



Libs talking tough in battle on crime

DAMIEN BROWN

SPITTING on a police officer, someone from an emergency service, or a doctor or nurse may land Tasmanians behind bars for six months under a plan to get tough on crime announced by the Liberals yesterday.

Also, electronic tracking bracelets will be attached to Tasmanians convicted of non-violent offences and they will be sentenced to home detention.

Race-hate crimes and serious assaults on disabled Tasmanians may also be punishable by jail.

Under the policy launched yesterday by Liberal leader Will Hodgman and his team, anyone over the age of 17 convicted of physically injuring a police officer, emergency service worker or a health worker will be thrown behind bars for a minimum of six months.

The assault must result in actual bodily harm, which will be defined in a set of new guidelines to be developed by the Liberals if they win the March 20 election.

The guidelines will set out what "bodily harm" would constitute to bring mandatory sentencing.

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Yes this is a bold plan, yes it is tough but we make no apology that this may not be popular

WILL HODGMAN

yes it is tough but we make no apology for the fact that this may not be popular in some sectors of the community," Mr Hodgman said.

"They [emergency service workers] spend their day making us feel safe and we owe it to them to feel the same."

With assaults on police officers steadily increasing from 867 in 2004 to 1113 in 2009, the mandatory sentencing laws would also apply to volunteer fire officers, SES workers, hospital staff, child protection, community corrections and youth justice workers.

The policy also proposes to make all convicted sex offenders undergo a rehabilitation program before they are paroled.

The Liberals also have

committed to the Labor policy of establishing a Sentencing Advisory Council and setting up a Charter of Victims' Rights.

People who are convicted of criminal activity may also have their bank accounts drained in an effort to ensure future criminal activities cannot be funded.

The Liberals have committed to reviewing the role of justices of the peace, Safe At Home legislation and the Monetary Penalties Enforcement Service.

Police Association of Tasmania president Sergeant Randolph Wierenga welcomed the announcement of the proposed new measures, saying it would make the job safer.

Attorney-General Lara Giddings said Mr Hodgman had made highly conflicting statements within a matter of weeks.

"Mr Hodgman was reported on January 29 as saying he was unsupportive of minimum penalties as such legislation impacted on judicial discretion," she said.

"But now he comes out singing a completely different tune, saying he supported minimum penalties."



HARD LINE: Will Hodgman, left, with Franklin candidate Tony Mulder, spells out his plan to tackle crime. Picture: SAM ROSEWARNE