

AUSTRALIA: Drunk evangelist Jason Hooper, escapes fine after crashing into a parked car

Written by Byron Shire News
Tuesday, 28 June 2011 00:00

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AN American evangelist preacher who crashed into a parked car at Macksville while drunk at the wheel has avoided a fine in court, angering police and road safety groups.

A magistrate has heard Jason Hooper, a member of the worldwide Morningstar Fellowship Church of South Carolina, got behind the wheel of his rented Holden Commodore after a heavy drinking session on June 19.

Intending to drive from Kempsey to Coffs Harbour during heavy rain and flooding, he crashed into a Hyundai on the side of the Pacific Highway at Macksville at 4pm.

Arrested at the scene, Hooper was breath analysed at Nambucca Heads Police Station where he returned a high-range blood alcohol reading of 0.206 – despite a zero alcohol limit imposed on holders of international drivers licences in NSW.

Court documents stated Hooper had earlier been drinking double shots of Scotch.

Facing a hefty fine and a possible custodial sentence in court, the travelling pastor has pleaded guilty, citing “stress” and “financial matters” as factors in his behaviour.

He was disqualified from driving on NSW roads for three years.

Chairman of the Pedestrian Council of Australia, Harold Scruby, said the sentence was a “joke”.

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“This is a serious offence, he should be sent straight back home (deported),” he said.

Hooper stated in court he didn’t normally drink and would seek counselling on his return to the United States.

He vowed to reimburse the owner of the other car, a local school teacher.

Hooper is currently on a working visa, undertaking an east coast church tour with Pour It Out Ministries.

This week he’s due to practice his up-tempo rock style of Christian preaching at the Revival Outpouring Conference in Canberra, but told the Daily Telegraph the driving conviction may impact on his tour.

Hooper plans to return to Australia for further tours in October and February.

News of his drunken exploits has since broken in his home country.

<http://www.byronnews.com.au/story/2011/06/28/an-american-evangelist-preacher-who-crashed-into-a/>