

Truckies drive on kids' medicine

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LONG-haul truckies going through the Gold Coast are using a prescription stimulant in the mistaken belief that it will protect them at drug-driving test stations.

Anecdotal evidence obtained by The Gold Coast Bulletin suggests that the truckies are using drugs normally used to treat Attention Deficit Hyperactivity Disorder (ADHD) and diuretics as a substitute for speed or amphetamines to get them through long hours behind the wheel.

Ritalin or methylphenidate, most commonly taken in pill form, is a central nervous system stimulator that reduces impulsive behaviour and assists concentration. It also stimulates sections of the brain and releases dopamine.

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There has been some controversy about its use for children and there have been cases of ADHD sufferers selling it to fellow school students because of its speed-like qualities.

But police warn drivers they will be caught if they are not in proper control of their trucks.

The officer-in-charge of the new drug-driving testing arm of State Traffic Command, Senior Sergeant Richard Teal, said the drug tests detected cannabis, speed and ecstasy.

"But if the driver has overindulged in any other drug, prescription or not, we are confident we will detect it," he said.

"We are trained to look for Indicia (a working list of factors) which includes things like eyes dilated, extreme sweating and dryness of the mouth and if we think someone's ability to drive their truck is impaired then we have the right to take them for a blood test.

"Then a government medical officer can determine if the amount of whatever drug found in their system warrants us laying charges, and that includes prescription drugs."

But a former interstate driver, who did not wish to be named, said truckies were pressured to drive long hours to keep their jobs and they would continue to try to beat roadside drug tests.

"A normal person cannot stay awake for that amount of time without taking some kind of stimulant," he said.

"I got out of it because it was getting too dangerous. As an owner-driver I was driving 24 hours straight just to make ends meet and I wasn't the only one doing it."

The truckie had spent 10 years driving interstate since the 1980s.

He said the pressure from transport companies to deliver freight in the fastest time possible was getting worse.

"The most popular drug when I was driving was speed but others would use diet pills like Duromine to keep them awake. They also had Ox Blood perfume phials which you could get for \$120 each, anything to stay awake," he said.

"The scary part is when these guys are on speed or other drugs, they've got no fear and they roar down the highway without worrying about the consequences.

"The Government has to introduce uniform laws so drivers get at least an eight-hour break between long hauls, otherwise they have no choice but to use drugs."

Another truck driver said he knew four colleagues who had taken prescription drugs between one and two hours before being pulled over for a drug test.

"They got through, no problems," he said.

"The cops can't detect it."

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