely he will ever work again.

"The police force has taken my life," he said.

"I'm agitated, I get aggressive easily and I panic.

"I was a regular easy-going bloke before all this, I have just mentally unravelled."

Mr Cochrane said he was first exposed to "the bullying culture" of the Victorian Police in 1994, while working as a constable at the former Russell St police complex.

Mr Cochrane claims that on one occasion he was handcuffed and beaten by a sergeant after confronting him about bullying in the office.

The alleged incident does not form part of this case, as the time period for lodging legal proceedings has now lapsed.

Mr Cochrane said he believed too many officers were "copping it on the chin" because bullying was an accepted part of the Victorian police force.

"There are a lot of silent people in the force that barrell it all up and they are letting the bullies get away with it," he said.

"It's taken my life, but I hope this helps to save some others."

A Victoria Police spokesman said the force did not comment on civil trials.

## The D find their destiny

TONGUE-in-cheek rockers Tenacious D are looking to Australians to embrace their new movie.

The D's feature film *The Pick of Destiny* struggled in the US, becoming only the 167th highest-grosser last year.

Next month the film opens in Australia, one of the band's biggest territories.

"We made one of the greatest pictures of all time," guitarist Kyle Gass said.

"I don't think they were ready. I think it's ahead of our time."

Jack Black said: "We did our job. We made a tremendous film.

"If people don't understand it or don't like it, there's nothing we can do."

Gass added: "Let time make the final judgment."

Music was the first love for

**Cameron Adams**

music reporter

Black, who has starred in Hollywood hits *The Holiday*, *High Fidelity* and *School of Rock*.

*The Pick of Destiny* has an all-star cast, with Meatloaf as Black's father and Foo Fighters' Dave Grohl as the Devil.

"We needed someone really funny and musically talented, really there's only one person who could have done it — Will Ferrell," Black joked.

"But if we couldn't get him, it had to be Dave Grohl."

Tenacious D's show at Festival Hall last night continued their infatuation with the Devil. A look-alike of Colonel Sanders featured in their band playing in hell.

"Colonel Sanders is in hell," Gass said. "We drafted him to play drums. He killed over a billion chickens."

"That's worth like a thousand people, in meat," Black added, "but man, he plays mean skins."

The band have huge popularity in Australia, with their single *Tribute* a top 5 hit in 2002.

"We never chart in the States," Gass said. "Our worst city is LA where we're from, our home town."

Black added: "I don't know, I don't care. I like playing where the love is, that's all that matters."

Black will be seen in the movie *Margot at the Wedding* starring Nicole Kidman this year.

"She's a tremendous actor," Black said.

"She was very thin."



**Miss-guided tour:** Dave Hughes shows Jennifer Hawkins around St Kilda. Picture: JAY TOWN

## Jen surprised by lingerie ad ban

**David Hastie**

FORMER Miss Universe Jennifer Hawkins has said she was amazed but understood a decision not to display her latest lingerie advertisement in a New Zealand airport.

A billboard of Hawkins featured in a lacy bra clutching a stuffed rhino and captioned, "Feeling horny?", was deemed too raunchy by Auckland International Airport.

Hawkins said she didn't expect any controversy to surface while doing the photo shoot.

"To be honest I was in Coles Bay when all of that happened, which is in Tasmania," Hawkins said.

"I had all these messages on my phone about it and I was just going, 'I don't understand, what's happening'.

"There's some sexy shots but they are also quite cute.

"But it is an airport and it is their choice.

"If they think it's inappropriate that's their call."

The model and TV presenter had arrived in Melbourne on Thursday to film an episode of Channel 7's *The Great Outdoors* with comedian Dave Hughes.

Hughes was busy giving Hawkins a guided tour of his home suburb of St Kilda yesterday.

She said she had enjoyed the day, which included visits to Luna Park and The Esplanade.

The episode will be on television in April.

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