

Survey shows support for drug testing

By LOUIS ANDREWS

THE TUGGERANONG Community Council is calling for the ACT Government to move swiftly to introduce random roadside drug testing after a survey of south Canberra residents showed almost two-thirds supported the measure.

But the council has also stressed the need to have an informed policy, and has offered to run public forums to educate Canberra about the proposal's finer details.

The early survey results, collected from responses lodged at the council's website, were used to create the council's submission to the discussion paper, which was submitted late last week.

Random roadside testing has been a contentious political issue for several months, with the ACT Liberals failing to get a bill through the Legislative Assembly in March and the Government set to release its own draft legislation next month.

Council president Darryl Johnston said it was time to get on with the process of implementing new laws, but also stressed the need for "best practice" laws.

"We believe the whole issue is above politics, and it needs to be introduced as soon as possible, but at the same time we have to ensure that what is introduced is the best regime of random roadside drug testing," he said.

"If [the Government] looks around Australia there are best practice examples, so the ACT Government should be looking to ensure we've got the best regime and a watertight regime of random roadside drug testing."

While 60 per cent of the 141 respondents supported the tough road safety measures, almost as many indicated they knew someone who had driven under the influence of drugs.

Several respondents spoke of losing a loved one.

"My niece was killed due to a driver who was on drugs and she got off scot-free. Where is the justice in that?" one respondent said.

Another, who lost a friend in a crash involving a drug-affected driver, supported the proposal.

A number of respondents were strongly opposed to the measures, with 35 indicating they would not support random roadside measures.

"Which illicit drugs are we talking about? I have been driving under the influence of marijuana for over 20 years . . . I have managed to avert several accidents and could have run over a few pedestrians but did not," one respondent wrote.

Mr Johnston said the survey results showed many people had questions about the tests and the laws, particularly regarding prescription drug use.