

Targeting Drink Drivers on our Motorways

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Abstract

Operation 'NABBED' was developed to target alcohol affected drivers on the M4 Motorway in western Sydney. The operation was developed to overcome the WHS issues surrounding stationary RBT duties in a 110km/h area. The recent restructure of HWP resources in the NSW Police Force allowed for a large scale traffic enforcement along the entire length of the motorway consisting of Stationary RBT on every westbound off ramp from the M4 Motorway.

Background, Method, Results and Conclusions.

The M4 is the major Motorway that links the Greater Western Sydney to the large commercial centres of Sydney, Parramatta and Penrith. Mobile Enforcement and Last Drink Analysis identified the M4 as being used by alcohol impaired driver to travel home from where they had been drinking. From speaking to some of these drivers, it became apparent that motorists believed that stationary random breath testing was not carried out on motorways due to the 110km/h speed limit.

In 2014 I had been the Team Leader at Mt Druitt Highway Patrol for the previous 14 years. Providing a high profile traffic enforcement presence on this stretch of road had been a priority. There are significant risks to Police Officers when conducting traffic enforcement on this type of road. These risks limited the detection strategies that I could employ. Additionally, the previous structure of Highway Patrol resources in NSW limited me to only being able to task the 11 officers under my direct Supervision.

In December, 2011 all Highway Patrol resources were brought together under the Traffic and Highway Patrol Command. This allowed for large scale Traffic Enforcement to target a specific issue. The NSW Centre for Road Safety Enhanced Enforcement Guidelines indicate that to have maximum impact on a road safety issue, '.....short sharp bursts should see a geographical area targeted for a defined period of time with as many resources as possible'.

With that in mind, I developed Operation 'NABBED'. The mission of this operation was to: *'Detect Alcohol Impaired Drivers using the M4 Motorway'*. The concept of the Operation was simple. To provide high profile stationary random breath testing on every westbound off ramp of the M4 Motorway.

It was decided that the operation should run on the second weekend in December 2014, between the hours of 10.00pm and 3.00am on a Friday and Saturday to have maximum impact on the pre Christmas Holiday period. We first ran 'Nabbed' in 2014 with 60 officers targeting 13 off ramps. A total of 12,295 breath tests were conducted resulting in 54 PCA charges, 25 other Traffic Charges and 415 Penalty Notices issued. Every possible way of leaving the motorway was covered by breath testing, even the u-turn bays were monitored. This resulted in some motorists being detected at the end of the motorway in the Blue Mountains, who had intended exiting at Merrylands, some 30km earlier.

On both occasions, to maximize impact, print, television and social media was used. The timing of the operation was also well received as it coincided with pre Christmas work parties and School Holiday vacations approaching.

Operation NABBED M4 is now a yearly scheduled operation. The concept of operations has been adopted for enforcement on the M1, M2 and M7 connecting Sydney to the Central Coast and the Sydney Orbital Network. In total, NABBED has been conducted over 10 nights with a total of 69,111 Breath Tests conducted and 364 PCA Offences detected. An additional 251 charges were laid and 2,705 Penalty Notices were issued.

Citations:

- NSW Centre for Road Safety. (2014/15). Enhanced Enforcement Program, Additional Operation Guidelines, page 8 paragraph 3.

References

NSW Centre for Road Safety. (2014/15). Enhanced Enforcement Program, Additional Operation Guidelines.