

## DRIVER DRUG TESTING – A SOUTH AUSTRALIAN PERSPECTIVE

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### INTRODUCTION

Research shows that consumption of certain illegal drugs can negatively impact upon the driving task in a similar manner to alcohol impairment. There is significant evidence that many drivers killed or injured on our roads have drugs other than alcohol in their bodies at the time of the crash. South Australian statistics show that in 2005, 23% of driver and rider fatalities tested positive for Cannabis, methylamphetamine or a combination of these drugs[1].

In July 2006 South Australia proclaimed legislation which introduced a driver drug testing regime using oral fluid and blood to test for 3 ‘proscribed’ drugs:

- Methlyamphetamine (MA)
- Delta 9 THC (Cannabis)
- Methylenedioymethamphetamine (MDMA/Ecstasy).

### METHOD

The introduction of the legislation saw the South Australia Police (SAPOL) establish a full time driver drug testing group of 13 officers centrally located at its Traffic Support Branch at Ottoway.

The introduced regime established a 3 step process to determine the presence of a ‘proscribed’ drug. The process included:

- Screening test
- Oral fluid analysis or blood test
- Laboratory confirmation.

Equipment used to conduct a screening test was a Drugwipe Twin II manufactured by Securetec. Equipment to conduct an oral fluid analysis was a Cozart RapiScan manufactured by Cozart.

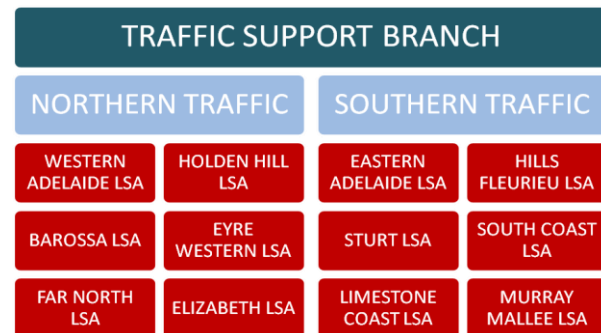
A total of 10,000 drivers were screened under this regime.

### EXPANSION

In 2007 the SA Government committed \$11.1 million dollars over 4 years for the expansion of the driver drug testing regime operating in South Australia.

The expansion of driver drug testing was primarily based on the use of 260 traffic enforcement section officers situated throughout the State to perform driver drug testing duties. The model moved away from the centralised model previously established in SAPOL and other jurisdictions in Australia where all operations are under the one command. This expansion enabled driver drug testing to be conducted in a similar fashion to random breath testing in that tests could be conducted in multiple locations at any one time and coordinated independently of each other. The trained officers have been independently testing drivers for drugs since April 2008.

*Table 1 – Structure of Traffic Enforcement in South Australia*



The expansion model retained the existing full-time Driver Drug Testing Group (centralised model) to supplement and support service level and corporate testing operations.

With an increase in the number of members trained to undertake driver drug testing there was a significant increase in the number of drivers being tested from the previous 10,000. There are now over 420 officers trained to screen drivers for drugs and over 250 officers are able to conduct an oral fluid analysis. SAPOL now screen over 40,000 drivers a year for drugs.

The rate at which South Australia screens drivers for drugs per 100,000 population (indicated in Figure 1) is 4 times greater than in other Australian jurisdictions.

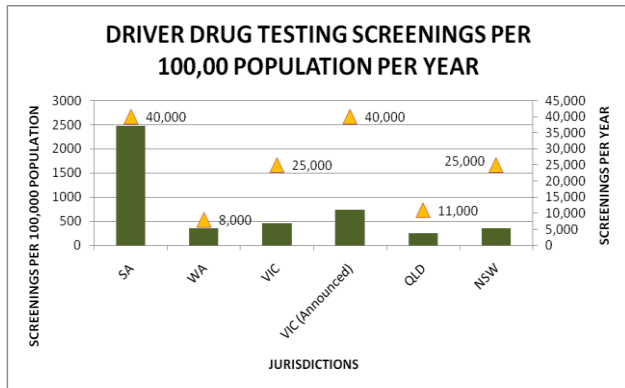


Figure 1 – Driver Screening in Australia per 100,000 Population

## RESULTS

Significant results have been achieved in South Australia since the expansion program began operating in 2008.

2008/2009 was the first full year of the expansion program with 39,510 drivers tested over the 12 month period. 888 drivers, or 1 in every 44 screened, was confirmed positive to one or more of the drugs being tested. Table 2 shows a break down of the 2008/2009 detections.

Table 2 South Australia Driver Drug Testing Results 2008/2009

<b>DRUG DRIVING 2008/2009</b>		
Drivers Screened for drugs (1/7/08 to 30/6/09)		<b>39,510</b>
Drivers confirmed positive to a prescribed drug	<b>MA</b>	305
	<b>THC</b>	278
	<b>MDMA</b>	29
	Drug combinations totalling 276 detections being:	
	<b>MA/THC</b>	190
	<b>THC/MDMA</b>	23
	<b>MA/MDMA</b>	31
<b>All drugs</b>		32
Total Drivers Reported for a drug driving offence		<b>888</b>
Drug Driving Detection Rate		<b>2.25%</b>

Rates of detection of particular drugs in comparison to the previous year showed a significant increase in the detection of cannabis by 11.3%.

2009/2010 was the second full year of the expansion program with 46,414 drivers tested over the 12 month period. 1,134 drivers, or 1 in every 41 screened, was confirmed positive to one or more of the drugs being tested. Table 3 shows a break down of the 2009/2010 detections.

Table 3 South Australia Driver Drug Testing Results 2009/2010

<b>DRUG DRIVING 2009/2010</b>		
Drivers Screened for drugs (1/7/09 to 30/6/10)		<b>46,414</b>
Drivers confirmed positive to a prescribed drug	<b>MA</b>	398
	<b>THC</b>	429
	<b>MDMA</b>	3
	Drug combinations totalling 304 detections being:	
	<b>MA/THC</b>	287
	<b>THC/MDMA</b>	6
	<b>MA/MDMA</b>	9
<b>All drugs</b>		2
Total Drivers Reported for a drug driving offence		<b>1,134</b>
Drug Driving Detection Rate		<b>2.44%</b>

The rate of detection increased by 0.19% during this financial year compared to the previous. The detection rate of cannabis exceeded the detection rate of methylamphetamine for the first time in a year. The very low detection rate of MDMA was significantly evident in the results.

## CONCLUSION

The driver drug testing regime now established in South Australia is helping to achieve goals set in the South Australia Police Road Safety Strategy 2006-2010 [2] and the SA Road Safety Action Plan 2008-2010 [3].

Legislative changes introduced in 2010 now see alcohol and drug driving offences interrelating for penalty with all second offenders being required to attend Court.

The results currently being achieved in South Australia are significant. The detection rates are amongst the highest in any Australian jurisdiction and the rates of detection of particular drugs are against national trends.

## REFERENCES

1. Road Crash Facts 2005 for South Australia, Department of Transport, Energy and Infrastructure, [http://www.transport.sa.gov.au/safety/road/road\\_use/roadcrash.asp](http://www.transport.sa.gov.au/safety/road/road_use/roadcrash.asp)
2. South Australia Police Road Safety Strategy 2006-2010, South Australia Police, [http://www.police.sa.gov.au/sapol/road\\_safety/road\\_safety\\_strategies.jsp](http://www.police.sa.gov.au/sapol/road_safety/road_safety_strategies.jsp)
3. The South Australian Road Safety Action Plan 2008-2010, Department of Transport, Energy and Infrastructure, <http://www.transport.sa.gov.au/safety/road/index.asp>