Increased jail time for dangerous police pursuits

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A Northern Territory Coroner’s recommendation to increase the maximum jail time for anybody who forces police into a pursuit has been implemented after it passed through Parliament today.

People who speed or drive recklessly or dangerously when evading police will now face a maximum jail term of five years, significantly more than the two years under the replaced legislation.

The legislation will also apply when police call off a pursuit due to the safety of the public, themselves, and passengers in the vehicle, and the offender is located and arrested at a later time.

Attorney-General John Elferink said the harsher penalties will ensure that a person is met with the full force of the law when they refuse to comply with police instruction to stop a vehicle.

The Coroner’s recommendation was made last year following an incident in Alice Springs where two passengers were killed and two others seriously injured when the driver of a vehicle attempted to flee police.

The driver of the vehicle was travelling at speeds in excess of 170km/h, causing police to sensibly call off the pursuit and limit any danger to themselves and innocent bystanders.

Mr Elferink said police pursuits not only endanger the lives of the offenders, but also innocent passengers, bystanders and police.

“I will not tolerate innocent members of the public being put in grave danger because a person believes they can act foolishly and evade the police and the law,” Mr Elferink said.

“The Country Liberals Government is committed to securing the safety of Territorians and penalising those who purposely snub the law.”
Police recorded 95 incidents of traffic pursuits in the Northern Territory last financial year.

**Media Contact:** Danielle Lede 0404 515 414