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Gambler dad blows TAC payment Young boy scarred by rip-off

Nick Leys

TAXPAYERS funded extra compensation to a young boy whose single mother was killed in a car crash because the TAC gave an initial payment of \$110,000 to his drug-addicted father.

The father — who has a history of drug and gambling problems and has been in and out of prison — blew the money in four months after buying his son a games console and computer.

Tim, now nine years old and living in Melbourne's outer east with his paternal grandmother, was returning from a prison visit to Sale with his 41-year-old mother in 2006 when she lost control of the vehicle and hit a tree beside the Princes Highway, killing her.

Officers from the TAC interviewed the father while he finished a sentence for drug-related offences at Fulham prison near Sale to establish he was the correct next-of-kin, and paid him the compensation instead of putting the money into a

trust fund for Tim, who was four years old when his mother died.

Tim's grandmother, Tania, told the *Herald Sun* the money had been spent on "drugs and pokies" within four months.

"I said to my son, 'That money is not for you, it is

'This money was meant for the loss of his mother'

for him,'" she said. "He told me, 'Don't worry, the money is safe'."

The TAC subsequently repaid \$67,000 in 2010 to Tim in a trust fund that cannot be accessed until he turns 18. He also receives a fortnightly payment of \$286 and a yearly education allowance of \$2430.

Lawyers Maurice Blackburn have now filed a claim in the Victorian County Court against the TAC seeking more compensation on the grounds Tim suffers post traumatic stress

disorder and has nightmares about losing his mother.

A previous serious injury application was rejected by the TAC, forcing the family to take the case to the County Court.

Dimi Ioannou, Maurice Blackburn senior associate, accused the TAC of mishandling the case from the start.

"This is money that was meant to compensate Tim for the loss of his mother," she said.

"Why did the TAC give a large sum of money to a man who had recently been released from jail, for a child that never lived with him?"

A spokeswoman for the TAC said: "The TAC acknowledged that it initially made an incorrect payment to Thomas' father and rectified that by paying Thomas a statutory lump sum death benefit to the State Trustees to manage on his behalf."

leysni@hwt.com.au