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Police & Courts

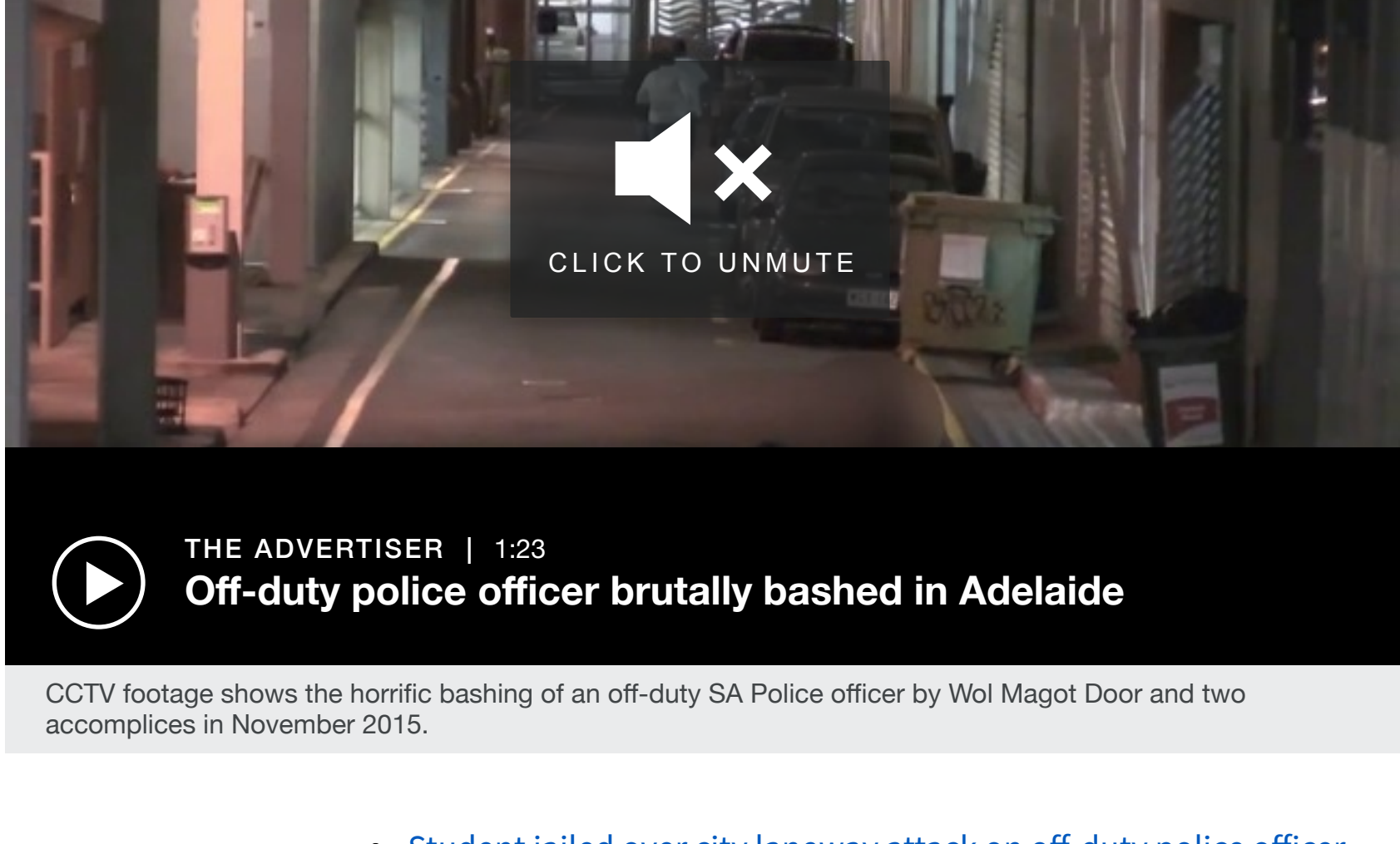
Attacks on police officers rising, as leaders demand stronger laws

An alarming increase in assaults against police in the past 12 months has been revealed, as leaders argue over how to strengthen the laws.

