

Date: July 10th 2014



Issue: BAC .02 – it's time!

["Permissibility, availability and accessibility - all increase consumption." Dalgarno Institute.]

"Yet another top police officer has come out with a call to revisit the drink driving issue, stating that we need to 'completely separate drinking from driving'. This issue tends to be recycled about every two years, but it's now time to make the change," said Mr Shane Varcoe, the Executive Director of the Dalgarno Institute. "We fully concur that it is time to make a move on this issue – the public are ready for it", he concluded.

Early in 2011 the QLD State Government commissioned and released the 'Drink Driving in Queensland' discussion paper in which a number of measures were tabled for consideration, including the very important reduction in BAC levels for drivers to .02. VICTORIA'S roads minister at the time was quoted in the Herald Sun saying that "strong evidence" would be needed for him to consider supporting what has been wrongly labelled 'radical' .02 limits on drivers. Clearly the label of 'radical' no longer applies and the strong evidence that already exists cannot be ignored any longer...

The evidence already shows that the risk of accident increases the higher the blood alcohol limit.

There is strong evidence that someone's ability to drive is affected if they have any alcohol in their blood. Drivers with a BAC of between 0.02 and 0.05 have at least a three times greater risk of dying in a vehicle crash. This risk increases to at least six times with a BAC between 0.05 and 0.08, and to 11 times with a BAC between 0.08 and 0.10. Studies consistently demonstrate that the risk of having an accident increases exponentially as more alcohol is consumed...¹

There is good evidence already collected through studies that lowering BAC will certainly be a key contributor to reducing the road toll

Overall, there is sufficiently strong evidence to indicate that lowering the legal BAC limit for drivers does help reduce road traffic injuries and deaths in certain contexts²

The following is an excerpt from the summary of the very thorough study by Bell & Vaos on 'The effectiveness of reducing illegal blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limits for driving'. In Summary states,

There is strong evidence in the literature that lowering the BAC limit from .10 to .08 is effective, that lowering the BAC limit from .08 to .05 is effective, and that lowering the BAC limit....02 or lower is effective. These law changes serve as a general deterrent to drinking and driving and ultimately save lives. Impact on Industry: This critical review supports the adoption of lower illegal BAC limits for driving.³

A significant study recently completed by the Centre for Public Health Excellence NICE, tabled further strong evidence for the implementation of a lower BAC for all drivers.

BAC laws and changes in drink-driving behaviour: There is sufficiently strong evidence to indicate that lowering the BAC limit changes the drink-driving behaviour of drivers at all BAC levels. The BAC law appears to act as a general deterrent and the beneficial effects are not just restricted to the drivers at the BAC levels involved.⁴

What was also discovered and consequentially recommended in this study was the manner in which these reduction BAC Reduction laws should be implemented. (Note - These recommendations are of course imperative in all preventative demand reduction measures and should apply to all drugs, licit and illicit)

There is sufficiently strong evidence to indicate that publicity and visible, rapid enforcement is needed if BAC laws are to be effective. Drivers need to be aware of – and understand – the law. They also need to believe they are likely to be detected and punished for breaking the law.^{5 (Emphasis added)}

We'll close with a recommendation from Professor Barry Watson the Director of CARRS-Q – (The Centre for Accident Research & Road Safety - Queensland at the Queensland University of Technology) who stated earlier this year that...

I think that the move to .02 is certainly something that we need to consider and it's certainly something that we need to encourage public discussion about. There is...evidence that it would be beneficial. There are already a number of countries in the world that have a .02 or .03 limit including countries like Norway, Sweden and Japan... There are some other good reasons for considering it: one is that at .05 people are impaired, I think more so than they probably realise, and research does suggest that your crash risk does increase and, by .05 is somewhere between one and a half to two times that of a sober driver.⁶

It's time for greater safety and care for all Australian's who share our roads.

Communications Liaison.

Endnotes

1 (pp 3-4) ***Review of effectiveness of laws limiting blood alcohol concentration levels to reduce alcohol-related road injuries and deaths:*** Centre for Public Health Excellence NICE; (Final report - March 2010) Authors: Amanda Killoran, Una Canning, Nick Doyle, and Linda Sheppard

2 *ibid* p 5

3 ***The effectiveness of reducing illegal blood alcohol concentration (BAC) limits for driving: Evidence for lowering the limit to .05 BAC*** James C. Fell, Robert B. Voas Pacific Institute for Research and Evaluation, 11710 Beltsville Drive, Suite 300, Calverton, MD 20705–3102, USA Received 7 January 2005; received in revised form 2 June 2005; accepted 25 July 2005 © 2006 National Safety Council and Elsevier Ltd. All rights reserved

4 *op cit* p 6

5 *op cit* p 5

6 <http://www.aussmc.org/2010/03/rapid-roundup-reducing-blood-alcohol-limit-to-002-experts-respond/>

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