

TAC discusses legislative proposals to combat drink driving  
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Members of the Transport Advisory Committee (TAC) today (June 30) discussed the Government's proposals on legislative amendments to further combat drink driving.

In March, the TAC discussed measures to combat drink driving and agreed that a three-pronged approach be taken, entailing tightening of legislation, strengthening of enforcement and enhancing education and publicity.

"It is encouraging that the random breath test legislation which came into effect on February 9 has created a strong deterrent effect," TAC chairman Ms Teresa Cheng said.

"The number of drink driving cases and traffic accidents involving drink driving have dropped by 37% and 65% respectively since random breath test operations began in February. We hope this will bring a fundamental change in the driving culture."

The TAC was pleased to note that the Government found it feasible to introduce a scale of penalties according to different levels of blood alcohol concentration.

"Under the Government's proposal, a three-tier system will be introduced, and a higher level of blood alcohol concentration found in a driver's body would lead to a longer disqualification period. According to some research results, drivers who consume alcohol have a much higher risk of involvement in crashes than those who don't consume alcohol, and the risk grows rapidly with increasing blood alcohol concentration," Ms Cheng said.

"We agree that a longer disqualification period will have a strong deterrent effect, and that the length of the minimum disqualification period for each level in the scale should

correspond with the level of excessive blood alcohol concentration," she said.

The TAC supported introducing a concept of "dangerous driving causing grievous bodily harm, noting that the Government's proposed penalties were set at a level between those for dangerous driving and dangerous driving causing death.

"We recognise that serious traffic accidents will cause great suffering to the victims and their families. We note that there are similar provisions in overseas jurisdictions, such as Australia."

The TAC also supported the Government's proposal that a blood alcohol concentration three times the prescribed limit (50 milligrams of alcohol per 100ml of blood) should be made a circumstance of aggravation in all dangerous driving offences.

"With specific penalties on these aspects, the seriousness of the accident and the responsibility of the drivers involved could be reflected more effectively," Ms Cheng said.

In addition to tougher legislation and enforcement, the TAC agreed that the Government should sustain its effort in enhancing education and publicity, which was the fundamental way to cultivate good driving behaviour.

The Government will consult various stakeholders on the proposals. The Transport Panel of the Legislative Council will discuss them on July 17.

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