

The Alternative Journal of the Rainbow Region



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THE NIMBIN GOODTIMES

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MOBILE DRUG TESTING



IT'S NOT ABOUT ROAD SAFETY

Legendary Nimbin musician Neil Pike being detained for drug testing on his way to a gig at MardiGrass Photo: Sue Stock

by David Shoebridge, Greens MLC

If you live in or near Nimbin you will be very familiar with the police mobile drug testing (MDT) program. You will have seen the flocks of patrol cars, the MDT vans and the lines of stopped traffic. No doubt you are thinking 'how much does this cost and is it really about road safety?' If only the NSW government was asking the same questions.

Our office has followed the scheme closely for a number of years and it would be an underestimate to say we are not impressed. The information we have obtained so far shows that the scheme doesn't test to see if drivers are impaired by drugs, it looks for the mere "presence" of drugs. It also targets just three illegal drugs, cannabis, MDMA and amphetamines, but ignores all legal drugs as well as commonly used illegal drugs like cocaine.

Knowing it has these faults, we decided to press for more information. We now have new information from a freedom of information request made to the NSW Centre for Road Safety. This gives us the data from drivers who are drug tested after a motor vehicle accident. It is data collected in ambulances and hospitals. It's not from information collected by police at the roadside MDT stops. There's no spin in this data.

It's telling us some pretty straightforward things. Benzodiazepines like Valium and Rohypnol are the drugs most commonly found in drivers who had car accidents over the last three years. The next most commonly found drugs are methamphetamines, then cannabis, followed by MDMA and cocaine at much lower levels. This matches previous information we've seen from overseas jurisdictions.

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