



A Queensland Health spokesperson said illicit drugs had the capability of affecting driving skills.

“Drugs can affect a driver’s ability to see and hear, concentrate, make appropriate decisions, react to their surroundings, and co-ordinate their muscle movements,” the spokesperson said.

“Each drug has a different effect. Methamphetamine is a stimulant, ecstasy (MDMA) is a combination of a stimulant and hallucinogenic, and the tetrahydrocannabinol (THC) in cannabis slows down the central nervous system.

“There is no quality control for drugs made in illicit laboratories so individuals who use these drugs have no way of knowing exactly what they are taking, nor can they know how long these drugs will stay in their system.”

Random Roadside Drug Testing is proving to be effective across the state after the first conviction was issued to a Brisbane man charged from the first operation in December.

The man, who pleaded guilty, was fined \$250, disqualified from driving for two months, and given six months probation.

Roadside Drug Testing Unit Officer in Charge Senior Sergeant Kevin Groenhuijzen said the program was designed to curb driver impairment and reduce road trauma.

He explained that if an officer had conducted a Random Breath Test and the result was negative, he or she then had the option of conducting a Roadside Drug Test.

“It is up to the officers if they are going to do the test,” Senior Sergeant Groenhuijzen said.

“We have particular demographic groups that we look at testing, such as those between the ages of 18 and 25 years, or drivers in the transport industry, particularly truckies.

“These particular groups are most likely to be effected by illegal substances.

“We are testing for drugs we know are completely illicit,” he said.

“The three drugs we are testing for shouldn’t be taken in any shape or form.”

If there is a positive reading collected from the driver, they are taken for further testing in special-purpose vehicles.

“On this occasion about one millilitre of saliva is placed in a buffer solution of water and a saliva analysing instrument confirms if the test is positive,” Senior Sergeant Groenhuijzen said.

“If the reading is positive the driver will have their licence suspended for 24 hours.

“The saliva sample is then passed onto the Queensland Forensic Services’ John Tonge Centre where they will analyse it and issue a certificate of analysis within seven days to six weeks.”

A positive analysis will result in a prosecution being commenced against the driver.

Senior Sergeant Groenhuijzen said officers recognised the signs of a drink-driver but drug-driving detection was a finer line. Officers in the Roadside Drug Testing Unit received training from the Forensic Medical Officer to look for the physical indicators of a person on drugs.

The Random Roadside Drug Testing Unit is to be expanded in due course.

*By Michelle Fleming,
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Before the introduction of Random Roadside Drug Testing, the only way of identifying drug drivers was through blood samples taken at a hospital from drivers either involved in crashes or exhibiting signs of being adversely affected by drugs rather than alcohol.

Forensic Medical Officers employed by Queensland Health assist police by analysing blood and saliva samples, and advising police on impairment issues.

