

THE NSW SOBER DRIVER PROGRAM

An Interagency collaboration between the Roads And Traffic Authority of NSW, Motor Accidents Authority of NSW, NSW Department Of Corrective Services, NSW Attorney General's Department, and NSW Police.

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Introduction

Every year in NSW, approximately 20,000 people are convicted for drink driving offences. In 2002, alcohol was a factor in 21% of all fatal crashes. The economic cost of these crashes to the community is approximately \$192 million. Repeat drink drive offenders represent a significant proportion of the drink-driving problem in NSW. Australian and international research shows the recidivist drink driver to be resistant to traditional interventions. The NSW Sober Driver Program was developed as a whole of government initiative to target serious road safety problems caused by repeat drink drive offenders in NSW.

What is the NSW Sober Driver Program?

The NSW Sober Driver Program targets adult offenders (18+) who are convicted of more than one drink driving offence within a five-year period. This 18 hour educational and therapeutic program, managed and delivered by the Probation and Parole Service, addresses issues such as consequences of drink driving, effects of alcohol on driving, managing drinking situations, alternatives to drinking and driving and relapse prevention and stress management.

The NSW Sober Driver Program provides a positive complement to existing sanctions such as fines and/or licence disqualification imposed by the court, and can be set as a condition of a court order.

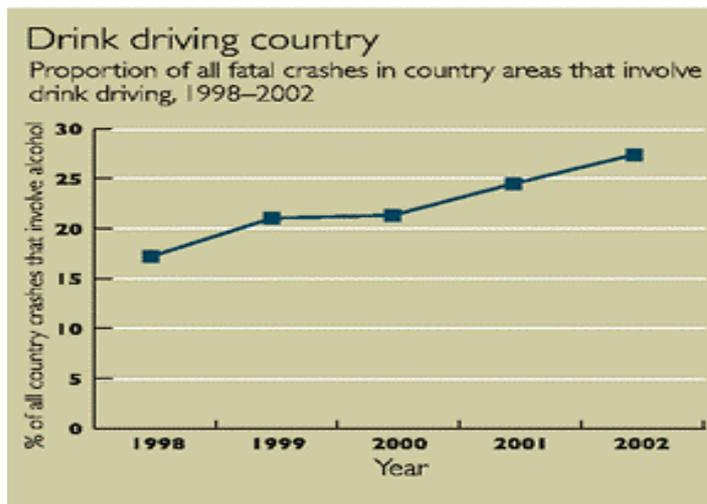
The impact of drink driving in NSW

Despite the dramatic reduction in drink driving crashes following the introduction of Random Breath Testing (RBT), alcohol remains a significant road safety issue in NSW. Each year, alcohol is identified as a factor in around 18% of all fatal crashes in NSW and results in an average of 105 deaths per year, (1998-2002). Drink driving casualties cost the community around 192 million dollars per year. It is well known that alcohol impacts on motor skills and decision-making skills. Research demonstrates that alcohol increases confidence and aggression and that the probability of crashing increases as an individual's blood alcohol concentration (BAC) increases. Compared with a driver who has not consumed alcohol, the probability of crashing is doubled at 0.05, seven times higher at 0.08 and twenty-five times higher at .15 BAC.

In NSW, most drivers are subject to a 0.05 BAC limit, except for professional drivers, who are subject to a 0.02 BAC limit and novice drivers who are subject to zero BAC. Drink driving fatalities have increased in recent years. In 2002, alcohol was a factor in

21% of all fatal crashes, up from 16% in 1998. This increase is largely due to an increase in drink driving crashes in country areas of NSW. While drink driving accounted for only 10% of all fatal crashes in the Sydney Metropolitan Area in 2002, it was a factor in 38% of all fatal crashes on country urban roads (country roads speed zoned at 80km/h or less).

The figure below shows the proportion of fatal crashes in country areas that involved drink driving between 1998 and 2002. The proportion of crashes that involve drink driving increased over this 5 year period from 16% in 1998 to 26% in 2002.



