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'It is bad for road safety': Drink-driving changes put under the microscope

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Possible changes to the way low-range NSW drink drivers are penalised has got lawyer John Sutton worried.

The proposed change will shift punishment away from sending the accused to court. Instead, on-the-spot fines will be issued. Although nothing has been finalised, it is thought first-time offenders found with blood-alcohol levels below a 0.1 reading, will not appear before a magistrate

John Sutton, managing partner at Armstrong Legal, says this is all too conducive to recidivism. Making a court appearance forces a drunk driver to realise that their conduct is unacceptable by community standards, according to the lawyer.

Recent figures seem to substantiate these claims. Victoria, where on-the-spot fines are also issued, has a 29 per cent re-offending rate. Meanwhile, the NSW court-orientated approach saw just an 8.1 per cent recidivism rate in 2015- 2016.

"(The proposed changes) makes it financially a far easier system to manage, because if people are paying tickets, they're not going to court," says Mr Sutton.

"But I'm driving this because it is bad for road safety."

"How does one see any justification to try and change this system and put it in a package of road safety measures? It makes no sense."

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'It is bad for road safety': drink-driving changes put under the microscope

12:33 OmnyStudio

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