



Still smashed?

The drink driving problem that needs to be solved.



Road Safety Series

November 2018



About the NRMA

The NRMA represents over 2.6 million Australians in NSW and the ACT, making it one of the largest tourism and transport companies in Australia. We provide motoring, transport and tourism services to our Members and the community.

We've been focused on better transport infrastructure since the beginning, when our founders lobbied for improvements to Sydney's Parramatta Road back in 1920. Independent advocacy is the foundation activity of our organisation, and remains critical to who we are as we approach our first centenary.

Road Safety Series

The NRMA has prepared a series of reports with the aim of identifying the main factors involved in road crashes and initiatives that may help to reduce the risk of loss of life and injuries.

We acknowledge the next major tool to prevent and reduce loss of life will be driven by technology, as was seen with seatbelts and random breath testing. While we move towards an autonomous future, continued investment in road infrastructure, vehicle technology and public education campaigns are needed to improve the safety of motorists on our roads.



Introduction

Drink driving is widely unacceptable in the community, yet it still remains one of the top three causes of fatalities and serious injuries on NSW roads. Last year 55 people lost their lives on NSW roads due to an alcohol related crash. This is simply not good enough.

The dangers of drink driving are well understood. Alcohol impairs a driver's ability to be in total control of their actions. For this reason, the 0.05 Blood Alcohol Limit (BAC) has been in place in NSW for almost 38 years. Yet every day drivers are still being caught over the limit.

Through the enforcement efforts of police, combined with successful education campaigns we have made real inroads in reducing the trauma associated with drink drinking. Back in 1982, 40% of fatalities were alcohol related. Today, this figure has been reduced to 15% in 2017.

The NRMA believes that we need to constantly look for new ways to tackle drink driving. With drink driving fatalities heavily skewed in country NSW, we need increased police enforcement, the latest technology to stop drink drivers in their tracks, and provide alternative transport options for rural communities.

What the NRMA wants

- 1.** Recruit an additional 200 Highway Patrol Officers to help deter drink driving, especially in regional NSW.
- 2.** Trial alco-gates in high risk drink driving environments such as major events to help reduce drink driving.
- 3.** Provide funding for the development of education campaigns that highlight the dangers of driving over the limit the next day.
- 4.** Ensure all major regional events include an alternative transport plan so patrons can get home safely. This includes trialling on-demand and point-to-point transport options with community and private transport operators.
- 5.** Investigate alternative funding models to provide transport options to help prevent drink driving in rural communities.
- 6.** Encourage alcohol interlock uptake in fleet vehicles.

The dangers of being over the limit

1 in 7 **55**

Drink driving is a factor in about 1 out of 7 crashes in NSW where someone loses their life.

In 2017, 55 people lost their lives in alcohol-related crashes.¹

In 2017, NSW Police conducted nearly 5 million breath tests.