(Source Roads and Traffic Authority)

Every year approximately 20,000 drink driving offences are committed with around 15,000 at a middle or high range prescribed concentration of alcohol (PCA).

Recidivist drink drivers represent a significant proportion of the drink-driving problem in NSW. Recidivist drink drivers can be defined as individuals who continue to drink drive after being convicted and sentenced for a previous drink driving offence. Around 18% of offenders convicted of drink driving have a prior drink driving offence within the previous five-year period. Recidivist drink drivers are more likely than first offenders to be male and aged at least 30 years. Many recidivist drink drivers believe that it is 'bad luck' to be caught and do not believe that drinking alcohol impairs their driving performance.

Historical countermeasures

Significant and immediate reductions in drink driving crashes, of at least 25%, were achieved through the introduction of RBT in 1982. In addition to RBT, there are currently a number of programs in NSW which address drink driving. NSW has an integrated approach to drink driving, which incorporates police enforcement with public education campaigns that reinforce the risk and consequences of getting caught drink driving or having a crash.

Over the past few years (1998-2003) drink drive public education campaigns have used two key strategies - a positive (prevention) and a general deterrence strategy which reinforces, through advertising, the risk of being caught and the penalties for drink driving. The positive prevention strategy reinforces 'desirable' transportation

behaviour for people who choose to drink and promotes planning ahead to avoid driving after drinking. The deterrence strategy aims to increase the awareness of police RBT operations and the perceived risk of being caught. The main aim is to create, reinforce and maintain the expectation that if people drink and drive they will be caught and face serious consequences. The emphasis is on the presence of police and the unpredictability of RBT operations.

More recently, the Roads and Traffic Authority, (RTA), has developed a new television advertisement that challenges the belief that having a few beers has no impact on a persons driving ability. The advertisement, which focuses on the psychological effects of alcohol on the brain, uses scientific facts to convince drink drivers that there can be no way to compensate for impaired driving skills after drinking alcohol. While the campaign is aired statewide, it was developed to specifically target country drink drivers.

These strategies are only part of the solution to drink driving in NSW. As recidivist drink drivers are less receptive than other drivers to messages contained in advertising and public education campaigns, a coordinated approach to drink driving should also include educational and rehabilitation programs for specific target offender groups. The *NSW Sober Driver Program* represents such a program.

Program management

In April 2001, the NSW Government endorsed the Road Safety Task Force Report. A key report recommendation, endorsed by the Hon Carl Scully MP Minister for Roads, was the development and statewide implementation of educational programs for serious traffic offenders as a whole of government initiative.

The development and implementation of the *NSW Sober Driver Program* is coordinated by an interagency Working Party, which reports to the Government Agencies Road Safety Council (GARS). The Council includes representatives at chief executive level from:

- The Roads and Traffic Authority (RTA).
- Motor Accidents Authority (MAA).
- Attorney General's Department (AGD).
- The Probation and Parole Service, Department of Corrective Services (DCS).
- NSW Police.

These agencies are also represented on the Working Party, which also includes representatives from Blacktown TOP Inc. a community based traffic education program and Police and Community Youth Clubs.

In 2001, the Working Party contracted ARRB Transport Research, an independent re-search company specializing in road safety research, to undertake research to inform the development of a best practice, whole of government traffic education program. The RTA and MAA are jointly funding the Program for a three-year period from July 2003 to June 2006. The NSW Probation and Parole Service are delivering the program at the local level.

Program development

ARRB Transport Research conducted a review of best practice in traffic offender programs operating in Australia and overseas. The report arising from this review, the *NSW Safe Driver Program Report*, proposed that a number of program modules be developed, each of which would be targeted to a category of serious offences such as repeat drink driving, high range speeding and driving while disqualified.

The Report recommended that a program for repeat drink drivers should be the first module to be developed since the bulk of research relates to programs for drink drive offenders, research supports the efficacy of remedial programs for drink drive offenders, and there is a high rate of recidivism for drink drive offenders.

