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## **Let's get serious about road safety**

The number of deaths caused by drugged drivers – 71 last year and 88 the year before - means there must be better testing to get these people off our roads, says Road Transport Forum (RTF) chief executive Nick Leggett.

The RTF has [submitted](#) on the Ministry of Transport [Discussion Document Enhanced Drug Impaired Driver Testing](#).

“The Government needs to change its single-minded road safety focus, which is tunnel vision on speed and getting vehicles off the road, and take a holistic look at all the other contributing factors,” Leggett says.

“The number of people being killed by drug impaired drivers is higher than by drivers above the alcohol limit. The statistics in this discussion document are just the tip of the iceberg, as drug testing is limited and there is no mention of serious injury and harm, only the death toll.

“Something has got to change. We believe that the way alcohol use and driving is dealt with could be replicated for drug use, to ensure safer roads for all road users.

“The RTF fully supports roadside drug testing as a first line tool for early detection of impaired drivers. This should without question, be part of an overall aspiration to mitigate risk on New Zealand roads of injury and death caused by drugged drivers.

“Disappointingly, the discussion document veers towards the rights of drug-using drivers rather than on the safety of those who share the road with them, or the rights of those they kill or injure.

“In fact, the discussion document puts up time (for testing and for prosecuting) and cost or ‘pressure’ on the system (for testing and prosecuting) as significant barriers to any change.

“If the Government were as committed to road safety as they say they are, surely a small amount of time spent on a roadside (2-5 minutes), or at a Police station, for testing, is justified in the face of the high road toll.

“Truck drivers are in the unique position of sharing their workplace – New Zealand roads – with the public. While the road transport industry follows workplace health and safety laws to ensure drivers are not drug impaired, with extensive testing regimes including pre-employment, random and post incident/accident drug testing, there is no guarantee that those they are sharing

the road with won't be impaired by drugs as there is no adequate testing regime for them.

"We would like to see one standard approach; we don't have that now.

"Drug driving is clearly a road safety issue of some magnitude and the RTF supports roadside drug testing including the Compulsory Impairment Test, screening with some of the new oral technology and saliva wipes, and where necessary, an evidentiary blood test. Let's get serious about road safety."

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**About Road Transport Forum New Zealand (RTF)**

RTF provides unified national representation for several regional trucking associations. RTF members include Road Transport Associations NZ, National Road Carriers, and NZ Trucking Association. The affiliated representation of the RTF is about 3,000 individual road transport companies which in turn, operate 16-18,000 trucks involved in road freight transport, as well as companies that provide services allied to road freight transport.

The road freight transport industry employs 26,600 people (3.0% of the workforce), has a gross annual turnover of \$6 billion, and transports about 70% of New Zealand's land-based freight measured on a tonne/kilometre basis.