Drug driving problem

The map below shows where 195 people have died in 174 drug driving fatal crashes in the four-year period from 2010 to 2013.

These crashes involved a driver or rider with at least one of three illicit drugs (cannabis, speed or ecstasy) in their system.

Fatalities from these crashes make up about 13 per cent of the road toll.

The 174 crashes involved 140 drivers and 34 motorcycle riders with one of these illicit drugs found in their system.

Of the 140 drug drivers involved in fatal crashes, 20 were heavy truck drivers.

Other contributing factors in these crashes included illegal speeding, alcohol and fatigue.

Over the period from January 2010 to September 2013, there were about 3,900 drivers and riders convicted of drug driving offences on NSW roads.
Drug driving is a statewide issue. Most drug driving offences were in metropolitan areas (54.5 per cent), while about a third (33.3 per cent) of offences were in country areas. Interstate residents made up 5.2 per cent of driving under the influence and 13.4 per cent of presence of an illicit drug offence.

While most drug driving offences were on metropolitan roads, most fatal crashes involving a driver with the presence of an illicit drug (75 per cent) were on country roads.

This result is likely to be related to the greater consequences of being impaired while driving on higher speed country roads, meaning that high visibility enforcement and education is also critical in country areas.

While there are less drug driving offences in country areas, there is a slightly higher driving under the influence conviction rate for country residents (about 37 per cent of driving under the influence convictions, but with 28 per cent of licence holders), per head of population. This is a similar pattern to drink driving.

**Contributing factors for fatalities 2010 to 2013 – compared to fatalities involving a driver with an illicit drug present**

The above graph compares the percentage of fatalities involving a driver with an illicit drug present, to fatalities with a contributing factor of speed, fatigue, restraint non-usage and drink driving.
The above two charts illustrate the increase in the number and percentage of fatalities from crashes where there is a presence of an illicit drug. In 2013 this approached the levels for drink driving (about 16 per cent of all fatalities).
Over the period January 2010 to September 2013, there were almost 3,900 drivers and riders convicted of drug driving offences on NSW roads:

- 1,939 offences for driving under the influence for a range of drugs other than alcohol, whether illicit or prescribed drugs that are misused, including cannabis, analgesics (eg. opiates and cocaine), amphetamines (eg. speed and ecstasy), depressants (eg. benzodiazepines), and hallucinogenic drugs.

- 1,959 offences for driving with the presence of certain illicit drugs (cannabis, speed and ecstasy), and also cocaine and morphine (heroin).

**Drug-driving offences by offence type, 2008-2012**

Note: excludes offences registered for interstate/overseas and prison residents
Police roadside drug testing results

Police started testing for cannabis, speed and ecstasy on the roadside in 2007. Police have since conducted an average of 32,000 roadside tests annually. However, the roadside drug testing program is expanding incrementally and by the end of 2017 police will conduct about 100,000 tests a year.

Police roadside drug test operations, tests and positive readings

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>H/V Operations</th>
<th>H/V Tests</th>
<th>H/V Pos</th>
<th>Number of Positive tests as a Rate</th>
<th>L/V Operations</th>
<th>L/V Tests</th>
<th>L/V Pos</th>
<th>Number of Positive tests as a Rate</th>
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</tbody>
</table>

During 2013, roadside drug tests detected the presence of illicit drugs in the saliva of about one in every 40 light vehicle drivers and one in every 76 heavy vehicle drivers. However, roadside drug testing operations are becoming more targeted, and during 2014, as few as one in every 10 drivers were detected with the presence of illicit drugs in their saliva.

By comparison, for the period 2010-2013, police conducted about 4.8 million random breath tests each year and, on average, one in every 236 drivers tested returned a positive reading. During this same period, there was an average of 22,000 drink driving offences each year.

The approach to drink driving is significantly different. Drinking alcohol is much more common across the community and this high level of enforcement is combined with extensive public education (the Plan B campaign) to create a general deterrence approach.
Profile of drug driving

- More than 80 per cent of drivers detected for drug driving offences were male, and driver and rider fatalities with the presence of a drug were also more likely to be male (86 per cent).
- Drug driving most commonly involves males under 50 years of age, with drivers aged under 30 significantly over represented as drug driving offenders, as well as drug drivers involved in fatal crashes. Drivers aged 30 to 39 are also over represented as drug drivers.

Poly-drug use and driving

- There is consistent evidence that the crash risk is greatly increased when mixing drugs and alcohol, particularly for cannabis and opiates.
- It has been estimated that you are about:
  - 32 times more likely to be killed in a crash when using both drugs and alcohol.
  - 18 times more likely to be killed in a crash when using multiple drugs.