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NEW LAWS TARGET DRINK AND DRUG DRIVING

New laws targeting drink and drug driving come into effect in South Australia today.

Road Safety Minister, Michael O'Brien says the measures aim to crack down on those repeat offenders who continue to drink over the limit or take drugs before driving.

"The laws are part of a package of reforms, including the Mandatory Interlock Scheme, which this year is anticipated to prevent up to 2,700 drink driving offenders from starting their vehicles if they register a positive blood alcohol reading," Mr O'Brien said.

"The legislation builds on the State Government's other road safety initiatives, which include the introduction of full time mobile RBT's, immediate loss of licence for drink driving above 0.08 and random roadside drug drive testing.

"The statistics show 23% of drivers or riders killed on our roads between 2005 and 2009 tested positive to drugs.

"The percentage of road users killed while driving with a blood alcohol level over 0.05 has increased significantly over the last decade from a low of 25% in 2000 to an average of 37% in the five year period (2005-2009).

"On average, over the same five year period (2005-2009), 73% of all driver and rider fatalities with a blood alcohol reading above 0.05 were, in fact, over 0.15," Mr O'Brien said.

"The new laws, effective from today, include:

- A three-month licence disqualification for a first court conviction when driving with a prescribed drug (cannabis, speed or ecstasy) present in saliva or blood, or driving with a blood alcohol concentration of 0.05 to 0.079.
- Heavier penalties for repeat offenders, with courts considering both previous drink **and** drug driving offences during sentencing.
- An alcohol or drug dependency assessment for drivers (depending on the number of previous drink or drug driving offences committed).
- Lowering the minimum age of people who attend, or are admitted to, hospital for treatment as a result of a marine vessel or motor vehicle accident from whom a blood sample must be taken.

"The legislation will also allow police to test marine vessel operators for prescribed drugs (cannabis, speed and ecstasy) under the Harbors and Navigation Act 1993. Currently, the police can only test road users for drug driving," Mr O'Brien said.