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Mark Carroll: SA Parliament has abandoned injured and suffering police

copper, would elevate your physical safety above his or her own?

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IF a police officer challenged a drug-affected gunman

roaming your neighbourhood, you'd be pretty grateful. And your gratitude would be justified, because what other

stranger, besides a copper, would elevate your physical safety above his or her own? Probably no one. The problem is that while police willingly accept their duty

to prioritise public welfare above their own, they often suffer serious bodily injuries in the process. And I think of cops such as Senior Constable Brett

Gibbons, who suffered a horrific shotgun blast to his face

at the scene of the Hectorville triple murder in 2011.

Before that there was Senior Constable Alison Coad, who contracted painful oral herpes after a violent female offender spat directly into her mouth in 2003.

who ended up with burnt lungs. Brian now struggles with his breathing. Brett has undergone four operations since he was shot, and will

These officers would much prefer these incidents had never happened, but they never whinge about the fact that

What has sparked their ire, however, is the Weatherill Government's new return-to-work legislation, which effectively penalises rather than supports injured police.

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The Return to Work Act, which kicked in on July 1 this year, imposes strict new caps on compensation payments

injured police will be on their own, footing medical bills themselves.

But what is clear on reading the Act is that it reflects a total lack of understanding of the profession. It doesn't even attempt to deliver support for psychological injury.

dollars. Alison Coad will never be free of the oral herpes she contracted. She'll need medication for life and, from 2018,

will have to pay for it herself.

such as emphysema? He could well have to pay for his own medication and items such as an oxygen tank.

brought this return-to-work regimen into being was a gross error. Family First MLC Robert Brokenshire agrees. He calls the

Mr Brokenshire, with the support of his party, has tabled the Police (Return to Work) Amendment Bill in the Upper House. It seeks to amend the Police Act in a way that restores the benefits injured police were entitled to under the Workers Rehabilitation and Compensation Act.

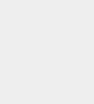
want to see police officers hesitating to respond to incidents because they feared on-duty injuries could ruin them. Police are relying on the public to encourage their local members to pass the Bill.

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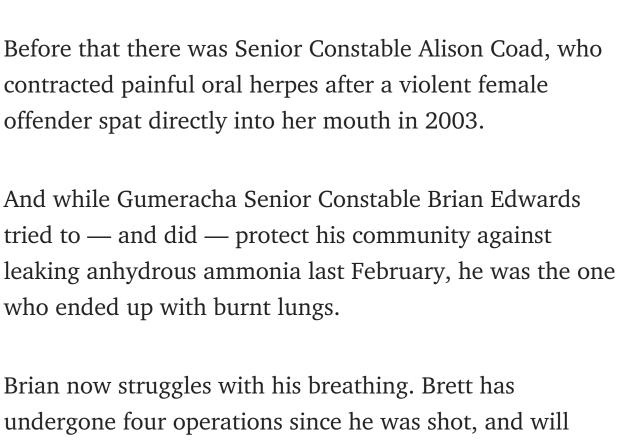


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need more. Alison suffers outbreaks of lesions on her hard palate every six to eight weeks and will for life. they did. They think of them simply as part of the job.

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for suffering workers such as Brian, Brett and Alison.

A two-year cap now applies to income maintenance and a

three-year cap to medical expenses. After that, our selfless

The only way an injured copper can get any financial compensation beyond those cut-offs is if he or she has been determined to have a 30 per cent "whole-person impairment". The Act defines that as a "seriously injured worker".

As for physical suffering, Brett Gibbons, with all his injuries and future medical needs, won't necessarily be determined to be 30 per cent impaired. And his future medical costs could rise into the hundreds of thousands of

And what if Brian Edwards ends up with a lung disease So, despite all our injured police officers have risked and

suffered to keep the rest of us safe, the SA Parliament has

seen fit to abandon them. Passing the legislation that

legislation "draconian, detrimental and unfair", and insists Parliament got it wrong. But that same Parliament can correct its error by endorsing new legislation.

Passing this Bill is critical — and not just because it will deliver a fair outcome for deserving police. The entire community stands to gain from the confidence it will give frontline police in their decision-making. No one would

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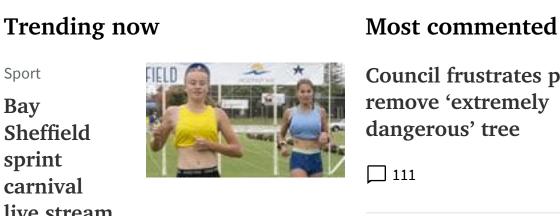
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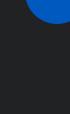
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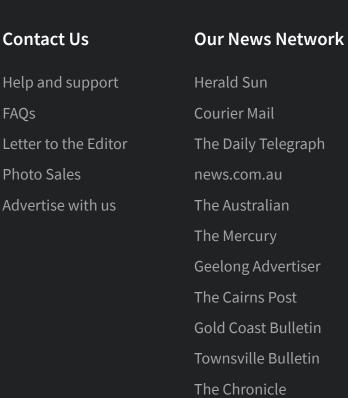




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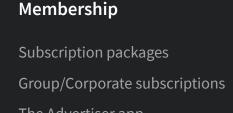


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