

NEXT SUNDAY ONLY - A SCRATCHIE IN EVERY PAPER

\$25,000 CASH UP FOR GRABS

PUB: SDT

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Tough laws in 2012

Emily Moulton

DRINK-DRIVERS, drug manufacturers and domestic violence offenders will face harsher penalties this year as a raft of legislation comes into effect.

Any motorist caught with a blood-alcohol limit above 0.08 will lose their licence at the roadside as part of changes to the Road Traffic Act.

Police will also have the power to issue an immediate licence disqualification notice to anyone who refuses a breath or blood test.

Adults who manufacture, cultivate or prepare illicit drugs that cause harm to a child will face a mandatory minimum jail term of 12 months.

The harsher penalty is part of the Misuse of Drugs Amendment Bill 2011 that will also take away magistrates' power to issue fines, community-based orders or intensive-supervision orders for drug offences involving children.

WA families will also be met with increased water charges from today.

Opposition Leader Eric Ripper said the price rise spelt further bad news for WA families who had already been slugged more for electricity and water.

"The average Perth household will face increases of approximately 25 per cent as another round of savage increases comes into effect, with the cost of water for the first 150 kilolitres increasing from 98.2c a kilolitre to \$1.19, while the next 200 kilolitres will increase from \$1.23 to \$1.53 per kilolitre," Mr Ripper said.

Domestic violence offenders who repeatedly breach restraining orders will face automatic imprisonment. The offence will be considered a "serious offence" under the Criminal Investigations Act 2006.

Record crowds

Yasmine Phillips
Katie Robertson

THE Perth Cup could become a regular fixture on the city's New Year's Eve calendar after record crowds flocked to celebrate WA's biggest race day yesterday.

A sea of 21,000 made their way through the gates of Ascot Racecourse from 8am yesterday, up from 18,182 last year.

The popular event, which is usually held on New Year's Day, was moved to December 31 after organisers "identified a hole" in events on New Year's Eve, and also to coincide with other races across the country.

Perth Racing spokesman Jamie Chadwick said the "change of date had been very positive", saying future Perth Cup events could also be held on December 31.

"Pre-sale tickets online tracked very well and were comparative to this time last year," he said.

"Generally people have been receptive to the idea, with some suggesting that the day before may be easier to manage than the day after."

Punters were expected to gamble about \$2 million yesterday, while the crowds peaked just after 3pm, when only minor incidents, such as blisters, kept first-aid officers busy.

This week, WA Police Union president Russell Armstrong said letting people start drinking at 10am and then expecting them to leave the venue in a polite fashion at 7pm could be a "recipe for disaster".

But Mr Chadwick said the bar's opening hours had been approved by the relevant liquor licensing authorities.

Those who weren't at the track welcomed the New Year with backyard barbecues and parties, while families hit Perth Zoo for its end-of-year concert. Others packed popular night-spots after dark to usher in 2012.

In Sydney, fireworks over the harbour kept revellers spellbound as seven tonnes of pyrotechnics were primed to go off at 9pm and again at midnight.



Well-worn pitch: Jerome Simpson, 3, gets ready to take block for some bush cricket in Yalgoo. Picture: Daniel Wilkins

Pub stumps drawn early

NO crowds, no police patrolling the streets and no waiting for a cab - welcome to New Year's Eve in Yalgoo, where even the town's only pub didn't stay open until midnight last night.

Residents in the tiny central WA town, 600km northeast of Perth and with a population of 130, spent the last day of 2011 with a game of bush cricket, a few backyard barbecues and a quiet drink at the Yalgoo Hotel.

Other families went camping on the Moore River or headed to Geraldton to celebrate with family.

"About the only excitement up here is

a bushfire that's been burning since Monday," Yalgoo Hotel publican Mick Forster said last night. "That's the only reason I'm still open - to feed the fireys."

After a game of cricket, little Jerome Simpson said 2012 would mean going to kindy with the "big kids" in Yalgoo, while for 10-year-old Juan Hodder and his 12-year-old cousin Zac Simpson, it's the chance to spend the summer holidays going camping and playing with friends.

And with more than 50 per cent of Yalgoo's population being children, it's never hard to find someone to play with.

"The children are gorgeous, they have so much character," Centacare indigenous children's program co-ordinator Ruth Burmeister, who works with local families, said.

"Each child has their own strong individual personality. I feel very lucky to work here and do what I do."

"Yalgoo isn't a town without its problems - the issues that are prevalent everywhere are here, somewhat, as well. But I think that everyone in Yalgoo has got something to contribute to the town."

Yasmine Phillips

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