

A photograph of a glass of alcohol and a set of keys is centered in the middle of the page. The glass is partially filled with a clear liquid, and the keys are attached to a black fob. The entire scene is set against a solid blue background.

Boost the bus

RBT every driver

Road Safety Series

December 2021

About the NRMA

The NRMA represents over 2.7 million Australians in NSW and the ACT, making it one of the largest tourism and transport companies in Australia. We provide motoring, transport and tourism services to our Members and the community.

We've been focused on better transport infrastructure since the beginning, when our founders lobbied for improvements to Sydney's Parramatta Road back in 1920. Independent advocacy remains critical to who we are today.

Road Safety Series

The NRMA has prepared a series of reports with the aim of identifying the main factors involved in road crashes and initiatives that may help to reduce the risk of loss of life and injuries.

We acknowledge the next major tool to prevent and reduce loss of life will be driven by technology, as was seen with seatbelts. While we move towards an autonomous future, continued investment in road infrastructure, vehicle technology and public education campaigns are needed to improve the safety of motorists on our roads.

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Our 'Don't Blow it Campaign' in 1982 aimed to shift public perception of drink driving.

Introduction

The NRMA has played a leadership role in addressing the dangers of drink driving in our society. We campaigned for the introduction of Random Breath Testing (RBT) and launched the first-ever drink driving awareness campaign.

Commencing in 1982, RBT is a critical component of deterring drink drivers. Drink driving is no longer socially acceptable in our community. Despite this, it continues to be a major road safety issue. In 2020, 54 people lost their lives in alcohol-related crashes on NSW roads. In order to deter people from drink driving, they need to perceive that there is a high risk of getting caught. History had shown that an increase in RBTs can further reduce alcohol-related road trauma.

Levels of RBT vary across jurisdictions, with some conducting just 0.26 tests per licence on issue per year (ACT), and others conducting 1.16 (Tasmania). In NSW, the rate in 2017 was 0.80 per licence on issue per year however, it increased to 0.96 in 2019.

It is the NRMA's strong view that in order to curb drink driving, there needs to be:

- At least 1.1 RBTs per year per licence on issue.
- The appropriate allocation of resourcing and funding to increase police enforcement.
- Raise awareness of the high risk of detection.
- Support education campaigns to encourage the separation of drinking and driving.

What the NRMA wants

- 1.** At least 1.1 random breath tests per year per licence on issue to be conducted in the financial year 2022/23.
- 2.** Adequate planning and resourcing to ensure a long-term goal of at least 1.5 random breath tests per year per licence on issue is achievable.
- 3.** Appropriate funding and resourcing allocated to NSW Police in order to achieve at least 1.1 random breath tests per year across NSW.
- 4.** Increased RBT of drivers must be supported by an education campaign to raise the awareness of the high risk of detection and associated penalties.



