MEDIA RELEASE

Hon Diana Laidlaw MLC
Minister for Transport & Urban Planning
Minister for the Arts
Minister for the Status of Women

Thursday, 7 June 2001

MOBILE RANDOM BREATH TESTING TO BE INTRODUCED

The State Government will introduce mobile random breath testing during prescribed periods – including long weekends and school holidays – as part of a new road safety reform package.

Minister for Transport and Urban Planning, Diana Laidlaw, says she will introduce a range of road safety measures in a Bill to Parliament today aimed at reducing South Australia’s road deaths, injuries and related health costs.

The Statutes Amendment (Road Safety Initiatives) Bill 2001 provides for:
• The compulsory loss of licence for exceeding any maximum speed by more than 45km/h;
• Increased penalties for unlicensed drivers who have never held a licence by imposing a fine of $2500 for a first offence;
• New procedures for requiring the production of a drivers licence which will aid police in tracing stolen vehicles and enforcing licence conditions;
• Introduction of mobile random breath testing at specified times, in conjunction with normal police patrol duties;
• Introduction of digital cameras to improve detection of speeding offences, especially heavy vehicles; and
• To provide for the testing of accuracy for fixed housing speed cameras.

Ms Laidlaw also foreshadowed that the Government is assessing:
• The effectiveness of a recently introduced New Zealand practice that provides for the immediate roadside impounding of vehicles driven by unlicensed or disqualified drivers; and
• Options to require drivers disqualified for irresponsible practices to undertake a training course before they regain their licence.

“All the measures are designed to meet the State Government’s commitment – as part of the National Road Safety Strategy endorsed late last year – to reduce South Australia’s road toll by 40 per cent, to no more than 86 by 2010,” Ms Laidlaw says.

“The Bill allows police to conduct a mobile random breath test at any time during prescribed periods – this includes long weekends, school holidays or during a period designated by the Minister for Police. Currently, police can only conduct a random breath test at a designated random breath testing station, or if there is reasonable grounds to stop a motorist for another matter.”

Ms Laidlaw says changes to laws regarding production of a driver’s licence will mean police can request a specimen signature at the time of an offence (if the driver isn’t carrying their licence) - to help ensure that the person who subsequently shows their licence at a police station, is the same person.

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BACKGROUND


Unlicensed drivers

- The present penalty for unlicensed drivers in SA is an expiation fee of $188, with a maximum fine of $1,250.
- The Bill provides for a maximum fine of $1250 for an unlicensed driver who has previously held an appropriate licence (and continues to be expiable). The maximum fine for a driver who has never had a licence for the class of vehicle they are driving is $2500 for a first offence, and $5000 or imprisonment for one year, plus disqualification from driving for at least three years for a second and subsequent offence.

Exceeding speed limit by more than 45km/h

- Current laws regarding speeding do not include disqualification from driving as a penalty – instead excessive speeding is dealt by police through the charge of dangerous driving.
- The Bill creates a specific offence of exceeding any maximum speed limit by more than 45km/h, carrying a penalty of a minimum three months licence disqualification. Where a speeding offence is detected by a speed camera, police will undertake an investigation to establish the driver of the vehicle who would then be prosecuted through a Court.
- The offence will apply to all vehicle classes (eg B-Double heavy vehicles speed limited to 100km/h) and all speed zones (eg. school zones / residential street limits / roadworks).

Random mobile breath testing

- Current laws do not allow police to stop motorists for a breath test except at an RBT station or if there is reasonable grounds for a motorist to be stopped. RBT stations are not an effective use of resources in low traffic areas.
- The Bill will allow random breath testing to be undertaken in the course of normal police duties during prescribed periods. This includes on long weekends, during school holidays, and at other periods as designated by the Minister for Police.

Production of a driver’s licence

- Current laws allow motorists who are not carrying their licence at the time of driving to produce their licence at a police station within 48 hours. It is almost impossible to be sure that the person producing the licence is the same person spoken to be police in the first instance.
- The Bill will allow police to obtain a specimen signature from a motorist who is not carrying their licence. This signature can then be checked against another signature obtained when the motorist produces their licence at a designated police station. Motorists will now be given 7 days to produce their licence.

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