The Report also recommended that offenders be referred or directed to participate in the Program by Magistrates and Probation and Parole Officers. The Probation and Parole Service is well placed to integrate program delivery within current case management practices since current infrastructure enables delivery of the program across NSW; knowledge, skills and referral networks ('through care') enable ongoing monitoring and follow-up of offenders and; currently, two-thirds of traffic offender referrals to the community program are drink drive offenders.

In 2002, the *NSW Safe Driver Program Report*, including all the recommendations, was endorsed by GARS. The Working Party engaged ARRB Transport Research to establish the curriculum framework for the *NSW Sober Driver Program* and to develop the program components and specifications for resources. To inform program development, AARB Transport Research conducted an extensive consultation phase with NSW stakeholders including providers and participants of Traffic Offender Programs (TOPs) and NSW Magistrates.

The *NSW Sober Driver Program* was based on best practice principles of traffic offender programs that were identified in the *NSW Safe Driver Program Report*. The program was developed to be:

- Highly interactive and based on key adult education and psychological principles.
- Structurally complex and sequenced to build the confidence and competence of participants.
- Designed to encourage participants to take individual responsibility for their own learning and the adoption of strategies.
- Structured to take participants from being anonymous members of a large group where they share responsibility for learning, to smaller group work, and finally to individual work.
- Available across the state for all eligible offenders and delivered in a consistent and uniform format.

The *NSW Sober Driver Program* was first piloted in October 2002 through three District Offices of the Probation and Parole Service: Campbelltown, Wollongong and Port Macquarie/Kempsey. An evaluation of the pilot programs was conducted in December 2002. The evaluation was designed to assess whether the program resulted in improvements in participants' knowledge and understanding of the effects of drink driving on self and the community; whether the resources were effective in achieving the program goals and; whether the participants were actively involved and

engaged in the sessions.

Following the pilots, an evaluation report and recommendations for further development of the program was submitted. On the basis of the successful evaluation, endorsement of statewide roll out of the Program was given at Chief Executive level from all agencies represented on GARS. The resource materials for the program were revised following the evaluation and a second pilot was conducted in the pilot sites between February and June 2003. The program was rolled out across NSW from July 2003.

A *Condensed Version* of the *NSW Sober Driver Program* has been developed for repeat offenders living in rural and remote NSW. The resources for the *Condensed Version* of the program have been developed and pilot programs were evaluated in July 2003 in three rural locations: Forbes, Griffith and Armidale. An evaluation report was submitted, the resources for the *Condensed Version* were revised with a second round of pilots delivered August & September 2003.

To ensure professional delivery of the program, all facilitator/co-facilitators are required to undertake NSW Sober Driver Program specific training. To date 234 persons have trained in program delivery.

Following the pilots of the *Condensed Version* of the program the working party commissioned the development of Aboriginal specific resources. This involved extensive consultation with various Aboriginal groups resulting in the production of video resource material.

Briefing sessions on the *NSW Sober Driver Program* for key stakeholders began in December 2002 with a meeting with the Chief Magistrate. Briefings for Magistrates, Court User Forums and Probation and Parole District Offices commenced in February 2003 to enable Magistrates to refer eligible offenders to the program and to ensure that a sufficient number of offenders are available.

A Memorandum of Understanding between the RTA, the MAA, AGD and DCS for the delivery of the *NSW Sober Driver Program* was signed in August 2003.

Structure & eligibility

The *NSW Sober Driver Program* is based on best practice principles of traffic offender and behaviour change programs that were identified in the *NSW Safe Driver Program Report*. The program targets adult offenders (18+) convicted of two or more drink driving offence within the past five years.

