

Drug driving: one-in-four get off

The NRMA is calling for tougher action against drug driving after statistics show that over one-quarter (27 per cent) of motorists convicted of driving with illicit drugs in their system got off penalty free.

Statistics sourced by the NRMA from the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research found that from 2007 to 2010 more than a quarter (27 per cent) of people convicted of drug driving walked free after being given a Section 10 or convicted without penalty. Offenders can be let off under Section 10 of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999 and have their conviction dismissed or discharged without penalty. In South Australia one-in-four drivers or riders killed between 2005 and 2008 tested positive to illicit drugs. Alarming, there appears to be serious shortfalls in the data about the role of illicit drugs in car crashes in NSW. NRMA Motoring & Services President Wendy Machin said too many people caught drug driving were getting off the hook. Drug driving is illegal, it is dangerous and it can kill, Ms Machin said. The Police are doing their job catching people but the community is being let down by a system that sees too many walk away penalty free. The NRMA is concerned that Section 10 rulings are being handed out too frequently there are penalties in place for people caught drug driving and we believe the community would expect these penalties to be enforced for this highly dangerous and illegal behavior. A Section 10 can be granted if the offence is considered to be of a trivial nature, but there's nothing trivial about drug driving. We have the penalties in place- lets use them. Almost 70 per cent of motorists convicted of drug driving were fined. The harsh penalties for motorists caught with the presence of active THC (cannabis), methylamphetamine (speed/ice), or MDMA (ecstasy) in their system include a \$1,100 fine and a minimum three month disqualification for a first time offence. Heavier penalties apply for a second offence.

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