

Drug drivers 'need education campaign'

By Simon Lauder

Posted Mon Dec 31, 2007 10:35am AEDT

Updated Mon Dec 31, 2007 11:19am AEDT

As the New South Wales Government prepares for further rollouts of roadside testing for illegal drugs, calls are being made for an education campaign similar to the one about the dangers of drink-driving.

In a recent survey of 419 young people in Sydney nightclubs by the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, around 40 per cent said they had taken ecstasy before driving.

Thirty per cent had taken amphetamines before taking the wheel, while 72 per cent had been a passenger in a car with a drug-affected driver.

Researcher Paul Dillon says it is obviously a bad idea to drive under the influence of mind-altering drugs, but some drug users are not convinced it is as dangerous as drink-driving, because there is not as much evidence.

"It appeared that there was little knowledge, or little understanding, of the dangers associated with getting behind the wheel of a car with a range of illicit drugs, including ecstasy," he said.

"I suppose our great problem is that for alcohol the information around drinking and driving is quite clear. When it comes to other drugs, the evidence is not so clear-cut."

"I think the evidence we have still says [driving under the influence of drugs] is not a good idea.

"The whole idea of using any drug is to alter your perception, to make you feel a different way, and to change where you're at. The one place you don't want to change where you're at is behind the wheel of a car."

The results of the New South Wales Government-commissioned study have been released as the Police Minister announces a rollout of two more police trucks for roadside drug testing.

Mr Dillon says he has not heard of any plans for an accompanying education campaign that informs the public of the risks of driving while high.

"It really is extremely important that we combine the rollout with an education campaign that really gives better quality information to this culture, about the very real risks that they're taking part in," he said.

Of more than 5,500 drivers tested for illicit drugs in New South Wales this year, 156 returned a positive result.

New South Wales Police Minister David Campbell says that justifies extra resources for roadside tests, but he is not committing to a public awareness campaign.

"It is clear that people driving with these drugs in their system are causing part of the road toll, and that's why the



Roadside testing: A drug testing kit as used by police in Perth (ABC: Jonathan Beal)

Government has given the police the powers and the equipment to begin to do something about it," he said.

When asked why there is not an awareness campaign about illicit drug usage similar to the one for drink driving, Mr Campbell said the New South Wales Government had begun to address the issue by commissioning a study into drug use and risk among nightclubbers.

Tags: [road-accidents](#), [education](#), [drug-education](#), [government-and-politics](#), [states-and-territories](#), [law-crime-and-justice](#), [crime](#), [drug-offences](#), [australia](#), [nsw](#)



© 2010 ABC