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Australian Federal Police Association

AFPA WELCOMES NEW LAWS PROTECTING FIRST RESPONDERS

MEDIA RELEASE

The Australian Federal Police Association (AFPA) welcomes the announcement by the ACT Government regarding the introduction of the *Crimes (Protection of Police, Firefighters and Paramedics) Amendment Bill 2019*.

AFPA President Angela Smith said that the passing of the bill, over eight years in the making, and the three new laws it creates will be welcomed by all first responders in the ACT.

“The bill will define three new offences under the *Crimes Act 1900* which focus on the safety and wellbeing of police officers and other first responders. Assaults against police officers have generally been trending upwards and from mid-2015, the ACT has been averaging around 52 assaults against police officers per year.

“ACT Policing officers, AFP Protective Service Officers and other first responders don’t come to work to be assaulted. Traditionally offenders have been charged with common assault, which does not reflect the true nature or extent of the incident.

“Having a standalone offence that describes the true nature and seriousness of the crime is very important, and I know these new laws will be welcomed by the members of ACT Policing and AFP Protective Service Officers.”

The three new offences are:

- an offence for assaults against police officers and PSOs, with a maximum penalty of two years imprisonment
- an offence for intentionally or recklessly driving at a police officer or PSO and exposing a police officer or PSO to a risk of safety, with a maximum penalty of 15 years imprisonment
- an offence for driving at and causing damage to a police vehicle, with a maximum penalty of five years imprisonment.

Ms. Smith said that the AFPA would like to thank the ACT Government for passing the new laws.

“I thank Minister Gentleman for getting this bill through Cabinet and passed. This has been on our priority list since 2012, and he is the first Minister for Police and Emergency Services that has delivered a specific offence for assaulting police officers and first responders.

“I must also thank the Shadow Minister for Police Mrs. Giulia Jones MLA who has worked tirelessly towards protecting police officers and first responders. She has listened to our concerns and the concerns of our members. Mrs. Jones was instrumental in ensuring that AFP Protective Service Officers were included in the legislation,” Ms. Smith said.

STATEMENT ENDS

For comments:

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