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MEDIA RELEASE

Protecting Council officers in the line of duty

Local Government Professionals (LGPro), the professional member association for officers working in Local Government in Victoria, is disappointed that its campaign calling for more protection for authorised Council officers carrying out their duties has not been supported by the Victorian Attorney General, Martin Pakula.

LGPro wrote to the Attorney General, the Sentencing Advisory Council and the Minister for Local Government expressing concerns about the increase in the number of Council officers being assaulted in the line of duty and seeking the same statutory minimum sentences for offences involving attacks on emergency workers and custodial officers in Victoria

In his written response, Mr Pakula said the intent of the government reforms was to confer greater protection on those who the community relied on to respond to emergencies and to directly manage Victoria's prisoners. The categories of officers included in the legislation are very specific, and the Government does not have plans to extend these statutory minimum provisions, he said.

LGPro President, Rebecca McKenzie said the Attorney General's response was "extremely disappointing and somewhat surprising" due to the increasing number of assaults being reported on Council officers simply carrying out their jobs. Officers from Whitehorse and South Gippsland Councils have sustained serious injuries while carrying out their duties.

Ms McKenzie said the current sentences handed out to perpetrators of assaults on authorised Council officers is inadequate and does not take into account the trauma caused to the individual and their family and the impacts and costs imposed on their colleagues and employer.

"It is sad but true that our officers working in the areas of domestic animal control, parking, food regulation enforcement, public health and wellbeing, planning and environment enforcement and regulation, tobacco control, building regulation and local laws are frequently subject to abuse and sometimes assault while carrying out legitimate duties, including enforcement of State legislation," she said.

"We believe that when a person assaults a Local Government authorised officer while in the execution of their duties, they should be subject to the same mandatory sentencing arrangements as those people who assault police, emergency workers, hospital staff and fire fighters and we will maintain our campaign to protect them," she said.

LGPro will continue to lobby the Minister for Local Government and Attorney General on this issue.

For further information on this release contact LGPro CEO David Preiss on 9268 6400 or 0413 275 031.