South Australian police defend fatal shooting of 63-year-old woman amid unanswered questions

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More than a week after South Australian police shot dead a 63-year-old woman outside her own home in Adelaide, fundamental questions surrounding the disturbing incident remain unanswered.

Yet the killing has largely disappeared from the corporate media, the state Labor government has offered no substantial explanation, and senior police officials have publicly defended the officers involved before the completion of an investigation being conducted by the police themselves.

Whatever the precise circumstances of the shooting, it is the latest in a succession of fatal encounters involving South Australian police, amid a major expansion of police numbers and powers under the state Labor government and a wider law-and-order offensive by governments across Australia.

Ming Chhuop Allen was killed in the early hours of October 29, after police were called to her residence on Gwynne Street in the eastern Adelaide suburb of Firle. According to media reports, she had been attempting to force entry into her own home with an axe.

Why Allen was attempting to enter the property in this manner remains unexplained.

According to South Australia Police (SAPOL), officers confronted Allen and ordered her to drop the axe. Police claim that she refused, that a Taser was deployed unsuccessfully and that she struck an officer in the leg with the axe, causing minor bruising. An officer then fired two shots, killing her.

This account has not been independently substantiated. Little has been revealed about how the confrontation developed, the distance between Allen and the officers, what attempts were made to defuse the situation or why the officers did not withdraw to a safe distance. Nor has any explanation been provided of why the encounter had to end with Allen being shot dead.

Neighbours described Allen as a peaceful and unassuming woman.

One told the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) that Allen was "well known in Gwynne Street to have been lovely and always asking how people are."

"There's never been any sign of any aggression or anything like that," the neighbour said.

Another described Allen as reserved and peaceful: "She, I think, lived quite a reserved life. All I saw her doing really was gardening ... so it's very shocking to me, she seemed like quite a peaceful person."

Rather than providing answers, Acting Police Commissioner Linda Williams immediately defended the officers, declaring herself "very comfortable" with how they had responded.

Williams claimed to have reviewed body-camera footage of the incident, but it has not been released. Despite the lack of any independently verified account of what occurred, she declared herself satisfied with the officers' conduct.

All three officers have since returned to operational duties, even though the investigation remains incomplete.

The brazen character of the police response has drawn criticism from a former senior police oversight official.

In a November 2 article published by *InDaily*, former Acting Police Ombudsman Michael Grant challenged the credibility of the investigation, writing: "But we already know the result prior to the investigation and the preparation of the report."

Grant called for independent oversight of police shootings. His intervention underscores the extraordinary character of the police leadership's actions.

The investigation is being conducted within the very force whose leadership has already pronounced the

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officers' conduct appropriate. Its conclusion has effectively been laid down before the investigators have completed their work.

A Commissioner's Inquiry will examine whether police procedures were followed, while a report will be prepared for the coroner. But the fundamental issue is not simply whether officers complied with established procedures. It is how a 63-year-old woman, reportedly attempting to enter her own home, came to be shot dead by armed police.

The combination of an internal investigation, the premature endorsement of the officers and the withholding of crucial evidence from public scrutiny points to a police cover-up.

The South Australian Labor government of Premier Peter Malinauskas, returned to office in March, has presided over several fatal police encounters in less than two years.

• In January 2025, officers shot dead a 40-year-old man at Craigburn Farm, in Adelaide's south, after his girlfriend sought help because he was harming himself.

• In June that year, Gaurav Kundi, a 42-year-old Indian-origin father of two, died after becoming unresponsive during a police arrest in Adelaide's eastern suburbs.

• This July, Kunmanara Ingkatji, a 23-year-old Aboriginal man, died after officers restrained and handcuffed him in central Adelaide.

These deaths have occurred amid a major expansion of police numbers and powers under the Labor government.

Labor has championed a "tough on crime" agenda, boasting that its knife-law reforms would be the toughest in the country and expanding police powers to search people at shopping centres and transport hubs.

Its 2025–26 budget announced what the government called the largest boost to police funding in the state's history, including $172 million over six years to expand the force towards a record 5,000 sworn officers.

The succession of deaths in South Australia is part of a wider national pattern of fatal police encounters. The Australian Institute of Criminology recorded nine fatal police shootings nationally in 2024–25.

Across the country, Labor and Liberal-National governments are strengthening the police apparatus under the banner of public safety. In October, for example, the New South Wales Labor government made expanded police knife-scanning powers permanent.

At the same time, armed police are routinely dispatched to deal with people in distress, including those experiencing mental health crises, personal emergencies and other situations requiring care and assistance rather than coercion.

There is no evidence that Allen was experiencing a mental health crisis. Nevertheless, her death raises the broader issue of how encounters involving vulnerable or distressed people can escalate into deadly police confrontations.

The Craigburn Farm shooting, for example, followed a call for assistance because a man was harming himself. Instead of receiving the help he needed, he was shot dead by police.

The growing reliance on armed police to respond to such situations is inseparable from decades of cuts and underfunding of mental health and social services by successive Labor and Liberal-National governments.

In South Australia, a 2023 study identified more than 19,000 people with severe mental illness who were going without community-based psychosocial support, including rehabilitation and assistance with daily living. It estimated that closing the gap would require $125 million annually.

According to the Mental Health Coalition of South Australia, Labor's June 2026 budget provided nothing towards that identified funding requirement, three years after the report's release.

The dangers associated with police responses to mental illness have been documented over many years. In 2018, the coronial inquest into the police killing of Courtney Topic heard that nearly 42 percent of those fatally shot by police in Australia between 1989 and 2011 had been identified as having a mental illness.

The contrast is stark. While thousands of people with severe mental illness are denied essential support, the Labor government is pouring additional resources into the police and granting them greater powers.

This is not simply a matter of misplaced budget priorities. The expansion of the police apparatus is part of a broader law-and-order offensive by Labor and Liberal-National governments, directed at strengthening the repressive powers of the state amid deepening social inequality and mounting social tensions.

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