

Evaluation of the performance of Alcohol and Drug Awareness Courses currently provided in the ACT

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Abstract

This study evaluates the performance of Alcohol and Drug Awareness Courses (ADAC) provided in the Australian Capital Territory. The following were examined: key performance indicators on the provision of ADACs, their efficacy in changing the attitudes and knowledge of attendees, and their effect on drink driving rates in the ACT. Completion rates for individuals enrolled in the courses have been increasing. Surveys of attendees suggested that the courses improved their attitudes towards drink driving. Also, ADACs may have contributed to reductions in drink driving detections. Based on these findings, the ADAC program has been performing well since its inception.

Background

Driving while impaired by alcohol or other drugs is a significant road safety issue. In Australia, driving while impaired by alcohol is the leading contributing factor in around 30% of fatal crashes (Australian Transport Council, 2011). As of the 25 November 2011, drivers in the ACT who have been found guilty of a drink or drug driving offence are required to undertake an Alcohol and Drug Awareness Course (ADAC) before being issued with a restricted or probationary licence. The aim is to raise awareness about the effects of alcohol and drugs on driving and health, and to change the behaviour of offenders.

The present study evaluated the ADAC program in terms of: key performance indicators on the provision of the courses (e.g. attendance), their efficacy in changing the attitudes and knowledge of attendees, and their effect on drink driving detections in the ACT.

Method

Key performance indicators were obtained from ADAC providers for the period that the program has been running (December 2011–August 2017). Surveys were given to attendees immediately before and after the courses (June 2015–November 2017), with 244 individuals completing them. The purpose was to measure the baseline (pre-course) and post-course attitudes (e.g. there are no excuses for drink driving) and knowledge (e.g. what is the BAC limit for a fully licensed driver) towards drink and drug driving. Data on persons charged with drink driving (proxy measure for drink driving in general) in the ACT (2002–2016) were obtained from the ACT Justice and Community Safety Directorate Criminal Justice Statistical Profiles.

Results

Table 1 shows increases between 2012 and 2014 in: courses delivered (11.7%), participants enrolled (67.3%), attendance (73.8%), participants completed (51.5%), and the percentage of participants completed (8.9%). Despite declines between 2015 and 2016, these performance indicators remained higher in 2016 than in 2012.

Table 1. Key performance indicators for the ADAC courses (2012 to 2017)

	2012 ^a	2013	2014	2015	2016	2017 ^b	Total
Courses delivered	94	107	105	101	99	51	557
Participants enrolled	710	1001	1188	1189	1138	532	5758
Participants in attendance	634	934	1102	1093	988	445	5196
Participants completed course	596	901	1082	1073	970	441	5063
% completed (of total enrolled)	83.9	90.0	91.1	90.2	85.2	82.9	87.9

^a Includes December 2011, when ADAC commenced

^b Only includes January to June 2017

Mean correct responses to the 15 attitude survey items significantly increased from 11.1(*SD*=2.1) pre-course to 11.8(*SD*=2.3) post-course (paired samples t-test, $t(80)=3.7$; $p<0.001$). Mean correct responses to the knowledge items (out of 19) did not significantly differ (pre-course=13.1(*SD*=2.7), post-course=13.5(*SD*=2.5), paired samples t-test, $t(84)=1.5$; $p=0.130$).

In Figure 1, drink driving detections in the ACT decreased since 2011, when ADACs were introduced. This contrasts the projected increase since 2011 (based on 2002 to 2011 trends).

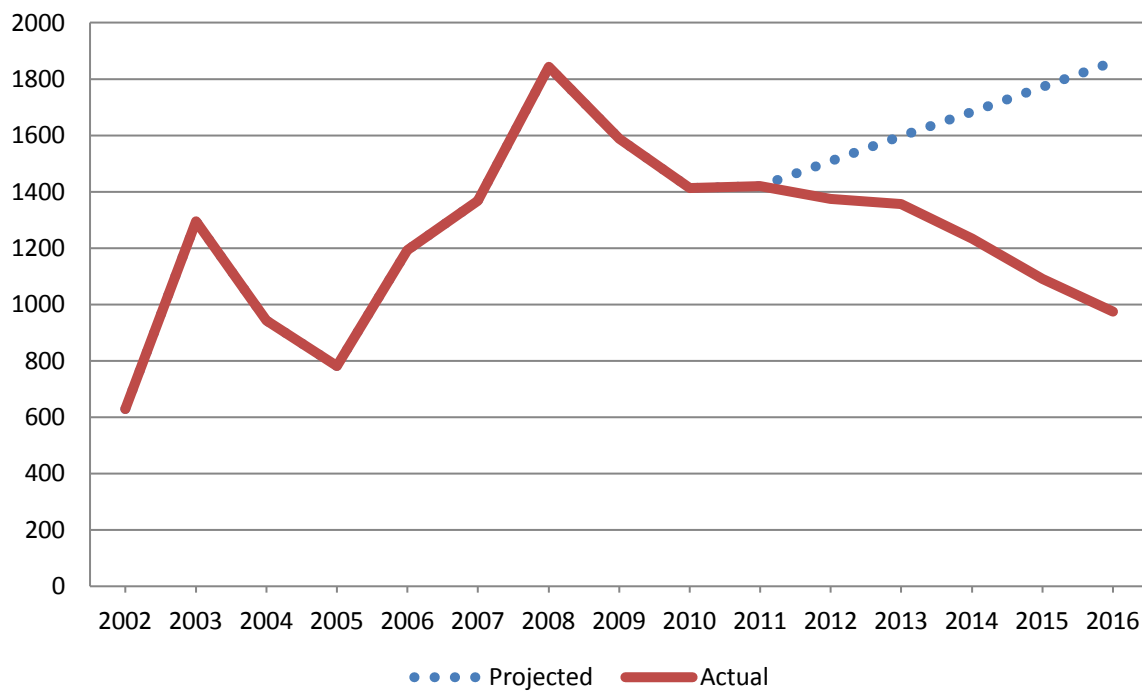


Figure 1. Actual compared to projected (based on 2002 to 2011 trends) drink driving detections in the ACT, 2002-2016

Conclusions

Course completion rates increased to 90% in 2013, 2014 and 2015. Attitudes of attendees towards drink driving improved following course completion. Knowledge of drink and drug driving information did not change, but this may result from high existing knowledge or survey limitations (questions may not have adequately reflected all information in the course). Also, ADACs may have contributed to reducing drink driving detections (and possibly overall drink driving behaviour) in the ACT. However, the reductions could be due to other factors, such as other drink driving countermeasures (e.g. the Alcohol Ignition Interlock Program that was introduced in the ACT in June 2014) or economic factors. Overall, these findings suggest that the ADAC program has been performing well since its inception.

References

Australian Transport Council. (2011). *National Road Safety Strategy 2011-2020*. Canberra: Australian Transport Safety Bureau.