



Sgt Compton ... improvement

Run tragedy 'no freak accident'

Drivers good as Easter winds up

Police have praised Top End motorists for a change of heart which saw a dramatic drop in drink-drivers at Easter's end.

Police said the rate in drink-drivers ranged from a record 23 on Saturday night to four on Monday evening.

A total of 61 people were caught drink-driving during the Easter traffic campaign.

Accident investigation unit head Sergeant Spence Compton said Easter offences occurred in two parts.

Attitude

He said: "During the first part it was as though people developed a devil-may-care attitude. The second part has been different, (with) a marked reduction of detection of drink-drivers."

The unconfirmed highest breath-test was believed to be 0.22.

Police tested 5117 drivers.

Two were charged with dangerous speed.

The Easter toll period was to finish at midnight last night; there was yet to be an NT Easter road death.

Teen in car vandalism

A 16-year-old youth and his mates caused hundreds of dollars worth of damage to parked cars during a one-night crime spree, the Darwin juvenile court heard yesterday.

Craig Bradley Stokes was sentenced to seven days detention, fined \$500, and ordered to pay \$400 restitution for his part in the vandalism.

The court heard Stokes had been in custody since April 3.



Susan Pritchard (centre) with her late husband's parents arrives at court in Darwin yesterday ... seeking \$800 000 from Raceage

The smash in which four people were killed during the 1994 Cannonball Run was no freak accident, a Darwin court was told yesterday.

Darwin woman Susan Pritchard's husband Keith, 31, was one of four men killed when a Japanese Ferrari driver lost control and crashed into a checkpoint south of Alice Springs on May 24, 1994.

Mr Pritchard was an unpaid volunteer race marshal.

Mrs Pritchard, a mother of three, was last year awarded \$300 000 from the Confederation of Australian

Motor Sport which backed the event.

She also won the right to sue Raceage under the Federal Trade Practices Act.

Mrs Pritchard is now seeking \$800 000 from Raceage in a Federal Court hearing before Justice Mansfield.

Mrs Pritchard's counsel, Michael Maurice, QC, told the court yesterday the "hero" status of motor racing driver Allan Moffat had allowed the organisers not to disclose the speeds which would be used in the race.

Mr Maurice said the race organisers had not wanted to attract critical comment.

He said Mr Moffat was a motor racing legend and hero to weekend petrol heads.

He said this was exploited by organisers to secure the support of the NT Government, Transport and Works and police.

Mr Maurice said people would not have questioned the decisions of Mr Moffat. He said decisions which cut costs had led to unacceptable risks making the volunteers especially vulnerable.

Mr Maurice said if the proper procedures approved by the Confederation of Australian Motor Sports for the Cannonball Run had been used then Mr Pritchard and another race official would not have died.

Mr Maurice said Raceage used unnecessary "stop finishes" at control points which exposed people to danger. He said these caused obvious dangers with competitors coming down from high speeds and possibly misjudging their speed when bringing their car to a halt.

The hearing is continuing.

Anger as clergy tote guns

NEW YORK: Kentucky clergy fearful of armed robbers stealing the collection money will be able to carry concealed guns in church after lawmakers passed an amendment to the State weapons law.

Ministers and priests of rural churches lobbied them to carry concealed State legislators to allow

guns after the clergy was deliberately left out of a 1996 law allowing concealed weapons in Kentucky.

The amendment recently passed in the House by 76-9 and is expected to be signed into law by Governor Paul Patton tomorrow.

But some lawmakers and ministers are enraged by the move in the wake of the school killings in Arkansas.

State Democrat Kathy Stein said: "It's quite disturbing to me, right after the Jonesboro tragedy."



Four girls and a teacher were killed in a schoolyard ambush in Jonesboro last month.

Nancy Jo Kemper, a minister and director of the Kentucky Council of Churches, said: "How can we expect our children to learn guns will not solve problems if they see even ministers, who are supposed to be agents of peace, carrying weapons that can kill?"

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