



Push for roadside drug blitz

Opposition wants ACT to follow states' lead

By Victor Violante
Chief Assembly Reporter



FIRM SUPPORT: Alison Ryan, of Calwell, whose 15-year-old daughter, Amy, died in a car crash last year. The vehicle was being driven by a friend who was under the influence of drugs. Photo: KATE LEITH

ACT Police would be empowered to conduct random roadside drug testing for cannabis, ecstasy and amphetamine use under new laws proposed by the ACT Opposition.

Opposition police spokesman Jeremy Hanson will table in the Legislative Assembly this week a Bill seeking to give police powers to drug-test motorists by means of an oral swab, similar to provisions already in place in every other Australian jurisdiction.

Under the proposed laws, motorists testing positive to the drugs would face the same penalties as low-range drink-drivers, which in the ACT is a fine not exceeding \$500 and a default licence disqualification period of six months for a first offence.

Mr Hanson said it would be up to the Government to determine what equipment and testing method to implement. His legislation would instrument",

"If you are serious about road safety then you also have to implement things that will combat people driving under the influence of drugs," Mr Hanson said.

"It is a limited cost, but in terms of what it can save the community - the severely injured - that's immeasurable."

The proposed laws have the backing of Calwell member Alison Ryan, whose 15-year-old daughter, Amy, was killed in a two-vehicle crash last year in a two-year good-behaviour bond.

Ms Ryan said she believed random drug testing on the roads and better education of young people would deter people from driving while and getting behind the wheel.

Driving under the influence of drugs is illegal in the ACT, but the Government remains committed to introducing random roadside drug testing in the ACT.

Ms Ryan said, "There's not enough education out there warning the individual drivers by the roadside. Tasmania, however, police can test the ACT Government has been considering the introduction of random drug testing and issued a discussion paper last year, flagging the proposal. Former Territory and Municipal Services minister John Hargreaves said at the time, "The Government remains committed to men to give a compulsory blood sample taken by hospital staff.

identify the presence of a drug, not the concentration, so penalties in other Australian jurisdictions have been established a presence-based approach to drug-driving penalties. Under existing ACT laws, police can order persons aged 15 or older who are involved in a traffic crash for which they require hospital treatment to give a compulsory blood sample taken by hospital staff.

"To us it seems sensible," AFPFA chief executive Jim Torr said.

Police officers, the Australian Federal Police Association, also supports the union that represents ACT other drugs.

The union that represents ACT police have good reason to do so, they can have that same blood sample tested for the presence of

Coonan departs as Joyce as steps up

By Danielle Cronin
Political Correspondent

A senior Liberal has quit the front bench ahead of Opposition Leader Tony Abbott's ministerial reshuffle that will see a freerand Nationals senator promoted to shadow cabinet.

Mr Abbott will unveil his new team early this week and expects all Opposition frontbenchers to be "out there barnstorming the country".

Part of his plan is to recruit Nationals Senator Barnaby Joyce who rejected calls to join the front bench when Malcolm Turnbull was Opposition leader. "I can tell you it won't be the Minister for Arts," Senator Joyce said of his new role, pointing out he was an accountant before entering politics.

Current Opposition finance, Helen Spokeswoman Senator Helen Coonan - a leading moderate in the party - announced yesterday she would move to the back bench.

"After serving continuously on the front bench since 2001, the change of leadership to Tony Abbott is an opportune time to allow new talent in the Coalition to step up and make a strong contribution," Senator Coonan said.

Mr Turnbull is also moving to the back bench and Opposition frontbenchers Margaret May and Chris Pearce plan to retire at the next federal election, opening up more options for Mr Abbott.

Liberal insiders have nominated several members who could be promoted, including former minister Kevin Andrews and parliamentary secretary Mathias Cormann, Brett Mason, Mitch Fifield and Concetta Fierravanti-Wells.

Veteran MP Bronwyn Bishop is rated as an outside chance to move of the back bench and Paul Fletcher - fresh from his win in the Bradfield by-election - may be in the mix.

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Grief drives drug laws

By Peter Reynolds

CALWELL'S Alison Ryan has been hailed as the inspiration behind the passage of legislation for the introduction of random roadside drug testing.

Two years ago, Mrs Ryan's 15-year-old daughter Amy died in a car accident that involved a drug affected driver.

Since then, Mrs Ryan has been vocal in trying to have legislation introduced that would allow police officers to check for drugs in the systems of drivers on ACT roads.

Two weeks ago, the Legislative Assembly passed a bill that was introduced by Liberals police spokesman Jeremy Hanson, which will give police these powers.

Mr Hanson said Mrs Ryan had been a major motivator for him to ensure the legislation was passed.

"I commend her for the hard work that she has done in advocating for this legislation and I acknowledge the support that she has given me in what has been a very difficult political process to make sure that we got here," he said.

"[The passage of the legislation] has been a victory. But it is not a victory for the Liberal Party. It is not a victory for the Greens. It is a victory for the community. It is a victory for our police force, who are charged with the responsibility of keeping us safe.

"And it is a victory for people like Alison Ryan and everybody she represents who have lost a loved one



Alison Ryan's campaign to have random roadside drug testing introduced into the ACT has become a reality. **Picture: Elesa Lee**

because of an accident involving someone affected by drugs. That is a victory ... and it is one for her and for those she represents."

The president of the Tuggeranong Community Council, Darryl Johnston, who also actively campaigned for the introduction of roadside drug testing, said he was happy that Mrs Ryan's hard work had paid off.

"Alison has done a lot of hard work through what has been a long and often frustrating campaign," he said.

"However, her strength and perseverance carried her through.

"What she has achieved will make

Canberra's roads safer for us all and, more importantly speaking as a parent, she has made our roads safer for our kids. "It has been nearly two years since we lost Amy and I believe she is looking down with pride on what Alison has achieved as her legacy to us all."

Mrs Ryan said she was overjoyed that the legislation had been passed and was thankful for the support she had received throughout her campaign to have it introduced.

"We don't know how many lives we're going to save because of this; I just hope no more families have to go through what we've been through," she said.