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### NEW LAWS TO PROTECT EMERGENCY WORKERS

Penalties for offences committed against a range of emergency workers, including those in hospital emergency units, ambulance and fire crews and volunteer emergency workers, are to be substantially increased under new laws announced today by Attorney-General Michael Atkinson.

The changes to the *Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935* will extend the aggravation of an offence against an emergency worker in the same way that such penalties already apply to offences against police and law enforcement officers.

Mr Atkinson says that the range of offences covered is broad and includes violent offences such as assaults, acts endangering life, recklessly or intentionally causing harm through to crimes such as theft.

#### **Aggravating an offence increases the potential penalty by up to 50%.**

“Emergency workers are often called upon to act in unpredictable and dangerous circumstances and often at risk to their own health and safety,” Mr Atkinson says.

“This kind of work requires a quick response to save lives or to assess life-threatening situations in unpredictable and emotionally fraught circumstances.

“The last thing that such workers should need to fear is being a victim of crime as they perform their duties,” Mr Atkinson says.

The changes will cover workers in the:

- Hospital emergency departments, including doctors, nurses, other medical professionals, support staff and volunteers;
- South Australian Ambulance Service;
- Metropolitan Fire Service, Country Fire Service and State Emergency Service;
- Surf Life Saving South Australia;
- Volunteer Marine Rescue S.A.;
- The provider of a service that is incidental or related to the service provided by one of these emergency service providers and essential to it (other than police and law enforcement officers, against whom offences already aggravated under s5AA (1) c of the *Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935*).

For the offence to be aggravated, the alleged offender must know of the worker’s occupation, know the worker was involved in that occupation in at the time of the offence and have appreciated the worker’s vulnerability when committing the offence.