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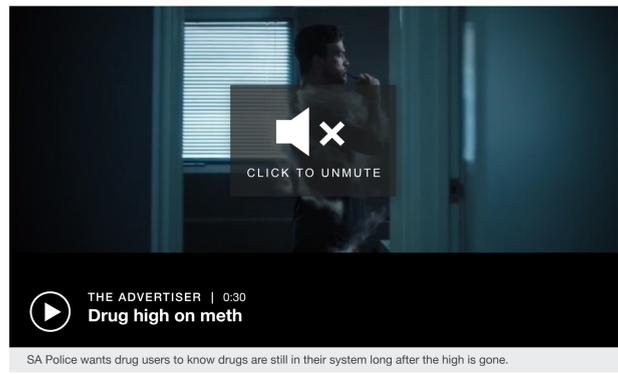
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Police to review roadside drug and alcohol testing over fears of officer exposure to coronavirus

The immediate future of roadside drug and alcohol testing will be discussed at a meeting of police union bosses over health and safety fears posed by coronavirus.

Steve Rice, Dixie Sulda

March 13, 2020 - 5:58PM The Advertiser 20 comments



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Roadside drug and alcohol testing and other police work will be reviewed over concerns that officers could face an increased risk of exposure to coronavirus.

The pandemic sweeping the planet has prompted an Australian Police Federation meeting next week, when union bosses will consider a national and unified approach to police protocols.

SA Police Association and Police Federation president Mark Carroll said discussions would also centre around strategies to prevent, as best as possible, the spread of coronavirus.

“Topics of discussion will include roadside drug and alcohol testing and other police work that might place officers and the community at risk of contracting the virus,” Mr Carroll said.

It is not suggested roadside drug and alcohol testing would be entirely scrapped. Officers wear gloves during alcohol and drug testing of drivers but are exposed to saliva.

An SA Police spokesman said: “SAPOL is constantly monitoring all areas of current business and taking into consideration the health and safety of all employees.”

State Government figures show that 59 motorists died and a further 197 were seriously injured in crashes where they recorded a blood-alcohol level above 0.05 between 2014 and 2018.

In the same period, 36 per cent of drivers or riders killed either tested positive to drugs – cannabis, methamphetamine or MDMA – had an illegal blood-alcohol level or a combination.

Victoria Police is seeking further advice on whether more safety measures are needed against coronavirus after high-level talks about the future of roadside drug and alcohol testing.

The Victorian Police Association has raised concerns about how to protect its members who operate roadside testing stations from the spread of the virus.

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