



ROAD
TRAVEL
REWARDS

Cops stop crashes

More police enforcement needed to curb road trauma

August 2025

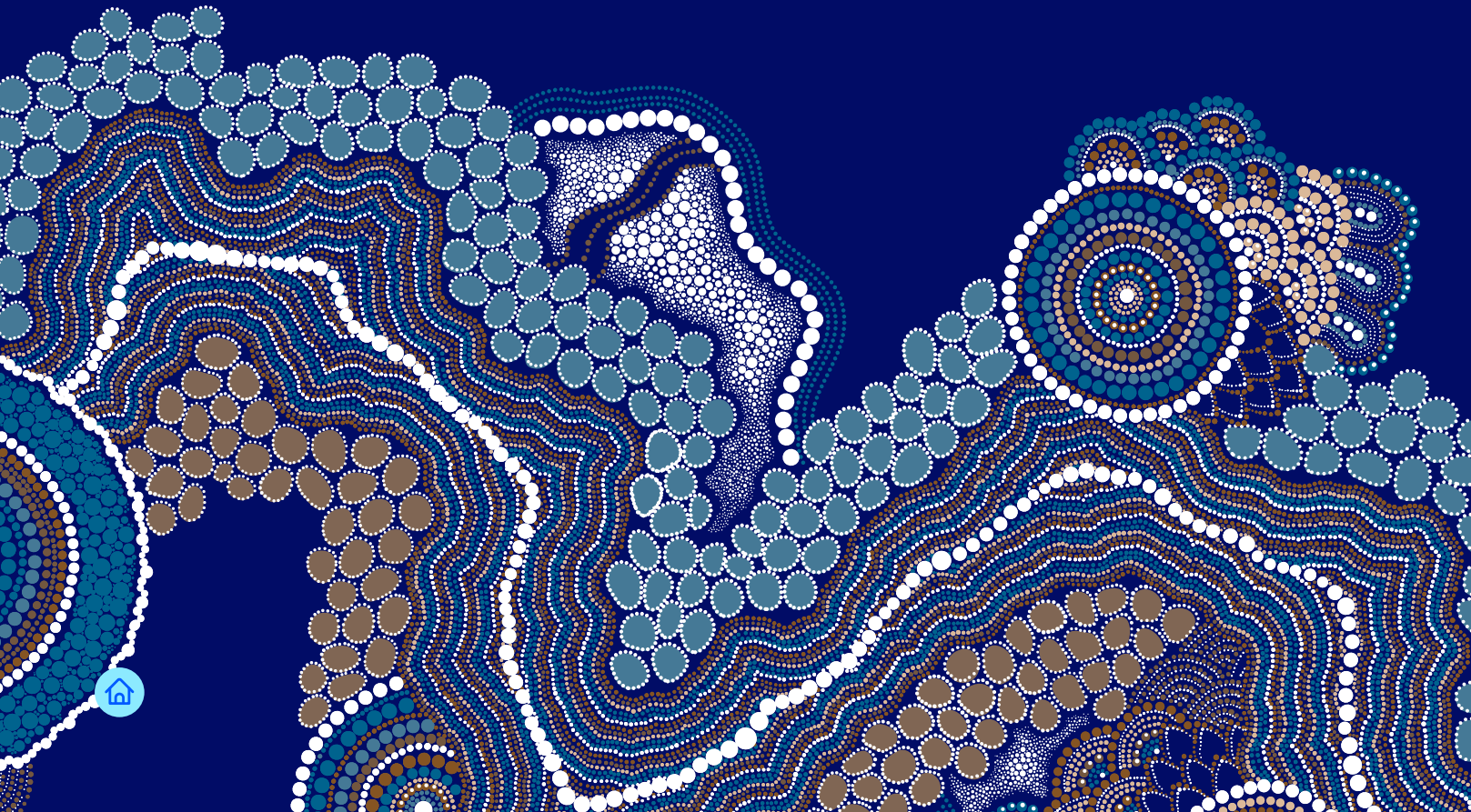
Acknowledging our Traditional Owners

We acknowledge the land on which we gather, from places as widespread and diverse as the NRMA. In the presence of Elders past, present and future, we recognise all journeys and our mutual role in creating new paths together.

About the NRMA

The NRMA is one of Australia's largest member-owned organisations with a 105-year history, representing over 3.4 million members. We offer a world of road, travel and rewards that help members live more freely.

