



# MEDIA BRIEF SHEET

## Key findings of the Northern Territory Road Safety Taskforce Report 2006 *SAFER ROAD USE: A Territory Imperative* (The NT Report)

The NT Road Safety Taskforce 2006 was established by the Northern Territory Government in January 2006 to work out how to reduce the incidence of road crashes in the Northern Territory.

The Taskforce is an inter-government group comprising representatives from the Department of Planning and Infrastructure, the Department of Health and Community Services, the Department of Justice and NT Police.

The findings and recommendations of the Taskforce have been submitted to Cabinet in the Northern Territory Road Safety Taskforce Report 2006, *SAFER ROAD USE: A Territory Imperative* (The NT Report).

The NT Report shows that to effectively and sustainably reduce the terrible human toll, the road safety culture in the Territory must change. Within the report are a series of evidence-based recommendations to ensure safer road use in the Territory – an integrated package that covers penalties, enforcement and education, and the future coordination of road safety in the Territory.

The key findings of the NT Report are:

### Risk of being killed in a road crash in the Territory

- Territorians are at **greater risk of being killed** in a road crash than people in the **rest of the developed world** (risk is twice that of the USA, more than three times that of Denmark, Japan and Germany, and more than four times that of the UK).
- The risk of being killed on Northern Territory (NT) roads is on average **three times greater than everywhere else in Australia**.
- On average, **one in every 400 Territorians will be killed or seriously injured on Territory roads this year**, and **one person killed and nine seriously injured** on Territory roads every week.
- The NT Report analysed all the deaths and serious injuries in the NT from the last five years and studied extensive evidence from around the world. The report determined the three big killers are **drink-driving, speed and fatigue**, with two other contributing killers in **failure to wear seatbelts and running red lights**.

### Driving under the influence of alcohol and drugs

- At least **48% of fatal crashes and 17% of serious injuries in the NT are alcohol-related**.
- From Dec 2005 to Jan 2006, statistics of drivers caught with alcohol readings above the legal limit, revealed **one driver in every 42 over the limit** in the NT (compared with one in 192 in Qld, and one in 314 in Vic).
- Territorians are at great risk from repeat drink-driving offenders – **28% of all drink-drivers are repeat offenders**.
- As well as having the **lowest fines** in the country, the NT also has **no demerit points** system and **no disqualification to deter lower-level drink-driving**. Currently NT drivers can be apprehended for driving with a blood alcohol reading of up to **0.08 an unlimited number of times and not lose their licence**.
- **Current limitations on taking breath and blood samples** mean that drink-drivers can avoid being caught in the NT.
- The NT has Australia's **highest level** of certain drug use (e.g. cannabis, amphetamines and opiates) **but police have no powers to test drivers for drugs**.



### Speed and speeding

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- Research shows that a **small reduction in speed** has a **major impact on the occurrence of crashes and the severity of injuries** (increasing average vehicle speed from 100km/h to 110km/h can increase serious injury crashes by about 33% and fatal crashes by about 46%).
- Since a 110km/h speed limit was introduced on the NT's Lasseter Highway in 2001, there has been a **reduction in deaths by 37%** and reduction in serious injuries by 44%.
- In the NT, the **chance of being caught** speeding and the level of penalties for speeding are **lower than the rest of the country**.
- Evidence shows the presence of **speed cameras reduces average traffic speeds, crashes and crash injuries**.
- NT statistics for October 2005 show **178 speeding fines were issued in a three-day period**, with **40% of those exceeding speed limits by 15 km/h or more**.
- **Current penalties are not a deterrent**. Of the 44 276 individuals who were issued with 74 531 speeding fines between 2003 and 2005, 8165 received two fines, 3418 received three fines, **3227 received 4 - 10 fines**, and a staggering 134 received more than 11 fines. The worst speeding offender received 47 fines.
- Research has shown that **fines alone**, while important, **are not an effective means of preventing repeat offenders** from driving dangerously.
- Where demerit points systems are in place, the **rate of offending slows as demerit points are accumulated**.
- In one study, three out of four people agreed that the possibility of **losing demerit points would influence their driving speed**. Potential loss of licence is more likely to contribute to a safer driving culture and more effective enforcement by police.

### Attitudes to open road speed limits

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- Driving on the open road is not safer at higher speeds – **higher speeds result in higher rates of crashes resulting in fatalities and serious injuries**. More than half of all fatal crashes in the NT are run-off-road or overturned crashes that imply loss of control and excessive speed.
- Changing our road safety culture about speed on the open road will be important as **38% of speed-related fatalities occurred on open roads**.
- **Speed is under-represented as an identified factor in road deaths and injuries** due in part to no open road speed limits.

### Fatigue

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- The majority of crashes on NT open roads are single vehicle crashes (run-off-road, overturned), which suggests a lethal link between fatigue and speed. Research shows fatigue may be a factor in up to 30% of fatal crashes and 15% of serious injuries.
- The risk of crashing when driving after being **awake for 17 hours is equivalent to having a blood alcohol reading of 0.05**.
- With travel involving long distances in remote country, it is likely **fatigue, regardless of average speed, plays a significant part** in NT crashes.



### Seatbelts

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- In more than **50% of fatal crashes** in the NT since 2000, **seatbelts were not worn** when available.
- Since 2000 on NT roads, **112 vehicle occupants** who were **not wearing seatbelts have died**, and **276 were seriously injured**.
- Research shows **seatbelts reduce the risk of death** for front seat car occupants by approximately **50%**.
- NT is the **only state or territory** where the Traffic Regulations permit **children under 12 months** to **travel in vehicles without restraints**.

