

Police, emergency services assault laws pass after five-month campaign

A five-month campaign by the police union for tougher laws and penalties for anyone who assaults an emergency services worker has ended in victory.

Nigel Hunt

July 23, 2019 - 1:24PM The Advertiser

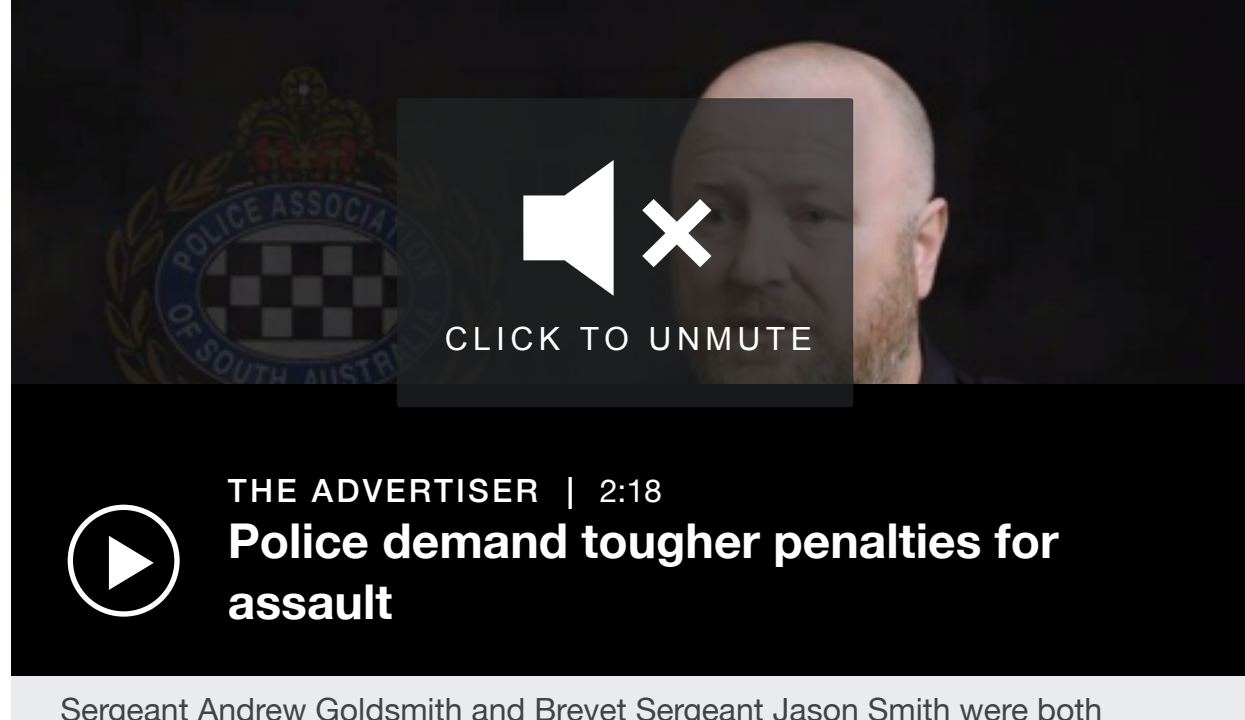
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Anyone who assaults a police officer or emergency services worker will face a prison sentence of up to 15 years under a specific new law that has passed state parliament.

The move ends a hard-hitting [five-month campaign by the Police Association](#) — supported by *The Advertiser* — aimed at protecting all emergency services workers.

In the Lower House this morning Labor's amendments to the Criminal Law Consolidation Act amendment Bill were passed — with the support of the State Government.

The amendments, made to a government bill introduced in May that was described as “weak” by the police union, will ensure harsher punishment for anyone who assaults a police officer, ambulance officers, nurse or other emergency services worker in the line of duty.



Sergeant Andrew Goldsmith and Brevet Sergeant Jason Smith were both seriously assaulted in the line of duty. They want tougher penalties for those...

Association president Mark Carroll said winning the campaign had “resulted in perhaps the most significant amendments to assault legislation” seen in South Australia.

“It is now a specific offence in the legislation to assault a police officer,” he said.

“And thanks to the Police Association’s initiative, other emergency services workers will enjoy the same protections.

“The community response to our campaign was loud and clear. They are sick and tired of the vile assaults on police and other emergency services workers and they’re fed up with the assailants walking away from court with nothing more than a slap on the wrist or a suspended sentence.”

Mr Carroll said for the past five months police officers had been the face of the campaign, sharing their personal experiences about the trauma that “cowardly assailants inflicted on them in the line of duty”.

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“Our parliamentarians — to their credit — have listened to these stories. They have recognised the overwhelming public sentiment and they have acted accordingly,” he said.

Opposition emergency services spokesman Lee Odenwalder said the new law was “a win” for all emergency services workers.

“Labor have been fighting for tougher laws to protect these workers,” he said.

“These laws will send a clear message to the courts and the community that criminals who assault our cops, ambos, nurses and other emergency workers should be properly punished.

“We are pleased the Marshall Liberal Government have supported and our amendments — which were widely backed by emergency services organisations.

“Police, ambulance officers and emergency workers are on the frontline protecting and caring for us, and we need to do everything we can to protect them.”

The amendments create a specific offence for dealing with assaults on police, ambulance officers and other emergency workers.

The new law specifies that spitting and throwing human biological material constitutes assault and/or harm for the purposes of the new offences and also ensures any person who has received a suspended sentence for assaulting an emergency services worker in the last five years is not eligible for another suspended sentence.

Attorney-General Vickie Chapman said the Government had been focused on “protecting all of our frontline emergency service workers and frontline medical staff across the state.”

“I have ensured the amended legislation is consistent, applicable and in line with other legislation already enshrined in our criminal laws,” she said.

“As a Government, we are always happy to work with the entire parliament to ensure our laws are in line with community expectations and protects those most vulnerable.”

Police Minister Corey Wingard said he supported “these new laws wholeheartedly.”

“Our police are dedicated to protecting the community and they deserve to know they will be protected through strong legislation,” he said.



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