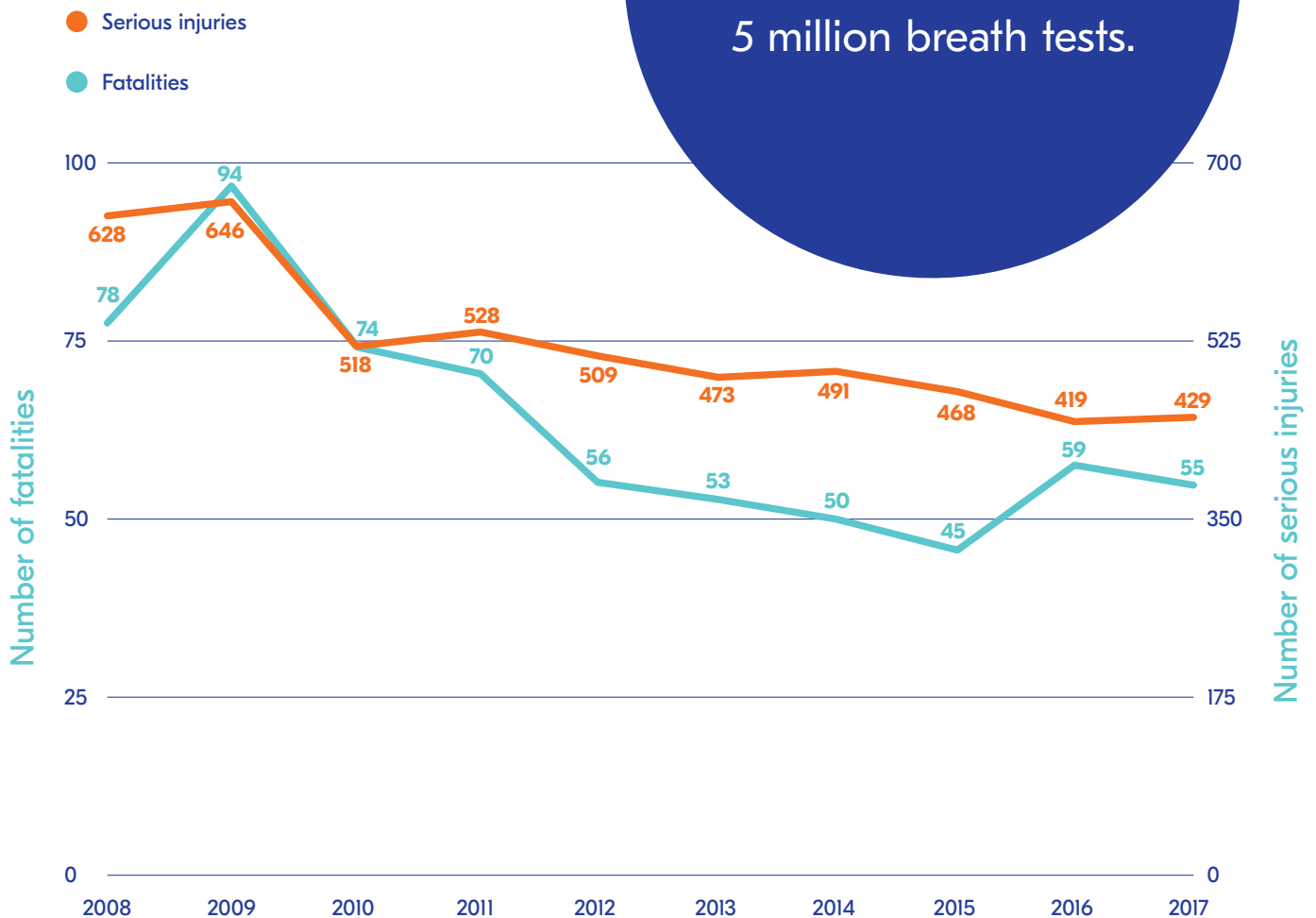


Figure 1. Alcohol related fatalities and serious injuries from 2008 to 2017
Source: Centre for Road Safety

Of the drink drivers/riders who were killed in the five-year period from 2013 to 2017 (provisional),

79%

From 2015 to 2017, 79% of alcohol-related fatal crashes happened on country roads.¹

93%

were men and 67% were under the age of 40.¹

Trauma from fatal crashes involving alcohol

1982 40%* of fatalities

2017 15% of fatalities

BAC limits

Zero

- Learner drivers or riders
- All Provisional drivers or riders
- Visiting drivers or riders holding an overseas or interstate learner, provisional or equivalent licence

Under 0.02

- Drivers of vehicles of 'gross vehicle mass' greater than 13.9 tonnes
- Drivers of vehicles carrying dangerous goods
- Drivers of public vehicles including taxis or bus drivers

Under 0.05

- All other licences (including overseas and interstate licence holders) not subject to a 0.02 or zero limit
- Under 0.05 is the legal limit for most full-licence drivers



¹Average % across 1980 to 1982, calculated only for those where an alcohol result was known.



What NRMA Members are saying

In July 2018, we surveyed over 1,400 of our Members and this is what they said.²

Biggest road safety fear

1. Illegal phone use behind the wheel (72%)
2. Driving under the influence of alcohol (56%)
3. Speeding (55%)
4. Aggressive driving (46%)
5. Driving under the influence of drugs (41%)
6. Driver fatigue (38%)

Drink driving was ranked as our Members' second biggest road safety fear.