Drink driving facts

In 2020,

54

people lost their lives in alcohol-related crashes.¹

In 2020,

303

people were seriously injured in alcohol-related crashes.¹

NSW Police conducted

2,831,035

random breath tests in 2020 – down 53 per cent on 2019.²

72%

of alcohol-related fatalities were on country roads.¹

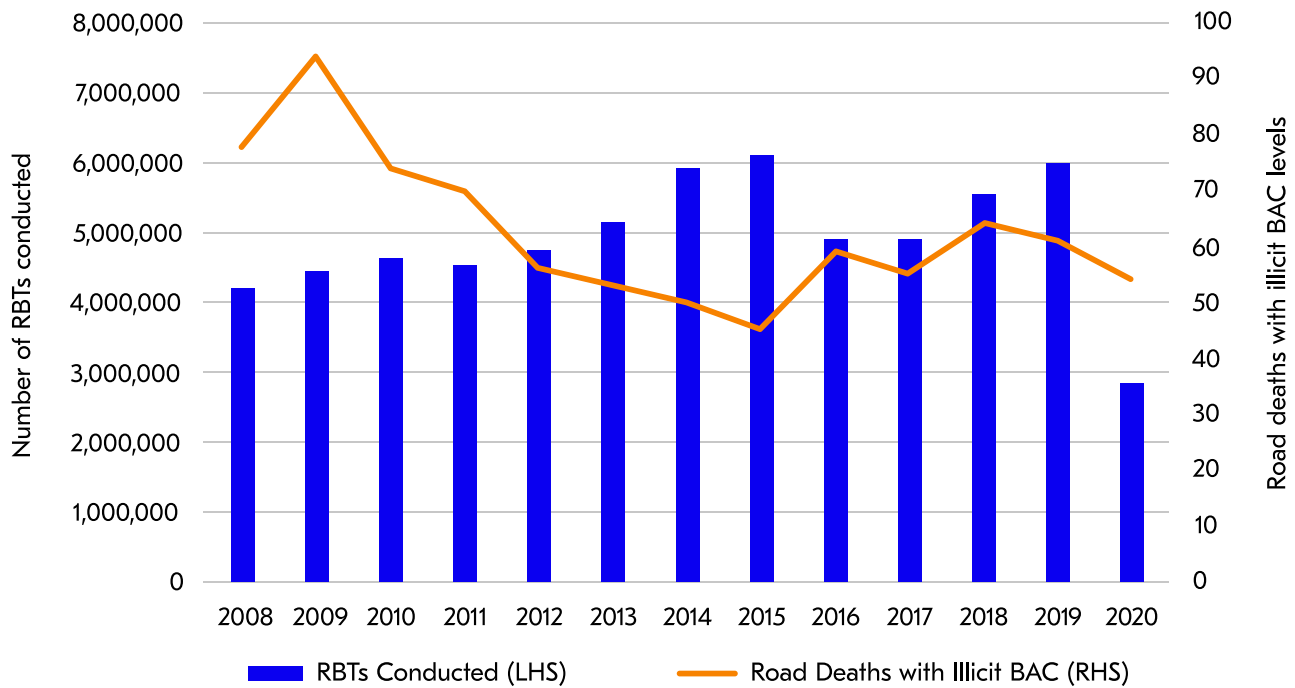


Figure 1. NSW Random Breath Tests and road deaths involving illegal Blood Alcohol Concentration. Source: Bureau of Infrastructure and Transport Research Economics.

Drink driving levels

Blood Alcohol Concentration (BAC)

Low-range – BAC of 0.05 to less than 0.08

Mid-range – BAC of 0.08 to less than 0.15

High-range – BAC of 0.15 or above

Trauma from fatal crashes involving alcohol

2016 – 15.5% of fatalities

2020 – 19% of fatalities

Increased RBTs needed

RBTs were first introduced in NSW in 1982 following extensive campaigning by the NRMA. It was the NRMA that launched the state's first ever drink driving campaign.

RBTs have been instrumental in drastically reducing the number of alcohol-related fatalities over the last 40 years. Unfortunately, over the last five years we have seen that trend reversed and there has been a rise in alcohol-related trauma.

Trauma from fatal crashes involving alcohol increased from 15.5 percent in 2016 to 19 percent in 2020.¹

In 2020, NSW Police conducted 2,831,035 breath tests and due to COVID restrictions, this was significantly less than the six million conducted in 2019. While the number of RBTs more than halved (-53%), of equal concern is the rate of percentage of positive tests.

As shown in Figure 2, the rate of percentage of positive tests was trending down however, in 2020 it sharply reversed with a rise to 0.50 per cent positive RBTs.

It is clear that complacency among some motorists' has set in and there needs to be a renewed and heightened sense of getting caught drink driving. To achieve this the number of RBTs conducted must be boosted in order to deter this risk behaviour.

