**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 hit 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 hit by a raft of savage increases last year that peaked just after 3pm, when only minor incidents, such as blisters, kept first-aid officers busy."

"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 police said they expected them to leave the venue in a "polite fashion at 7pm could be a recipe for disaster."

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 flocked to celebrate WA's biggest race day yesterday.

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

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.

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