Drink driving the next day

23% of those that drink alcohol thought they were still over the legal limit the next morning.

27% of them still drove the next morning when they thought they were over the limit.

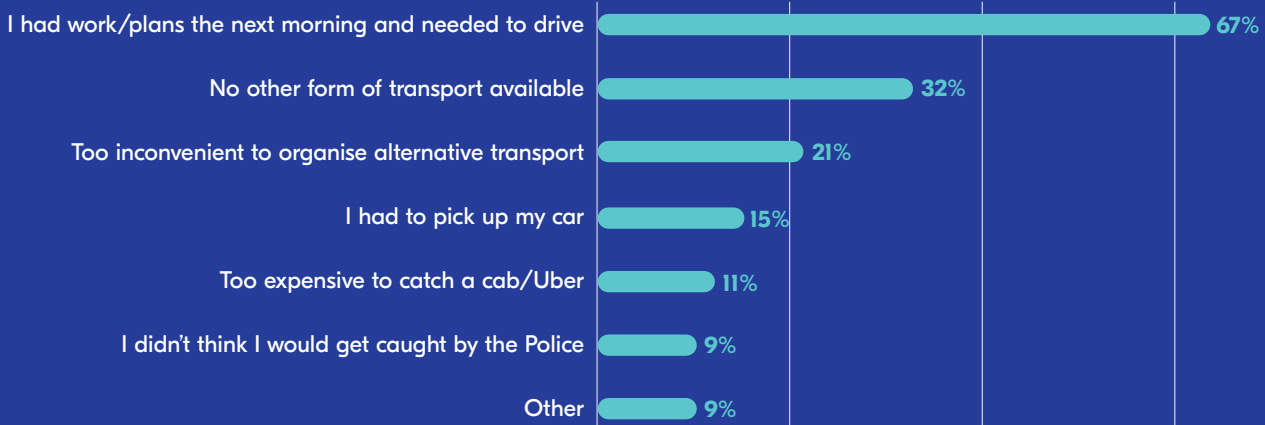


Young drivers under 25 years

58% of those that drink alcohol thought they were still over the legal limit the next morning.

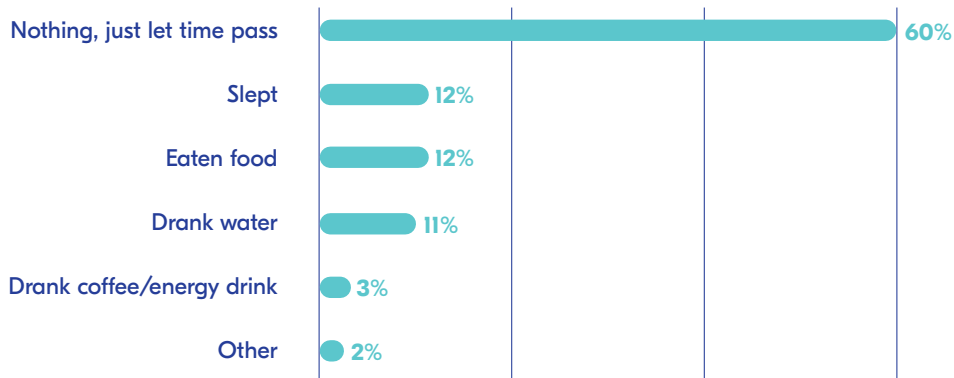
54% of them still drove the next morning when they thought they were over the limit.

Reasons for drink driving the next day



Getting back to zero

For those who thought they were over the limit the next day, the main things people did to help get alcohol out of their system were:



Consequences

98% were not booked for drink driving the next day.

95% of all Members have never been involved in a crash where the other driver was at fault due to intoxication.

End of year celebrations

5% thought they were over the limit the morning after a Christmas party/end of year function. (This increased to 21% for drivers under 25 years.)

13% of those that thought they were over the limit the next morning had to be somewhere the next morning and drove themselves.

