



FACTSHEET 12

ILLICIT DRUGS AND DRIVING

The use of illicit drugs is a risk factor for crash involvement and injury although the relationship is more complex than for alcohol. A study in South Australian regional and remote areas found that drug use was a contributing factor in 22.5% of crashes and cannabis was the most common drug¹. While no other research could be found on the incidence of drug driving related crashes in regional or remote areas, findings from the national wastewater drug monitoring program indicate that drug use is common in these areas². Countermeasures for drug driving include roadside oral fluid testing, behavioural programs and public education campaigns.

Implementation considerations

Roadside Oral Fluid Testing

Increased police resources and testing can lead to a greater number of detections and associated crash reductions. Limited resources, the cost of testing and large road networks can affect roadside drug testing programs in regional and remote areas.

Public Education Campaigns

High visibility enforcement combined with public education can increase drivers' perception that they will be caught if drug driving.

Behavioural Programs for Drug Driving Offenders

An important element for an effective program is building close partnerships with health and drug sectors to support, manage and treat substance dependent drivers.

It is important that offenders in regional and remote areas have access to such behavioural programs and that these programs are affordable and tailored to be culturally relevant for all offenders.

Effectiveness

Roadside Oral Fluid Testing

In 2015 Victoria increased the capacity of police in the detection of drug drivers. An evaluation of the program revealed the training resulted in substantially greater proportions of drug tests delivered by highway patrols and the heavy vehicle unit, and in rural areas. The evaluation also reported the increase in roadside drug tests had an estimated benefit cost ratio of 9 in road trauma savings.

Target road user groups

Vehicle Drivers and Motorcyclists

Target behaviour

Drug driving

¹Wundersitz, L., Edwards, S., and Thompson, J., 2021, Prevention and mitigation of fatal crashes in regional and remote areas, Adelaide: Centre for Automotive Safety Research.

²Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, 2021, National wastewater drug monitoring program - Report 13, Canberra, ACT:

³Newstead, S., Cameron, M., Thompson, L. and Clark, B., 2020, Evaluation of the roadside drug testing expansion and roadside alcohol testing enforcement programs in Victoria. Retrieved from https://www.monash.edu/_data/assets/pdf_file/0008/2564441/Evaluation-of-the-RDT-Program-and-RBT-in-Victoria-MUARC-Report-355_Updates.pdf Australian Criminal Intelligence Commission, Commonwealth of Australia.



Scan the QR code to access the full library of 21 factsheets.

