

Road victim's dad furious at move to free courts of drink drivers



Sarah Frazer, whose father launched a road-safety campaign in her name after she was killed by a drink driver.

A father who started a national road safety organisation after his daughter was killed by a drunk driver has “grave concerns” for a NSW government plan to issue on-the-spot infringement notices to low-range drink drivers rather than send them to court.

Peter Frazer, who established Safer Roads and Highways (SARAH) after his 23-year-old daughter Sarah died in 2012, said: “The mere fact we’re in some respects reducing the severity of a criminal offence by talking about issuing fines sends absolutely the wrong message.”

The government announced late last year it planned to change state laws to reduce a court backlog, bringing the rules in line with Victoria as part of NSW’s Road Safety Plan 2021. Drivers with no prior convictions would not have to face court if caught with a blood alcohol reading between 0.05 and 0.1.

“That’s the first grave concern,” Mr Frazer said. “We’re not just talking about low-range drink driving.”

Lawyer John Sutton, managing partner at Armstrong Legal, has expressed concerns about the changes because Victoria has an reoffending rate of 29 per cent – three times that of NSW.

“It’s a powerful argument that if there’s a policy in Victoria which isn’t as effective as the policy that currently exists, why would we change it?” Mr Frazer said. “Sarah’s death was caused by someone else doing something terribly wrong. The bloke didn’t mean to do it,” he said, but the law needed to change the behaviour of people who got behind the wheel after drinking.

Mr Frazer said alcohol interlocks – devices that force drivers to give a breath test before their vehicles will start – should be extended to low-range drink drivers awaiting court.

A Transport for NSW spokesman said more than 50 per cent of low-range offenders were given a non-conviction order and did not lose their licence. “There is no intention of removing an offender’s option to have their offence determined in court. But this, and the expense of engaging a lawyer, will be up to the offender ... We will also be expanding the alcohol interlock program to apply to mid-range first offenders, as it currently does to high-range and repeat offenders.”