The only thing that gets alcohol out of your system is time.

Getting caught

Police enforcement has been a crucial component in reducing drink driving fatalities on our roads. For almost 36 years, drivers across NSW have been pulled over and random breath tested to ensure that they are below the legal Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC) limit. Last financial year, NSW Police conducted over 5.25 million breath tests, of which more than 18,000 drivers were over the limit (see Table 1).

Table 1. Number for Random Breath Tests (RBT) conducted by financial year.³

Financial year	Number of RBTs	Positive tests	Percentage of positive tests
2012-13	4,911,785	19,868	0.40%
2013-14	5,647,534	20,241	0.36%
2014-15	5,844,215	19,161	0.33%
2015-16	6,371,160	18,670	0.29%
2016-17	4,099,130	17,256	0.42%
2017-18	5,258,445	18,072	0.34%

While trauma from fatal crashes involving alcohol has reduced dramatically since 1982 (40%* compared to 15% in 2017), more needs to be done to reduce the road toll associated with drink driving.

In September 2017, the NSW Government passed new drink driving reforms that will commence from the end of 2018. The reforms include:

- On the spot \$561 penalty and a three month licence suspension for a low range drink driving offence.
- Expansion of the alcohol interlock program to mid-range drink drivers.

While these reforms may act as a stronger deterrent to prevent drink driving, increased police enforcement is

also needed. The NRMA believes that an additional 200 Highway Patrol Officers are needed to help boost the current enforcement levels, particularly in regional communities. The extra Highway Patrol Officers should be in addition to existing frontline staff.

Further, just under one-quarter of NRMA Members thought they could have still been over the limit the next day after drinking the day before. Of these, over a quarter still drove the next morning, largely due to having work or plans the next morning and needing to drive.²

Given the lack of alternative transport in regional areas and the perception that drivers may evade detection, the NRMA believes that police enforcement must be increased in regional NSW.

*Average % across 1980 to 1982, calculated only for those where an alcohol result was known.

Targeting drink driving on country roads must also be a priority. Nearly 80% of alcohol-related fatal crashes occurred on country roads from 2015 to 2017.¹



The role of technology

Alco-gates

In order to make significant gains in reducing the needless loss of life on our roads, heavy investment in technology based measures is needed. Significant investment in technology has already been made to tackle drink driving. Random Breath Testing (RBT) and alcohol interlocks were considered cutting edge technology when introduced many years ago. The NRMA believes investment in innovative technological solutions should continue, to further prevent and reduce crashes caused by drink driving.

For example, Sweden successfully trialled 'alco-gates' in the Port of Gothenburg to tackle drink driving in 2013. Ports in Sweden are high risk environments for drink driving with a rate of three times the national estimated proportion of drink drivers.⁴ This is due to the consumption of alcohol while on board the ferry. Drivers leaving a ferry terminal were required to blow into a breathalyser linked to a boom gate at the exit of the port. Their BAC levels were checked and if they were under the limit the boom gates opened.

In 2016, the Victoria Government announced that they will be conducting a similar trial based on the technology used in Sweden. The proposed trial will require drivers to pass a breath test before they can leave the car parks of participating licensed venues. The 'alco-gates' would be fitted to car park boom gates, which would remain lowered until the driver recorded a breath test under the .05 limit. It is anticipated that the trial will commence in 2019.

The NRMA believes that a similar trial should be conducted in high risk drink driving environments including car parks near major sporting stadiums, festivals and events. It is vital that NSW is at the forefront of new and emerging road safety technology if we are serious about reducing the road toll.

Alcohol Interlocks

Alcohol interlocks are another technology measure that have been highly effective in preventing drink driving offenders from reoffending while the device is installed. An interlock is an electronic breath testing device linked to the ignition system of a car, motorcycle or heavy vehicle. The vehicle starts once the driver passes a breath test.

The NRMA advocated successfully for the use of alcohol interlocks in vehicles of repeat offenders. The device is now used predominately as part of a mandatory penalty for committing a drink driving offence.

