

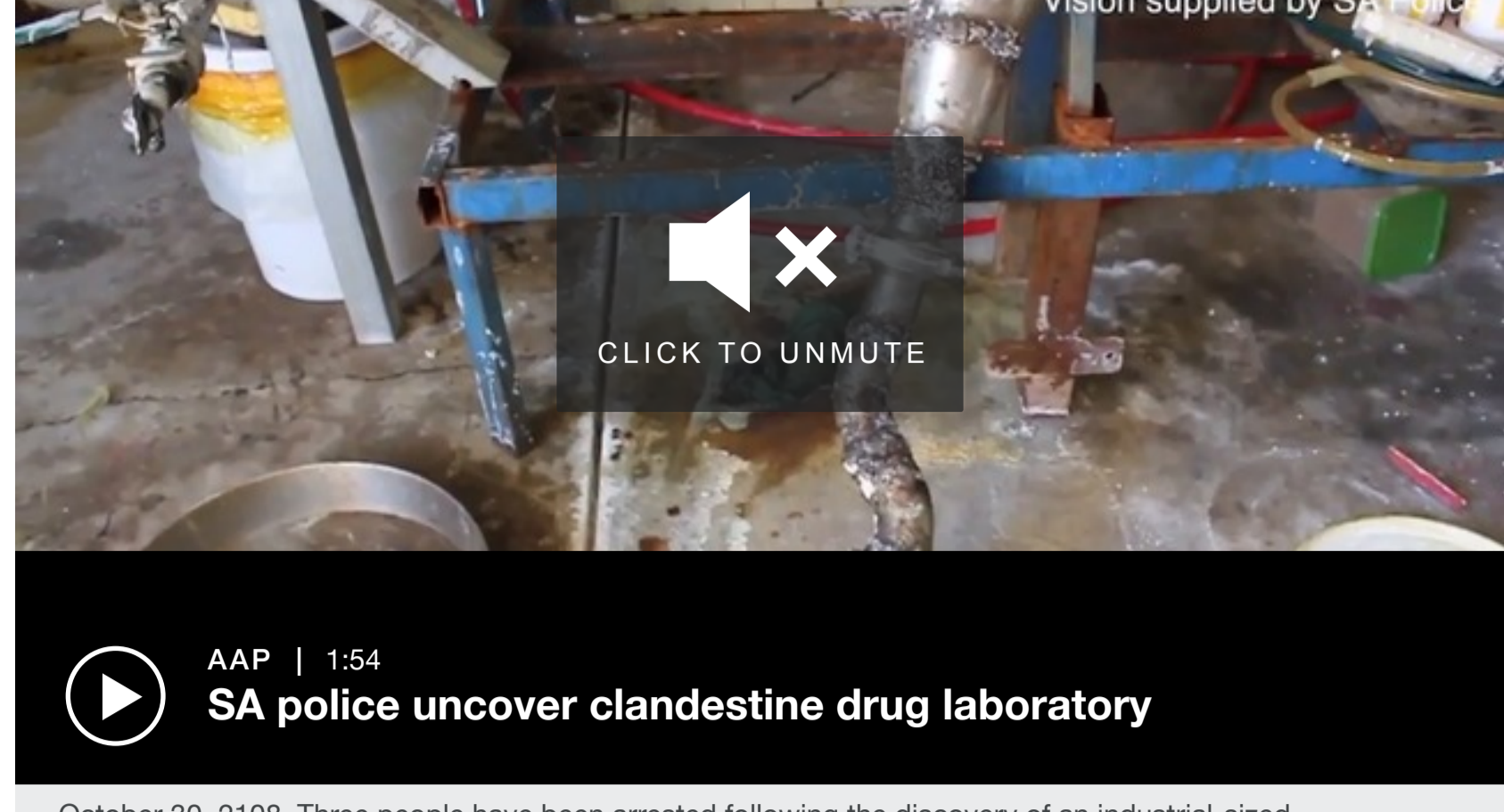
News > Opinion

Mark Carroll: All too frequently our members are subjected to 'coward punches'

When I was a kid growing up in Clovelly Park, the appearance of a police car in the neighbourhood was welcomed. Sadly, some four decades later, respect for police has diminished and, in some instances, the law has let down officers assaulted while on duty, Mark Carroll writes.

SA Police Association President
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8 comments



October 30, 2108. Three people have been arrested following the discovery of an industrial-sized Methamphetamine clandestine laboratory at a property at Croydon, South Australia. (AAP Video/SA Police)

- [Police demand tougher penalties to stop violence against officers](#)

When I was a kid growing up in Clovelly Park, the appearance of a police car in the neighbourhood was welcomed.

Despite the fact Dad was a copper, back then my mates and I thought police were sacrosanct. And like us, everyone respected the role police played in the community.

Equally, back then the law stood firmly behind our police.

Sadly, some four decades later, both of these factors have changed. Respect for police has diminished and, in some instances, the law has let down officers assaulted while on duty. Many will be surprised to learn that in 2016 and 2017 there were 1484 reported assaults against police.

Times have changed. Over the last few decades, the professionalism of policing has escalated dramatically. The police officer of 2019 is highly trained, highly skilled and highly regulated. There are procedures, policies and strict codes of behaviour all designed to protect the public and the individual police officer.

Anyone who assaults a police officer acting in the course of his/her duty can be prosecuted under the Criminal Law Consolidation Act 1935.

The accused can face between three to five years in jail, depending on whether a weapon is involved. Alternatively, an assault against a police officer may be prosecuted under the Summary Offences Act 1953.

Police are the front line – and the last line. Our police officers hold the line between civilisation and anarchy.

I suspect law-abiding members of our community would be gobsmacked to learn of the many and varied ways police officers are subject to violence. All too frequently our members are subjected to "coward punches", doused in petrol, struck with iron bars, stabbed with scissors and knives and deliberately driven at.

While it's a comfort that most of our dealings with the public are comparatively benign, occasionally they can be life-threatening or at worst, fatal.

If we are assaulted while discharging our duty, we need to be confident the law will support us.

Send us into harm's way to protect the community, we'll go. That's what we promised to do. But, please, back us up. The job is hard enough.

Mark Carroll is president of the SA Police Association



Police Association of SA (PASA) President Mark Carroll with Senior Constables Tash Smith and Paul Jelfs. Picture: AAP / Brenton Edwards

An offence of this nature attracts a lesser penalty of a maximum of two years jail and/or a fine of \$10,000. Further down the scale, a person who hinders or resists a police officer can be fined \$2500 and/or jailed for up to six months.

Even so, the penalties actually imposed are scarcely commensurate with the transgressions. In one notable instance recently, the judge accepted the gravity of an assault against an officer, lambasted the accused then let him off with a suspended sentence/good behaviour bond.

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