

PENALTIES FOR DRINK-DRIVERS

YOUR RISK | With the lowest fines in the country, no demerit points and no disqualification to deter lower level drink-driving, you are at risk on NT roads.

The current NT penalty system for drink-drivers is not an effective deterrent:

- Fines for 0.05-0.08 blood alcohol level drink-driving offences are low. The infringement penalty of \$100 is the country's lowest.
- The NT is the only place where repeat offenders for 0.05-0.08 alcohol offences are not automatically disqualified from driving.
- In addition to the low level of fines and lack of licence loss for repeat offenders, there is no demerit points penalty (*NT Report, page 17*).

Research shows that driver behaviour is influenced by the risk of being caught (drink-driving), and significant penalties (*NT Report, page 57*). A dedicated and highly visible Traffic Section and Highway Patrol would provide greater policing of drink-driving across the NT, both in detection and as a deterrent.

What should change

The NT Report says that the penalties must increase to deter drink-drivers.

- Penalties for exceeding zero (eg taxi drivers) or 0.05 BAC should be increased from \$100 to \$200.
- The driver's licence should be immediately suspended for three months for a second exceed zero or 0.05 BAC offence and six months for any subsequent offence within three years.
- As recommended in the 2003 O'Sullivan Report, *An Assessment of Resource Requirements of the Northern Territory Police Force*, dedicated Traffic Sections should be implemented as soon as possible in 2006-07.
- Create a community information campaign on changes to drink-driving laws.

BREATH AND BLOOD SAMPLES FROM DRINK-DRIVERS

YOUR RISK | Current limitations on taking breath and blood samples mean that drink-drivers can avoid being caught in the NT.

There are limitations on taking breath and blood samples in the NT. Unless hospitalised, breath or blood tests must take place within two hours of an incident. This is complicated by the remoteness of many Territory towns and the NT Police's priority of ensuring people involved in crashes receive medical treatment if needed.

What should change

- Increasing the time limit for taking breath or blood tests from two to four hours and authorising a wider group of medical professionals (registered nurses or qualified people) to take blood samples in places other than hospitals, will help overcome issues with timeliness of testing in remote areas (*NT Report, pages 18 - 19*).