



Media Release

9 May 2019

Road safety debate must include drug-driving, says RTF

It was disappointing to see debate on the key road safety issue of drug-driving descend into chaos in Parliament yesterday, says Road Transport Forum chief executive Nick Leggett.

“It was particularly concerning that the mother of a young man killed by a drug-driver had to witness that on a day she was presenting a petition to Parliament seeking random road-side drug testing,” Leggett says.

“On one hand this Government is saying it is committed to road safety and on the other, the Police Minister appears to be backing down on the issue of roadside drug testing, as seen in Parliament yesterday.

“The Road Transport Forum Board has a drug and alcohol policy for the industry with states:

- Zero tolerance of any use of illegal drugs; and
- No alcohol consumption before starting duty and only moderate consumption 12 hours beforehand.

“Road transport is a safety sensitive industry with people operating highly complex machinery using public roads. We take safety very seriously.

“Roadside drug testing was finally adopted in 2010, but Forum members want the Government to toughen its drug testing policy by introducing random testing, as for alcohol, and bringing in more scientific methods such as saliva or blood testing. Saliva testing has been successful in other countries such as Australia, the UK and Canada.

“At the moment the only tool for testing roadside is a cognitive test for impairment. We would like to see more accurate and sophisticated impairment testing.

“Added now is the possibility legalising recreational cannabis use and the environment for employers in safety sensitive industries, such as road transport, becomes even more fraught.

“This legislation is in danger of being rushed without due consideration of policy and law questions for employers around their obligations and liabilities under health and safety law, how they will be able to determine if people are fit for work, and what they will be able to do if people aren’t fit for work because of marijuana use.

"We'd like everyone to take a deep breath and have a sensible, strategic conversation about road safety and drug use," Leggett says.

For more information contact:

Josie Vidal, RTF manager communications & government relations

Mob: 022 092 9353

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.