# A national examination of Random Breath Testing and alcohol-related traffic crash rates (2000-2012)

## Researchers

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## Summary

Random Breath Testing (RBT) is a practice where police stop motor vehicle drivers chosen by chance to measure the amount of alcohol in their system. RBT is a central and important law enforcement initiative in reducing alcohol-related road traffic accidents, which has been embraced by all jurisdictions in Australia since the 1980s.

Australia is deemed to have the most successful RBT program internationally, measured in terms of alcohol-related traffic crash (ARTC) reductions. However within Australia, RBT programs are not implemented uniformly and their effectiveness varies considerably between the states and territories.

This research report examines the relationship between RBT and ARTC rates for each Australian jurisdiction, in order to better understand state-specific trends and to undertake a national comparison which ranks the success of the RBT programs operating in each jurisdiction.

The research draws on data spanning January 2000 – December 2012 (where available), and uses joinpoint regression (Statistical Research and Applications Branch, 2013) to evaluate and quantify any significant deviations in trends over time for each of the administrative datasets.

## Outcomes

The research finds jurisdictions with RBT to licensed driver ratios of 1:1 or greater, New South Wales, Queensland, Victoria, Tasmania and the Northern Territory, report stable to declining ARTC trends and lower percentages of reported drink-driving (8.38 to 12.49 per cent) compared with jurisdictions where the RBT ratio is 1:2 or 1:3; with the exception of the Northern Territory. The Northern Territory reports a higher percentage of reported drink-driving (14.95 per cent) and a current ARTC rate of more than double that of Tasmania.

Jurisdictions with an RBT ratio of 1:2 or 1:3, South Australia, Australian Capital Territory and Western Australia, also report declining ARTC trends however these jurisdictions show higher percentages of reported drink-driving (13 to 14.56 per cent).

After ranking all Australian jurisdictions, based on their RBT ratio, ARTC trend, and reported drink-driving in the past 12 months, this research concludes that New South Wales has the most successful RBT program in the country. The lowest score was given to Western Australia.

## Recommendations

This research concludes that it is critical that RBT best practice principles are consistently monitored and maintained in each jurisdiction in order for RBT to be an effective drink-driving deterrent across all of Australia.

The correct citation for this report is: Ferris, J., Devaney, M., Sparkes-Carroll, M., Davis, G. (2015). *A national examination of random breath testing and alcohol-related traffic crash rates (2000-2015)*. Canberra: Foundation for Alcohol Research and Education

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