### Running red lights

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- Since 2000 there have been **193 crashes attributed to drivers disobeying traffic lights** in Darwin alone. These crashes resulted in four fatalities and 58 serious injuries.
- **Side-impact crashes** at traffic lights invariably result in **serious injuries or fatalities**.
- **In a 24-hour period**, road sensors indicated that at 11 Darwin intersections, as many as **2613 vehicles were potential red light runners**.
- Current **penalties in the NT are low** in comparison to the rest of Australia.

### Groups at higher risk of death or injury

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- **Young or new drivers, visitors to the Territory and Indigenous Territorians are at higher risk** of being involved in a road crash and road fatality than other drivers.
- Young NT drivers have three times **the rate of crashes and fatalities** of other drivers.
- Drivers aged 16 - 19 in the NT comprised 5% of all drivers but were involved in **24% of all crashes after 10.00pm** at night.
- In **15.6% of crashes** involving **16-year-old drivers**, there were **three or more passengers** in the car – compared with 3.8% for drivers of all ages.
- Driver training on its own does not lead to young drivers having fewer crashes. The amount of additional **supervised driving by learners is vital** in reducing crash rates.
- The NT's licensing system permits unrestricted driving at the youngest age among all Australian states and territories. The **Territory has the least-restrictive system**.
- Visitors accounted for 20% of fatalities and 19% of serious injuries in the NT from 2000 to 2005. The most frequent crash type was single vehicle crashes in rural areas.
- In the NT in recent years, **Indigenous Territorians have made up 50% of road deaths**. However, statistics for Indigenous Territorians were **not as high for serious injuries**.
- **Of a total of 2995 fatalities and serious injuries in the NT** in the period 2000 to 2005, a total of **779, or 26%, involved Indigenous Territorians**. This is less than the representation of Indigenous people in the total NT population.
- **Indigenous fatalities are higher in every state and territory than non-Indigenous fatalities**. They are the highest in the NT, SA and WA (and non-Indigenous Territorians are more than twice as likely to be killed on NT roads than anywhere else in Australia).
- Pedestrians comprised a much larger proportion of Indigenous road fatalities than of non-Indigenous fatalities, particularly in the NT, WA and Qld. Alcohol intoxication was accentuated among Indigenous pedestrian fatalities.



## Future coordination of road safety in the NT

Future coordination of the road safety effort, along with the measures outlined in the NT Report, is crucial to reducing the Territory's road toll. The NT Report recommends that Local Government becomes more involved in local road safety. This will allow greater community voice in road safety issues.

The NT Report also recommends that coordination at a Territory-wide level should be undertaken by a senior level group comprising key Government agencies, TIO, AANT, and an acknowledged road safety expert.

## Recommendations of the NT Road Safety Taskforce

The NT Road Safety Taskforce recommends a range of measures to improve road safety in the Northern Territory. In summary, they are:

Changes to penalties	Recommendations
Increase penalties for - alcohol-related offences - speeding - not wearing seatbelts - running red lights	Recs 1, 7, 8, 14
Introduce immediate suspension of driver licences for repeat drink-driving offenders	Rec 1
Introduce tighter seatbelt regulations	Rec 9
Introduce a demerit point system based on the national model	Rec 13
Changes to enforcement	
Improve detection of drink and drug-driving	Recs 2, 4
Introduce default speed limit on open roads to 110km/h	Rec 6
Develop a Graduated Driver Licensing scheme for young drivers	Rec 12
Install integrated red light and speed cameras	Rec 14
Highway Patrol and Remote Area Traffic Patrol units to operate out of Katherine and Alice Springs	Recs 16, 17
Establish a dedicated Traffic Section in NT Police	Rec 15
Improved road safety education and signage	
Better road safety education curriculum for students	Rec 19
Review current mandatory Drink Driver Education course	Rec 3
Communicate new drink and drug-driving initiatives to the public	Rec 5
Introduce community-based officers for outreach into remote communities	Rec 10
Better signage and marking on routes with high tourist traffic	Rec 11
Increased funding for road safety education	Recs 6, 8, 18
Improved coordination of road safety	
Improve coordination on road safety between all authorities	Recs 20, 21



**Northern Territory Road Safety Taskforce 2006  
(and experience of Taskforce members in the Northern Territory)**

<b>NT Road Safety Taskforce 2006 Member</b>	<b>Time in NT</b>	<b>Experience in NT</b>
Chris Bigg Executive Director Transport, Department of Planning and Infrastructure	24 years	24 years in NT Government, with 22 years experience in transport
Mark Payne Assistant Commissioner Operations Command, NT Police	27 years	24 years as an NT Police Officer
Bob Rennie Superintendent of Road Safety, NT Police	24 years	24 years as an NT Police Officer
Steven Skov Centre for Disease Control, Department of Health and Community Services	20 years	20 years as a medical practitioner in the NT – including hospital and flying doctor work, 10 years working with remote communities and 2½ years injury prevention experience
Guy Riley Senior Policy Officer, Department of Justice	20 years	20 years as a lawyer in the NT
Bruce McCormack Corrections Policy, Department of Justice	More than 20 years	More than 20 years involved in the justice system
Nicholas Papandonakis Director, Transport Safety, Department of Planning and Infrastructure	41 years	20 years in NT Government
Pam Palmer Manager, Road Safety, Department of Planning and Infrastructure (Executive Officer to the Taskforce)	26 years	5 years teaching in NT and 8 years in road safety