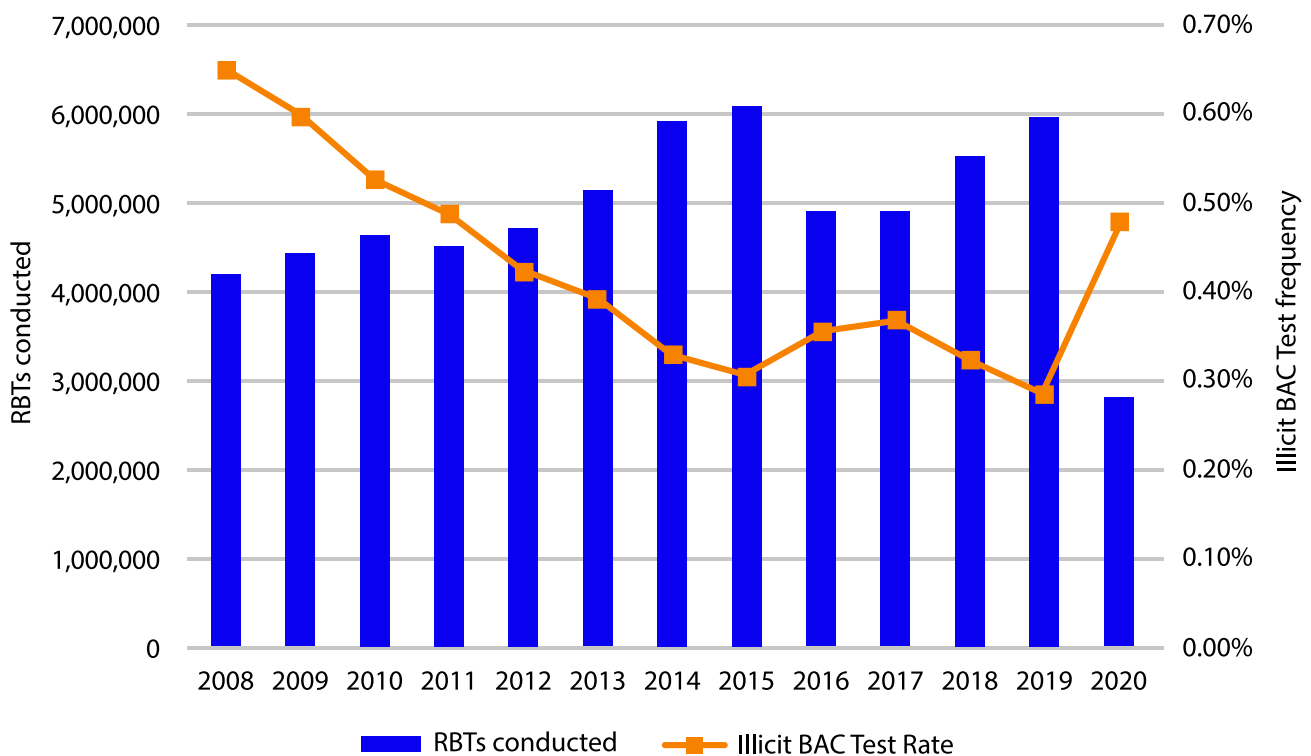


Figure 2. Number of Random Breath Tests (RBT) conducted in NSW vs percentage of positive tests.

Optimum RBT rates

Austrroads (2020) released a national policy framework on effective reforms to reduce and prevent drink driving, including a recommendation for jurisdictions to increase the number of RBTs. As shown in Table 1, Austrroads analysis of 2017 data revealed that, RBT rates vary across jurisdictions as shown in Table 1. In NSW, the rate for 2017 was 0.80 per licence on issue per year.³

The Austrroads report recommended the following optimum RBT rates:

Short term - At least 1.1 RBTs per year per licence on issue.

Long term - At least 1.5 RBTs per year per licence on issue.

Enforcement	NSW	VIC	QLD	SA	WA	TAS	NT	ACT
No. of RBTs in 2017	4.9 million	4.1 million	3 million	591,939	2,062,00	505,445	197,742	85,000
Positive tests in 2017	18,166	11,000	17,000	5137	11,976	2187	2719	945
RBTs per year per licenses on issue	0.80	0.87	0.70	0.48	0.91	1.16	1.07	0.26
Rate of detection	1 in 269 tests	1 in 354 tests	1 in 176 tests	1 in 115 tests	1 in 172 tests	1 in 231 tests	1 in 72 tests	1 in 89 tests

Table 1. Administration of drink driving enforcement across Australia. (Source: Austrroads).

Optimum RBT rates continued

The NRMA conducted further analysis and found that in 2019, the rate for NSW increased to 0.96 per licence on issue per year. NSW also almost achieved the short-term goal of at least 1.1 RBTs in 2014 and 2015 as shown in Figure 3.

at least 1.1 RBTs per licence on issue as indicated in Table 2, which the NRMA believes is achievable in the financial year 2022/23. However, adequate planning and resourcing is needed to ensure a long-term goal of at least 1.5 random breath tests per year per licence on issue can be achieved.

