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# THE POLICY CONTEXT OF DRUG DRIVING COUNTERMEASURES

# The ACT's drug policy

- *ACT Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Strategy 2004-2008: 4 aims*
  1. *Improve the health and social well-being of individuals, consumers, families and carers, and the community in the ACT;*
  2. *Minimise the harm in our community from alcohol, tobacco and other drugs while recognising the individual needs of all citizens in the ACT;*
  3. *Develop evidence-based initiatives to ensure that issues associated with harmful alcohol, tobacco and other drug use are addressed in an effective way; and*
  4. *Implement the Strategy in a manner that respects, protects and promotes human rights.*

# What are we aiming to achieve with RDT?

- Mr John Hargreaves MLA, Minister for TAMS  
8 April 2008:
  - 'I needed to be certain that **the testing was about road safety** and not about catching drug users and punishing them for using drugs rather than endangering other road users.  
As a Minister, I will do whatever I can **to improve road safety** but I am not going to be involved in punishing ACT drug users for their addiction.'
- Victorian Gov't 'Arrive Alive' Fact Sheets:
  - 'This testing is aimed at **making Victoria's roads safer by reducing the incidence of drug driving.**'

# Apparent logic model

Some people use illegal drugs



Some of them drive after doing so



Some of the drivers will be impaired by the drugs to the extent that the impairment will cause a crash



RDT will reduce the prevalence of drug-impaired driving through general deterrence



This will reduce the incidence of crashes to such an extent as to improve road safety

## But ... is there any evidence that RDT reduces mv crash incidence?

- No conclusive body of literature supports the proposition that DUID enforcement through RDT or other means reduces the incidence or severity of road crashes
- Victorian drug users: % drove soon after taking a drug:  
2004: 63%, 2005: 58%, 2006: 68%, 2007: 71% (Quinn 2008)
- Sweden's zero tolerance policy commenced July 1999
  - high levels of detections continue
  - no reports of reduced crash incidence
  - high levels of re-arrests: 68% over 4 years; average 3.4 (Holmgren 2008)

# The opportunity costs

- Failure to implement other interventions that are more efficacious and cost-effective?
- Fewer RBTs for alcohol?
- The drain on ACT Policing resources?
- Loss of community confidence in the legitimacy of law enforcement?

# Other ways of attaining the road safety goals more effectively?

- More intense enforcement of RBT?
  - Truly random RBT is promising (Delaney et al. 2006)
- RDT for the drugs that have been demonstrated to contribute most strongly to road crash incidence, and fatalities
  - Prescribed opioids and benzodiazepines (Engeland et al. 2007)
- Electronic stability controls
  - Fatal single-vehicle car crashes reduced by 30-50% and SUVs by 50-70%
  - Fatal roll-over crashes reduced by 70-90% (Ferguson 2007)

So what drives this policy if it is not evidence of relative cost-effectiveness?

- The availability of the technology?
- The other Australian jurisdictions are doing it so the ACT should too?
- Negative attitudes towards illegal drugs and the people who use them?
- A societal desire to criminalise non-mainstream behaviour?

# So we will need a thorough policy & program evaluation

- A statement of goals
- A statement of the intervention logic
- A thorough description of the intervention
- Development of policy-relevant performance indicators covering:
  - Inputs e.g. funds, equipment, personnel , etc.
  - Activities e.g. RDT numbers, locations, time of day, random vs targeted, etc.
  - Outputs e.g. positive detections, false positives, sanctions applied , etc.
  - Outcomes e.g. incidence and severity of road crashes, recidivism, self-reported prevalence of drug driving, community's and drug users' attitudes , etc.

*My proposition for discussion:*

The proposed ACT RDT intervention is based on a flawed policy analysis:

- Unclear goal specification: RDT purports to have as its aim improving road safety  
i.e. reducing crash incidence & severity
- A program logic analysis suggests that we are unlikely to attain this goal from this intervention
- The research evidence also suggests that we are unlikely to attain this goal from this intervention
- We have no evidence of careful consideration of:
  - the opportunity costs
  - the relative cost-effectiveness of other interventions aiming to improve road safety

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