Participants are directed by Magistrates to attend the *NSW Sober Driver Program* by way of:

- Good behaviour bond under Sections 9 or 10 of the Crimes (Sentencing Procedure) Act 1999
- Deferral of sentencing for rehabilitation under Section 11 (Griffith Remand) of that Act
- Good behaviour bond under Section 12 (supervised suspended sentence)
- Community Service Order
- Home Detention Order and

- Parole order

In addition, an eligible offender may be directed to attend the program by a Probation and Parole Officer. The program has been developed in two delivery modes:

1. The *Standard Version* of the program is conducted over nine consecutive weeks (18 hours). A maximum of 18 participants attend for 2 hours per week.
2. The *Condensed Version* of the program was developed to address the needs of rural participants, particularly those with issues of remoteness, aboriginal offenders and small participant numbers. The *Condensed Version* provides the 18-hour program over 3 consecutive weeks (6 hours per session). A maximum of 10 participants attend this version of the program.

Research indicates that drink-driving programs that combine educational and therapeutic approaches can reduce recidivism rates and increase knowledge and understanding of the effects of alcohol. Both delivery modes of the *NSW Sober Driver Program* are structured to integrate educational and therapeutic approaches throughout each session and incorporate the principles of relapse prevention.

The curriculum framework and content areas of the *NSW Sober Driver Program – Standard Version* are outlined in Appendix A.

Weeks One, Two and Three focus on the consequences of drink driving at the individual and broader community level. The sessions involve relatively simple, large group activities. Week Four builds an understanding of the complexity and demands of safe driving, while Weeks Five and Six focus on alcohol and its negative impact on decision making and driving skills. Weeks Seven and Eight focus on strategies that can be used to manage drink-driving situations and prevent relapse. The activities become more complex and tasks are performed in smaller groups allowing for increased interaction. In Week Nine, all components of the program are drawn together to emphasize to participants that they now have the knowledge, skills, strategies, and support to avoid re-offending in future.

The program content and delivery strategy have been designed to meet the needs of special needs groups. The evaluation confirmed that all participants including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders (Aboriginal), women and those with low literacy effectively participated in the program. When Aboriginal offenders attend, arrangements can be made for a representative of the local Aboriginal community to attend the sessions to support the participant.

Goals/Aims

The goals of the *NSW Sober Driver Program* are to:

- Reduce drink driving offending by graduates of the *NSW Sober Driver Program*.
- Encourage participants to understand the effects of drink driving on self, others and the wider community.
- Assist participants to build skills, strategies and knowledge to apply in future situations to ensure they do not re-offend.

The aims of the Program are to:

- Provide accurate information about alcohol.
- Explain short and long-term effects of alcohol on the body and behaviour.
- Explain ways in which alcohol affects one's ability to drive or ride safely.
- Develop an understanding of the effects and costs of drink driving on self and the community.
- Assist participants to develop essential skills and positive attitudes to ensure safe driving and/or riding occurs.
- Assist drink drivers and riders to identify and implement strategies and to access additional support when necessary to avoid relapse behaviours.

Resources

A range of resources and teaching methods has been developed to support the delivery of the *NSW Sober Driver Program*. These resources and methods follow best practice pedagogical approaches and encourage participants to take a problem-centred approach. They build on participant's real life experiences, using simulations, case studies and role-plays that are designed to increase the learning outcomes for participants.

The following resources have been developed to assist with effective and consistent delivery of each session of the *NSW Sober Driver Program*:

- Session Notes for Presenters
- Reference Guide for Presenters
- Participant Workbook
- Participant Drinking Diary
- Videos
- Poster of the video characters
- Presenter overhead transparencies

Program delivery

The Standard 9 week version of the *NSW Sober Driver Program* was first piloted in October 2002 through three District Offices of the Probation and Parole Service: Campbelltown, Wollongong and Port Macquarie/Kempsey. 43 people, (41 males & 2 females) started the program with 35 completing. A second pilot, at the same locations, began March 2003. 91 offenders (86 males & 5 females) were referred to this pilot with 82 completing the program.