Based on 2020 NSW licence numbers, over seven million RBTs need to be conducted per year in order to achieve

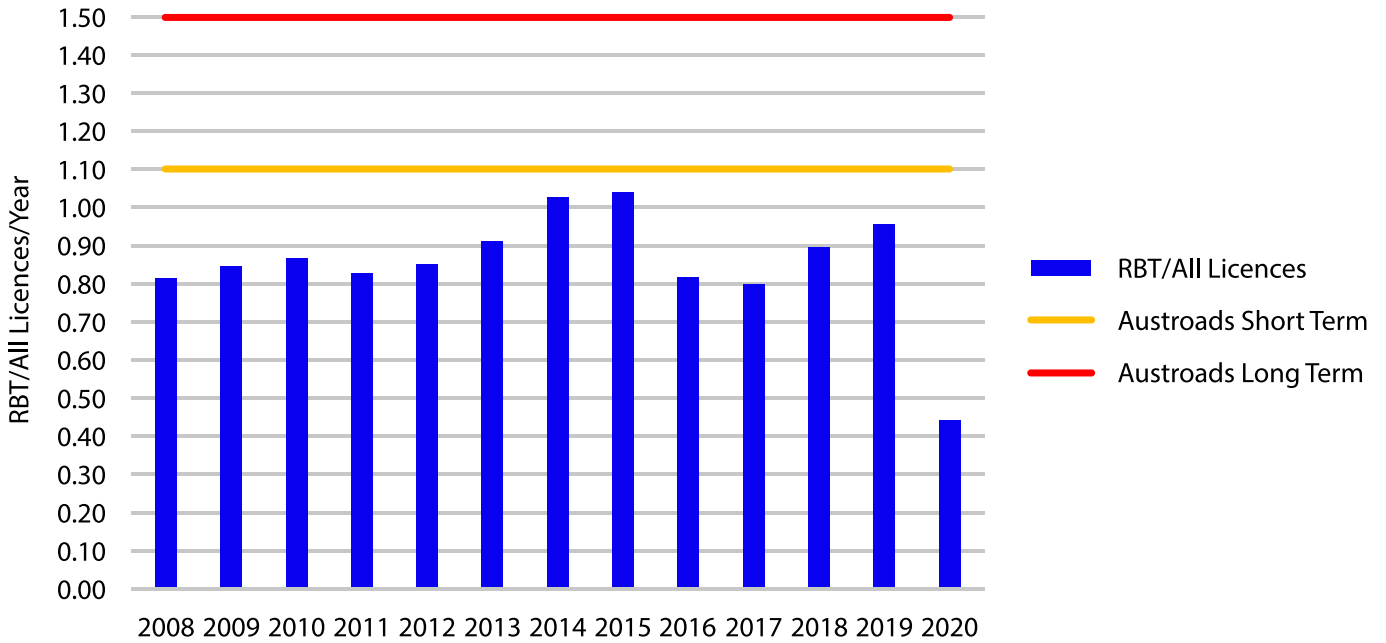


Figure 3. Number of RBTs conducted in NSW per year per licence on issue compared to Austroads short and long term recommend RBT rates.

Austroads Recommended RBT rates		Number of RBTs needed per year
Short term	1.1 RBT per licence on issue	7,011,734*
Long term	1.5 RBT per licence on issue	9,561,456*

*Based on 2020 NSW licence numbers.

Table 2. Number of RBTs that need to be conducted in NSW to achieve Austroads recommended RBT rates.

Fund more police and resourcing

RBTs are labour intensive, yet highly effective in deterring and detecting drink driving. A major barrier to increasing RBTs and potentially reducing road trauma is the allocation of appropriate resources.

The NRMA welcomed the \$41.5 million in this year's NSW Budget for an additional 250 police officers in 2021-2022, as part of the NSW Government's \$583 million commitment to recruit 1500 police over four years. It is now critical that we see more of them dedicated to reducing the road toll.

In order to increase RBT rates to evidence-based measures, appropriate funding and allocation of resources is needed beyond what is currently budgeted.

Police resourcing should also be adequately distributed across the state, with particular attention to regional NSW given that 72 per cent of alcohol-related fatalities occurred on country roads.

Additionally, the NRMA supports the Austroads recommendation that Mobile Drug Testing requirements should not be resourced through reduction of drink driving enforcement efforts.³

NSW Traffic and Highway Patrol Command

Authorised strength of the Traffic and Highway Patrol Command is

1,428

personnel. This includes Highway Patrol operatives, Crash Investigation Unit, personnel in technical duties, supervisors and management team.⁴

700

vehicles (includes Crash Investigation Unit vehicles and dedicated RBT buses).

