

# Man burned by hot tar sues police

By JEREMY KELLY

A MAN who claims he was handcuffed and pinned to a bitumen footpath hot enough to cook bacon and eggs is suing police for damages.

Omar Taha, 25, has filed a suit in the County Court seeking damages over his arrest in February 2000, on a day when the temperature reached 34.7C.

In his statement of claim, Mr Taha says he was arrested in the back yard of a Carlton house, handcuffed and then forcibly made to lie down on the bitumen footpath outside the house.

Mr Taha, of Brunswick, who was dressed in shorts and a T-shirt, claims the two arresting police officers forced him to remain on the footpath while he complained that he could not breathe and he was in severe pain and was suffering burns.

Mr Taha alleges that it was not reasonably neces-



Writ: Omar Taha claims he suffered severe burns.

sary for the police officers to keep him lying face down on the footpath to maintain his arrest.

After pleading guilty in February to attempted car theft and going equipped to steal, Mr Taha was sentenced to a

six-month intensive corrections order by a magistrate who heard that a doctor had described his burns as the worst he had ever seen.

In the writ, Mr Taha says he suffered severe burns to his legs, arms and chest and now has residual scarring, anxiety and depression.

Mr Taha's solicitor Lee Flanagan, of law firm Arnold, Thomas & Becker, said his client would be seeking damages for pain and suffering, medical bills and for exemplary and aggravated damages.

The statement of claim lists as defendants the State of Victoria and the two arresting officers, one of whom is believed to be living in England.



Evidence: Taha's feet after the arrest.

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