Statewide roll out of the 9-week version of the *NSW Sober Driver Program* commenced in July 2003. To date (31 July 2004), 34 Probation and Parole District Offices across NSW have delivered 112 programs with over 1400 offenders participating. A further 5 District Offices have referred offenders to the program. To date, 80% of program participants have successfully completed the program. 14 offenders have re-offended and returned to supervision by the NSW Dept of Corrective Services. Of these, 10 were for drink driving convictions. 51% of program participants came from rural or regional locations. 234 people across NSW have trained as facilitator/co-facilitators.

The Condensed Version of the Program successfully completed two consecutive pilots at three sites in 2003 and is scheduled to roll out across remote NSW from August 2004. 10 locations are set to start this version of the program.

A pilot of the *NSW Sober Driver Program* was delivered at Mannus Correctional Centre in March/April 2004. 8 offenders started and completed this pilot. An evaluation of the pilot recommended some minor changes to material to accommodate issues specific to the Correctional Centre environment. It is anticipated that the *NSW Sober Driver Program* will roll out in NSW Correctional Centres as a pre-release program at some point in the future.

Evaluation

An external agency, ARTD Management & Research Consultants, has been commissioned to undertake an evaluation of the effectiveness of the program. The evaluation will use a quasi-experimental approach utilising participant data in order to quantitatively measure the extent of effectiveness of the program as an educational and therapeutic intervention with the target population. This will cover changes in each participant's knowledge, attitudes and behavioural intentions and data on the level of re-offending subsequent to program participation. The evaluation will also include mixed methods utilising both qualitative and quantitative implementation data, including participant and key stakeholder interviews to provide an analysis of the critical success factors and barriers in the implementation process and the participation of the people in the target group.

The Coordinator of the project, on behalf of the NSW Safe Driver Working Party, regularly supplies progress reports to GARS.

Conclusion

The *NSW Sober Driver Program* is a whole of government initiative to address the serious road safety problem caused by repeat drink drive offenders. The Program has been designed as an educational and therapeutic program for repeat drink drive offenders and is the first statewide traffic offender rehabilitation program in NSW. The Program is jointly funded by the RTA and the MAA and delivered by the Probation and Parole Service.

Interagency collaboration has facilitated the development and implementation of the *NSW Sober Driver Program*. Best practice has been achieved through the exchange of and respect for the professional knowledge, skills and expertise of all project members, the utilisation of established infrastructures and the provision of joint funding.

Acknowledgements

The following agencies contributed to the program's development and implementation; The Roads and Traffic Authority of NSW, Motor Accidents Authority of NSW, NSW Department of Corrective Services, NSW Attorney General's Department, NSW Police, Blacktown TOP Inc. and ARRB Transport Research.

Appendix A:

An outline of the NSW Sober Driver Program content:

Week 1 Program introduction and overview	Program orientation: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Rationale.• Rights and responsibilities.
Week 2 Consequences of drink driving	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Excuses and reasons given for drink driving.• Immediate and longer term consequences of drink driving on self:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Legal.- Financial.- Social.- Emotional.- Professional, career, job.- Interpersonal relationships.
Week 3 Consequences of drink driving on others	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Exploration of who becomes involved when a drink driving offence occurs.• Immediate and longer-term impact of drink driving on the broader community.
Week 4 About driving	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Demands of safe driving:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Physical skills.- Thinking skills.- Danger-spotting skills.• Risk recognition and risk management.
Week 5 About alcohol	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Concepts of:<ul style="list-style-type: none">- Standard drinks.- BAC.- Returning to a zero BAC.- Short-term and long-term effects of alcohol on the body.
Week 6 Effects of alcohol on behaviour	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Effects alcohol has on behaviour.• Personal and social impacts of drinking alcohol.
Week 7 Managing drinking and situations	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• The value and use of Breath Alcohol Interlock Devices.• Understanding and applying behaviour change processes.• Recognizing drinking patterns.• Identifying high-risk situations.
Week 8 Avoiding relapse	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Assertive communication strategies.• Managing and reducing stress.
Week 9 Making choices about drinking and driving	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Skills and strategies for implementing and maintaining behaviour change.• Building a network of support.