Elizabeth Henson Political reporter

@Eliz_henson June 4, 2019 - 9:00PM The Advertiser

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CCTV footage shows the horrific bashing of an off-duty SA Police officer by Wol Magot Door and two accomplices in November 2015.

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Police officers were attacked 771 times – equal to an average of about 15 assaults a week – in the 12 months to April 30 this year, the latest crime statistics show.

The SA Police figures reveal an alarming eight per cent increase in the number of assaults against police during this period compared to the previous 12 months.

It comes as both the Police Association of SA and the Opposition renew their calls for tougher penalties for those who violently attack members of the force.

The Association has thrown its support behind a new law Labor plans to introduce into State Parliament on Wednesday.

The proposed legislation would:

CREATE a specific criminal offence, with “tough penalties”, assault and injure police officers and emergency service workers.

ENSURE a criminal who has already received a suspended sentence for injuring a police officer or emergency service worker cannot have their sentence suspended again.

COMPEL courts to make penalty decisions based of what will deter people from attacking officers and emergency service workers.



Police Association of SA (PASA) president Mark Carroll with Senior Constables Paul Jelfs and Tash Smith, who were assaulted in the line of duty. Picture: AAP / Brenton Edwards

PASA president Mark Carroll said the association backed the measures.

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“The Marshall Government’s response to our campaign, for stronger laws and harsher penalties for assaults against police, has been totally inadequate,” he said.

“We support the state Opposition’s proposed new laws - and they should receive bipartisan support if we are serious about dealing with assaults against police.”

Opposition Police spokesman Lee Odenwalder, who will introduce the laws, said parliament “needs to send a clear message to criminals and to the courts that violence against our emergency workers will not be tolerated”.

“The numbers are clear – assaults on our police and emergency workers are

becoming more common,” he said.

“Sadly, the message just isn’t getting through, and the Marshall Liberal Government just isn’t doing enough to address the very real concerns of police and emergency service workers.

“Police and emergency workers work every day to keep us safe, and they deserve the full protection of the law.”

Attorney-General Vickie Chapman – who noted assaults against police had been consistency high over the past seven years, most of which while Labor were in Government – said she was “deeply concerned with two major shortfalls” of the Opposition’s legislation.



Attorney-General Vickie Chapman said she was concerned with two shortfalls in the Opposition’s legislation. Picture: Tait Schmaal

“Firstly, the Labor Party amendments do not immediately cover all frontline emergency workers, which is a strength of the Government’s proposed legislation in this area,” she said.

“Secondly, Labor’s amendments, despite claiming to do so, do not actually guarantee a custodial sentence if an offender commits assault against police twice within five years, which is precisely what the Police Association have been calling for.”

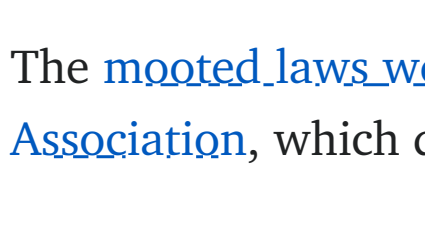
The Government [introduced its own legislation](#) into parliament last month that would see people who assault police and emergency service workers jailed for an extra year.

The maximum penalty for assault causing harm in these instances would rise from four years in jail to five while the maximum penalty for threatening harm, recklessly causing harm or committing acts likely to cause harm would rise from seven years in prison to eight.

The maximum penalty for intentionally causing harm would remain at 13 years’ jail while the intentionally causing serious harm would still attract a maximum penalty of 25 years’ prison.

Safeguards for police and emergency services would be considered by a judge when determining a penalty under the proposed changes.

The [quoted laws were slammed at the time by the Police Association](#), which described them as “weak”.



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