Independent advocacy is the foundation activity of our organisation and remains critical to who we are today. As a modern mutual we work with all levels of government to help improve transport safety, road safety, mobility issues and enhance community connections.



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Introduction

We're now more than halfway through 2025, and 212 people have been killed on NSW roads, with many more seriously injured. That's 25 more lives lost compared to the same period last year.¹ The hidden toll is the ripple effect these tragedies have on families, friends, and the wider community.

As the state struggles to reduce this horrific road toll, what is urgently needed is more high visibility policing. Unlike automated enforcement, being pulled over by a police officer has an immediate and powerful impact on driver behaviour.

Unfortunately, there has been a reduction in Random Breath Testing (RBT) in NSW. Last year, over 3.4 million tests were conducted, a fall of over 100,000 tests on the year before.² It is imperative that testing is ramped up to best practice levels of at least 1.1 tests per year, per licence holder to curb drink driving or over 7.6 million tests.

Pleasingly, the longstanding target of 200,000 roadside drug tests was met last year. However, with 24 per cent of road crashes involving illicit drugs, a new target must be established and implemented to better deter and detect drug drivers.

With high visibility policing across the state, drivers are aware that they can get caught anytime, anywhere. Without it, many will continue to take risks endangering themselves and others on the road.



What is needed

1

Increased high visibility police enforcement, especially in regional areas.

2

Enforcement data from roadside drug and alcohol testing should be made publicly available each year, within three months of the end of the calendar year.

3

At least 1.1 random breath tests per year, per licence on issue to be conducted.

4

A new target for roadside drug testing established and a timeframe set for its implementation.



What our members are saying

We surveyed 796 members to measure the attitudes towards police enforcement on the roads and the perceived impact of police enforcement on road safety.³

87%

of people believed an on-the-spot penalty or warning from a Police Officer was the most effective way to change poor driving behaviour, up from 82 per cent in 2020.

Only 7%

of people believed that enforcement cameras were the most effective way to change bad driving behaviour – down from 10 per cent in 2020.

77%

believed there should be more marked police cars on the roads, this rose from 68 per cent in 2020.

Only 14%

believed they have seen more marked police cars over the last 12 months, down from 21 per cent in 2020.

25%

believed that they have seen less marked police cars over the last 12 months, up from 15 per cent in 2020.

67%

of people have not been pulled over by police in the last 12 months, increased from 60 per cent in 2020.

Seeing marked highway patrols on the road has an impact on driver behaviour with:

56%

more conscious of driving within the speed limit.

53%

are generally more careful about their driving behaviour.

41%

are more alert to obeying the road rules.



Police enforcement vital

High visibility policing remains a critical component in reducing road trauma. The presence of police has an immediate impact by preventing, deterring, and detecting dangerous and illegal driving behaviour. Our survey revealed that 87 per cent of respondents believed that receiving an on-the-spot penalty or warning from a police officer was the most effective way to change poor driving behaviour.⁴

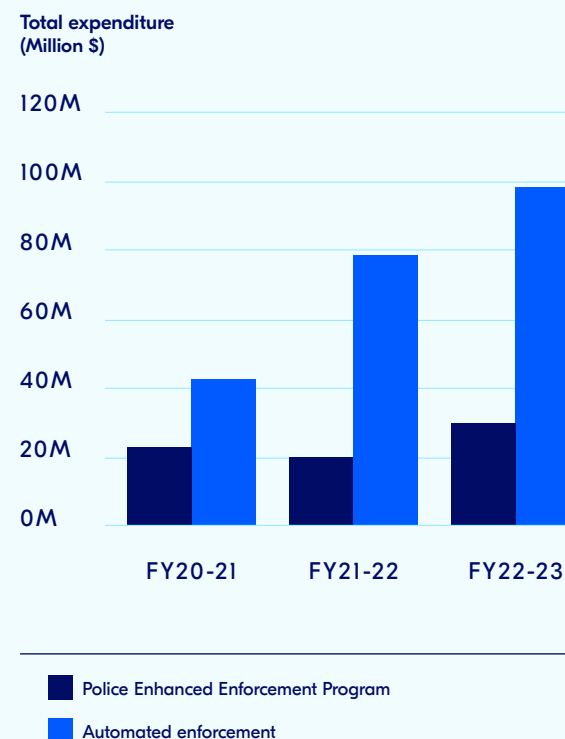
With the advancement of technology, there has been a growing emphasis on automated enforcement over traditional police enforcement. In addition to speeding, enforcement cameras now detect illegal mobile phone use while driving and incorrect seatbelt usage.

