

# CCTV to keep kids from harm

**TIM WILLIAMS**  
EDUCATION REPORTER

ALL vehicles used by a government service to transport special needs children are being fitted with security cameras and GPS devices as child protection measures.

But the State Government has not committed to mandating that a second adult be present for every trip to guard against abuse.

The peak body for school

governing councils, the SA Association of State School Organisations, lobbied for both changes.

SAASSO has welcomed CCTVs, but says the Government's reliance on criminal checks has failed to stop children being abused in the past, making it imperative they are never left travelling with a driver only.

Director David Knuckey said the technology upgrades were "excellent news", but he

was disappointed the Government had not responded to a request for school or health support workers to accompany vulnerable children in addition to drivers.

"Cameras may discourage assaults and could assist authorities in catching and prosecuting predators, thereby protecting future victims," Mr Knuckey told *The Advertiser* yesterday. "However, a trained (support worker) would directly protect children.

"The case last year where a driver assaulted a vulnerable child would not have happened if there had been a witness present.

"The (support worker) would also provide support for drivers not trained to deal with the special medical, safety and behavioural needs of special needs children."

In August, a driver from a hire car company contracted by Families SA was charged with raping a teenage girl in

state care while driving her to her care home.

The following month, SAASSO president Gino Amato wrote to then Education Minister Jennifer Rankine with their safety proposals.

The organisation has now published Ms Rankine's December response, in which she said a new panel of transport providers would be in place at the start of this year.

They would be required to have the technology upgrades

"installed and activated as soon as possible after the allocation of a school transport run," she wrote.

Education Department director of special education Mike Dillon yesterday said there were no plans to require a second adult for transporting special needs children, either in taxis or buses.

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## Asthma fix may be risk

A POTENT mix of asthma treatments being prescribed by doctors may be putting young lives at risk, experts say.

"We are concerned that combination therapy has become almost first-line preventer therapy," Peter van Asperen, one of the authors of a report on child asthma deaths published in the *Medical Journal of Australia*, said yesterday.

He argues that doctors are not following guidelines in the Australian Asthma Handbook, which does not recommend the use of long acting beta-agonist for children five years and under because of a lack of evidence in that age group.

## Man on city rape charge

A MAN has appeared in the Adelaide Magistrates Court charged with rape inside a licensed premises in the city on Sunday morning.

Police said they arrested and charged a Glenside man, 23, with engaging in sexual intercourse without consent. He allegedly sexually assaulted the victim inside a licensed premises just after 2am.

He was refused police bail.

In a separate incident, Special Crimes Investigation Branch detectives yesterday arrested a Wallaroo man, 29, for aggravated persistent exploitation of a child.

# Wombats' fate in limbo as sanctuary to close



GOING: Wombat Awareness Organisation founding director Brigitte Steven with wombats at her sanctuary near Murray Bridge. Picture: CALUM ROBERTSON

**DAVID NANKERVIS**

WOMBATS are the love of Brigitte Steven's life but she faces the heart tearing prospect of having to put down 40 of the State's fauna emblem if she can't find a new home for them.

The lease on her wombat sanctuary near Murray Bridge

– which is home to wombats who were orphaned or injured in the wild – runs out in April and Ms Stevens doesn't have the money for a new property.

"We had a peppercorn rent but the owners now want a normal rent which we just can't afford," Ms Stevens, the director of the Wombat

Awareness Organisation, said.

"The wombats could go to a zoo or be given away as pets but that would be cruel and I think it would be better to put them down rather than put them in a cage."

To avoid these outcomes she is appealing for public help or the generosity of a land owner to

come to the animals' rescue.

She said releasing the marsupials into the wild was also not an option as they would be chased away by other wombats – which are very territorial – or fail to find a suitable habitat.

The sanctuary receives no government support and Ms Stevens has exhausted her sav-

ings in running the organisation.

And in a cruel twist of fate, the organisation was bequeathed \$8 million in 2011 by an American but whose family has contested the will in court.

Ultimately, the organisation needs funds to rent an 8 hectares property where it can establish a new sanctuary.



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