However, the NRMA believes that alcohol interlocks should not only be used as a punitive measure. Fleet owners should be encouraged to consider the installation of alcohol interlocks in fleet vehicles as a workplace health and safety requirement. This measure will prevent fleet drivers from driving if they are over the limit the next morning, reducing any ambiguity about their ability to operate a vehicle if still under the influence of alcohol.

Alcohol interlocks in the workplace

- **Britain:** National Express fitted alcohol interlocks on their coaches operating in Britain following a two-year trial. It followed a National Express driver jailed in 2008 after his coach crashed and he was found to be over the limit.
- **France:** Since 2010, alcohol interlocks were mandated for commercial vehicles used for school transport.
- **Finland:** Alcohol interlocks are mandated in commercial vehicles used to transport children, the elderly and disabled people.

Education

The NRMA has been at the forefront of the campaign to address the dangers of drink driving over the last 40 years and, in the 1980s, ran the first ever education campaign to tackle drink driving.⁵ However, despite decades of campaigning, drink driving is a factor in about one of every seven crashes in NSW.

The NSW Government has also conducted extensive education campaigns over the years targeting drink driving. The most recent Plan B drink driving campaign commenced in August 2012 and aimed at empowering drivers to make the choice not to drink and drive, and to find an alternative way home. An evaluation of the campaign found that more than 80% of those surveyed recalled seeing campaign materials and almost all supported the campaign.¹

Ongoing education campaigns paired with enforcement are vital to ensure a shift in driver behaviour.^{6 & 7} While the road safety community has done a tremendous amount of work to make drink driving social unacceptable, we must not become complacent in continuing to reiterate this message.

The NRMA believes that motorists need more information of the dangers of driving over the limit the next day and should be the focus of the next drink driving campaign. Some people may think they are ok to drive the next morning and we need to educate them that this may not always be the case.



Constable Valerie Bryant of North Sydney Highway Patrol administers a roadside breath test.

*Open Road,
December 1984*



This NRMA campaign highlighted that only three middies in an hour was enough to put drivers over the legal limit and could see them lose their licence.

NRMA Corporate Archives

Plan B: alternative transport in rural areas

Last year, 38 people lost their lives due to alcohol related crashes on country roads, costing the community around \$285 million.⁸ When adding serious injuries, the total cost of crashes equates to around \$355 million*. This does not include the ripple effect road crashes have on rural communities.

The propensity to drink and drive in rural areas is far greater compared to urban areas due to geographical, social and environmental factors. Rural areas often have limited alternative transport options connecting hospitality establishments, transport hubs and local residences. Coupled with the perception of a lower detection rate, this leads to a greater number of motorists driving drunk.

While increased police enforcement in rural areas is certainly needed, people need alternative transport modes to reduce the temptation to drink and drive. Low rural population density makes viable alternative transport options difficult and it is a challenge that many communities face.

Given the devastating consequences of drink driving and the cost to the community, the NRMA believes trials and alternative funding models for transport options in rural areas must be considered a top priority.

For example, in the community sector, social impact bonds are used to fund a program to address a pressing social issue. Another potential funding model is a consortium of Federal, State and Local Governments that invests in alternative transport in rural areas to help offset the cost of crashes that they ultimately have to foot the bill for.

Innovative ways to get people home safely

On-demand, community transport and mobility as a service could all have a role to play in getting people home safely if they have been drinking. In 2016, the ACT Government partnered with Uber to get people home during the Christmas period. After using a Nightrider bus, Canberrans were able to receive \$10 off an Uber ride to complete the last leg of their journey. The ACT Government and Uber jointly funded the discount.



Planning regional events

Tourism and major events are the life-blood of many regional communities. These events attract large numbers of visitors to communities and inject economic activity in regional areas that would normally not occur. They profile the character of a destination, encouraging repeat visitation and support other sectors in the region including agriculture (produce) and manufacturing.

It is vital that both locals and visitors get home safely after these events. The NRMA believes that new and existing regional event organisers should provide a transport plan as part of their event application and consider what implications it may have for the host location. Event organisers should consider innovative transport solutions such as on-demand transport to help get people home safely.

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