As shown in Figure 1, expenditure from the Community Road Safety Fund on automated enforcement increased by more than \$55 million between the financial year 2020-21 and 2022-23, reaching almost \$100 million. By contrast, police enforcement expenditure in the financial year 2022-23 was just under \$30 million.⁴

Automated enforcement plays an important role and has, in theory, freed up the police resources to focus on high-risk behaviours that cameras cannot detect, such as drink, drug and aggressive driving. However, our survey found that 25 per cent of respondents reported seeing less marked police vehicles over the last 12 months, up from 15 per cent in 2020.

The number of operational hours police dedicate to road safety enforcement remains unknown. What is known, however, is the rising road toll, particularly in regional areas. A logical and necessary response is to increase high visibility across the state.

Figure 1. Community Road Safety Fund expenditure for Police Enhanced Enforcement Program vs Automated enforcement.



(Source: Centre for Road Safety)





Police enforcement data needed

Unfortunately, the NSW Government does not regularly publish data on police enforcement efforts. This includes, but is not limited to, the number of RBTs and roadside drug tests conducted, as well as the number of drivers who tested positive. Without timely data, it is difficult to assess the effectiveness of enforcement measures in reducing road trauma.

Enforcement data from roadside drug and alcohol testing should be made publicly available each year, within three months of the end of the calendar year. The number of RBTs and roadside drug tests conducted must also be reported separately.

As of 29 July 2025,
212 people
were killed on NSW
roads compared to 187
the same time in 2024.¹



Ramp up breath testing

Random Breath Testing (RBT) is a vital countermeasure to reducing drink driving related crashes. Unfortunately, the number of RBTs conducted in NSW are declining.

In 2024, over 3.4 million RBTs were conducted, down from 3,514,706 breath tests in 2023.² The number of positive tests is not publicly available. The Austroads best practice model states that at least 1.1 RBT tests per licence holder per year are needed.⁵ On 2024 figures, this equates to over 7.6 million tests across NSW.

Not only are current breath testing levels falling short of best practice standards, they also fail to meet the NSW Police's own target. According to the Road Policing Strategy 2021, NSW Police aimed to increase RBTs to seven million per year by the end of 2020.⁶ This target has never been met. The closest NSW Police came to achieving it was in 2019, with over six million RBTs conducted. Since then, breath testing has dramatically decreased following the COVID-19 pandemic and has yet to return to previous levels.

While the NSW Government has confirmed that the decline in random breath tests is not due to police shortages, we would welcome the overdue boost in testing rates to best practice standards.⁷

NZ success in drink driving battle

For many years, New Zealand experienced a rise in fatalities due to drink driving, which coincided with a decline in the number of RBTs conducted. However, in 2024 the country saw a 40 per cent reduction in alcohol-related fatalities, with 57 fatalities compared to 92 in 2023. During the same year, New Zealand Police exceeded their target of 3.3 million breath tests, conducting a record 4,118,159 tests. Notably, 2024 also marked New Zealand's lowest road toll since 2014.

In 2024,
51 people
were killed in
alcohol-related
crashes⁸.



Roadside drug testing hits target

In 2018, the NSW Government announced plans to double the number of roadside drug tests from 100,000 annually to 200,000 by 2020.¹⁰ The NSW Police hit the target last year with over 230,000 roadside drug tests conducted. There is no publicly available data on the number of positive drug tests. The NRMA congratulates the NSW Police on achieving this vital target.

Drug driving contributes to over 24 per cent of road fatalities on NSW roads and has surpassed other behavioural factors including drink driving.¹¹ According to the NSW Government, *"the presence of drugs is more prevalent than the presence of alcohol."*¹²

Roadside drug testing of drivers by NSW Police can detect the presence of four illicit drugs: cannabis, methylamphetamine, MDMA and cocaine.

