

Media Release

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Attention: Chiefs of staff/transport reporters

BANNED DRIVERS PUTTING COMMUNITY AT RISK: MUARC

Monash University accident researchers are calling for tougher action after a new study found banned Victorian drivers are putting other road users at risk by flouting the law and continuing to drive.

Researchers Belinda Clark and Dr Irene Bobevski from the Monash University Accident Research Centre (MUARC) interviewed 40 disqualified Victorian drivers for their study, the first of its type in Victoria in 30 years.

Sixty per cent admitted driving either immediately after being banned or some time during their licence disqualification – and most didn't consider themselves a danger to other road users and didn't think they would get caught.

Several banned drivers said they had avoided being caught by giving false details when pulled over by police or because their licence had not been checked at a random breath test (RBT) station.

Ms Clark said the findings were concerning because studies had shown drivers who kept driving after being banned were up to four times more likely to be involved in fatal crashes than legal drivers.

"Our study suggests that many banned drivers are in denial about the risk they pose to the community and that is a major concern considering about 50,000 Victorians are disqualified from driving each year," Ms Clark said.

"We are calling for the creation of a rehabilitation program for Victorian banned drivers aimed at changing these alarming attitudes."

The researchers are also calling for several other initiatives, including:

- a comprehensive media campaign, similar to those used for speeding and drink driving, to increase banned drivers' perception they will be caught;
- strengthened enforcement practices, including more licence checks of drivers at RBT stations;
- making it compulsory for all drivers to carry licences; and
- exploring the feasibility of introducing licences containing scannable microchips.

The study is the first in three decades to provide in-depth information on the attitudes, behaviours and motivation of banned Victorian drivers.

The most common reason for bans among the study participants was drink driving (22 drivers), excessive speeding (10), and accumulation of demerit points (five). Two parents and 11 partners of banned drivers also participated in the study and reported experiencing increased pressures resulting from the bans.

Only a small minority of drivers in the study said they had attempted to comply with their bans by reorganising work and social commitments, using public transport and removing easy vehicle access. Ms Clark said that while the sample of drivers in the study was small, it was in line with many previous studies that had found a high number (30 to 70 per cent) of banned drivers flouted their bans.

For further information and interviews, please contact Colin Vickery, MUARC Media Officer, on 0419 302 520.