30

30 dedicated RBT buses across NSW

21c

for a disposable RBT tube

+

48c

for a single disposable breath analysis instrument mouthpiece

=

69c

for a single RBT test



Separate drinking from driving

The role education campaigns play in raising awareness of the dangers of drink driving and encouraging good behaviour is vital in reducing road trauma. While this has helped make drink driving largely unacceptable in our community, the risk in some areas is still prevalent and sadly growing.

Continued and sustained mass media education campaigns are needed to promote the benefits of separating drinking and driving to all drivers. This includes, planning ahead on how to get home from a night out, thus removing the temptation for drivers to get behind the wheel when they might be over the limit.

Motorists also need more information about the dangers of driving over the limit the next day. Some people may think they are fine to drive the next morning and we need to educate them that this may not always be the case.

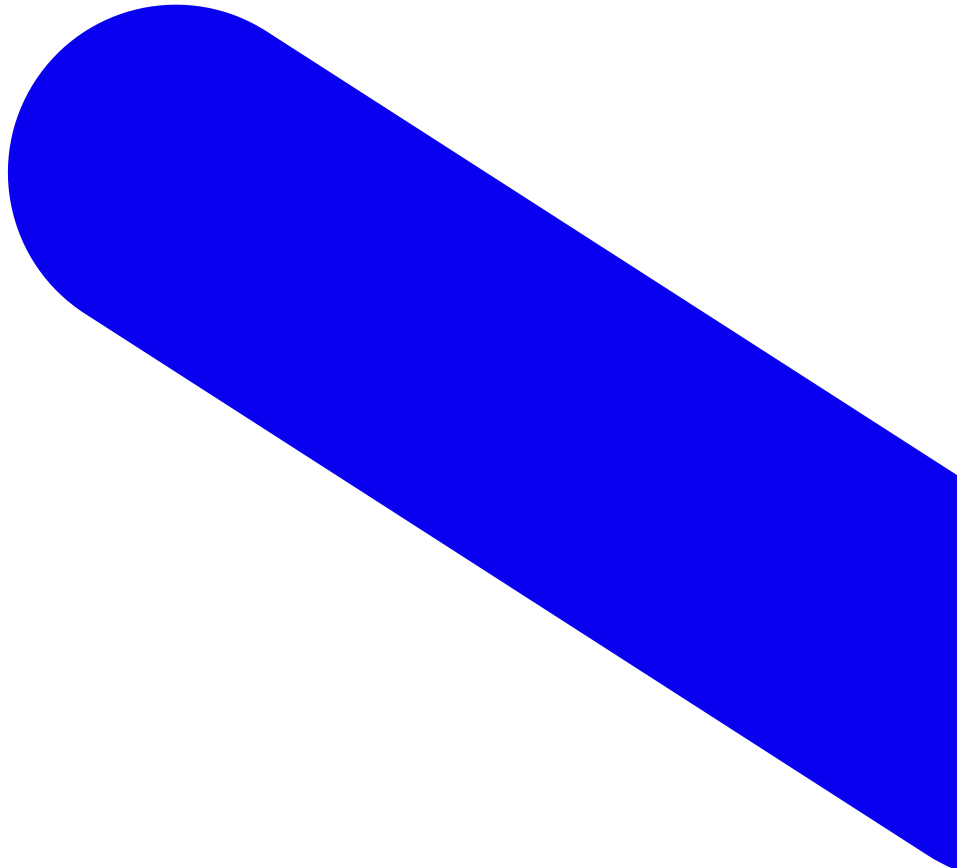
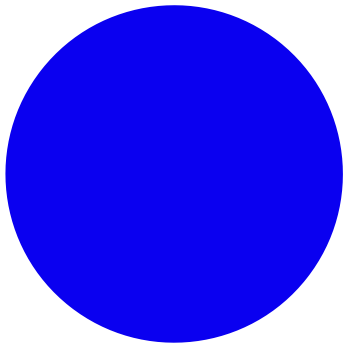
Drink driving campaigns should also aim to raise awareness of the high risk of enforcement and penalties in order to deter drink driving.

Education campaigns should focus on:

- High levels of enforcement and penalties.
- Promoting the benefits of separating drinking and driving
- The dangers of driving over the limit the next day.

References

1. Transport for NSW. (2021). Centre for Road Safety. roadsafety.transport.nsw.gov.au/statistics/interactivecrashstats/index.html
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