Roadside drug testing is more costly and time consuming than RBTs. However, new roadside testing procedures introduced last year have improved efficiency. According to NSW Police, these updated methods saved over 55,000 hours of police time.²

Given the rising road toll and the significant role illicit drugs plays in road fatalities, it is important that a new target is set for roadside drug testing, and a timeframe is set for its implementation. However, any increase in drug testing should not be at the detriment of the existing RBT program.

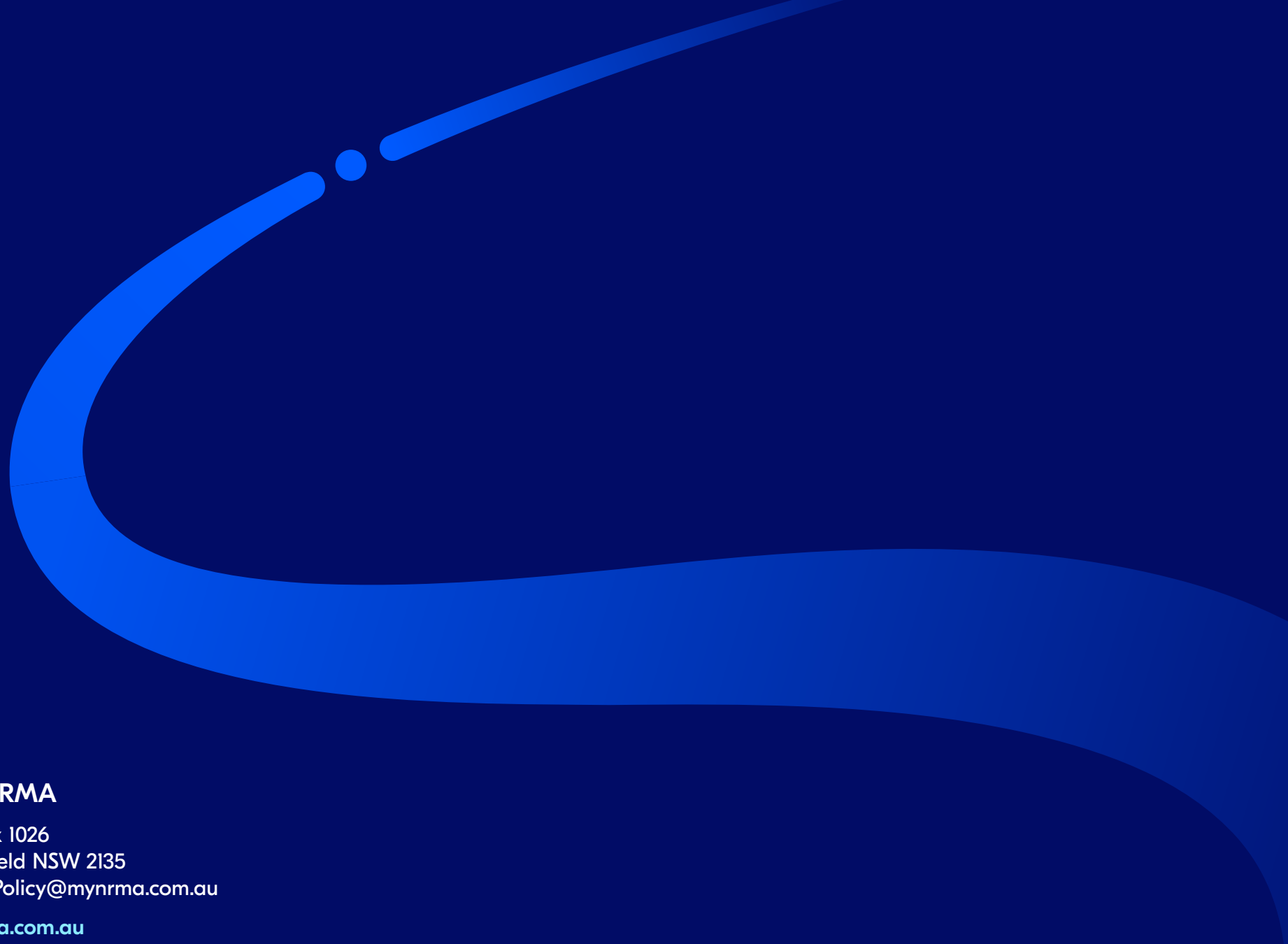
In 2024,
69 people
were killed in illicit
drug related crashes
(down from 79 in 2023).



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