



## DRIVER SAFETY BULLETIN – DRUGS AND DRIVING

### DRUG DRIVING IS A SERIOUS ROAD SAFETY ISSUE

The influence of illicit or prescribed drugs on driving is a growing concern on Australian roads. Studies suggest that drugs other than alcohol are associated with impaired driving ability, and, therefore road trauma.<sup>1</sup> The effects of drugs on driving are significant whether they be illicit or prescribed drugs. Some of the most common effects include: slowed reaction time, distorted perception of speed and distance and reduction in concentration and coordination.

#### Illicit Drugs

In Victoria, December 2004 saw the introduction of random roadside saliva testing to detect drivers travelling under the influence of drugs. There is zero tolerance for driving under the influence of illegal drugs. Any trace of illegal drugs will result in penalties such as a penalty fine, issuing of demerit points, and also in some cases the driver must undertake a drug education assessment course.

#### Prescription or Over-the-Counter Drugs

Many people take over-the-counter drugs to stop a headache, cure a cold or kill an infection. Some people take drugs to address a chronic disease. Whatever the reason, many prescription and non-prescription medicines affect your ability to drive safely. Here are some of the pharmaceutical and prescription medications which can affect your driving:

- Slimming pills
- Some cold and flu medication that contain codeine based preparations
- Cough mixtures (for example Benadryl Original)
- Allergy medications
- Anti-depressants
- Insulin

#### Safety Tips

Studies have found that driving under the influence of illegal drugs greatly increases the risk of being responsible for a fatal collision. This research has also found that motor vehicle collision fatalities involving drug use is on the rise.<sup>2</sup> The following are some handy tips to ensure you never get behind the wheel under the influence of drugs:

- Look for and follow instructions on warning labels
- If you are unsure of the side effects, read the Consumer Medicines Information leaflet available for most prescription medications
- Do not stop taking your prescribed medication if your driving is affected. Instead, stop driving and discuss possible alternative medicines with your doctor
- Always check with your doctor or pharmacist as to whether it is safe to mix your medications or to drink alcohol while on your prescription
- Do not take more or less of the prescribed dose unless recommended by your doctor
- Do not take another person's medication
- Do not drive if you have missed a dose of medication that controls symptoms which affect your driving
- If you are under the influence of either prescribed or illegal drugs and unsure of the effects, do not risk driving. Be smart – use public transport, organise for a lift from a safe designated driver or take a taxi.

Drive safely,  
The team at Innovation Group

<sup>1</sup> - Australian Drug Foundation, <http://www.aami.com.au/Resources/File.aspx?id=106>, viewed 25/2/2010

<sup>2</sup> - Safe Driving Policy, [http://www.tacsafety.com.au/upload/Safe\\_Driving\\_Policy.pdf](http://www.tacsafety.com.au/upload/Safe_Driving_Policy.pdf)