

Surgeons warn that cannabis use doubles car crash risk

7 October 2019

The Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS) has highlighted that cannabis use prior to driving can impair cognitive and motor function, and has been shown to double the risk of motor vehicle crash. This follows the ACT Government's decision to legalise cannabis for personal use.

RACS Trauma Chair, Dr John Crozier, has echoed warnings made by Police Commissioners and the Deputy Prime Minister, the Hon Michael McCormack, and said that the legislation in the ACT will undermine road safety efforts.

“Surgeons around Australia witness the carnage from road crashes daily. The ‘silent epidemic’, with 39,000 Australians hospitalised with injury from road crash each year, is not slowing. ACT’s bill legalising recreational cannabis use risks worsening this trend,” said Dr Crozier.

Evidence from the USA shows that legalisation of cannabis is linked to increases in road crash incidents.

“The Insurance Institute of Highway Safety (IIHS)’s Highway Loss Data Institution found significant increases in crash incidents in Colorado, Washington, and Oregon following legalising recreational cannabis. There were also increases in the number of drivers involved in fatal crashes who tested positive for cannabis.

“RACS has a long history of road safety advocacy and is strongly committed to reducing deaths and serious injuries on our roads. The College recently backed calls by the Australian Automobile Association for a new federal approach to road safety, and we will continue to advocate strongly in this area,” said Dr Crozier.

ENDS