



AN TÚDARÁS PÓILÍNEACHTA
POLICING AUTHORITY

Policing Authority Statement on Garda Síochána Road Data

The Policing Authority welcomes today's public acknowledgement by the Garda Síochána that there are major discrepancies in the published data regarding road side breath tests and their admission of possible wrongful prosecutions and convictions arising from a range of road traffic offences. The Authority also appreciates being advised and briefed in advance of the announcement.

The Authority has repeatedly asked questions about possible wrongful prosecution and conviction of people who had already paid a fixed charged penalty, beginning in June 2016. It is a positive outcome of our oversight that the Gardaí reviewed some 830,000 cases, that they have apologised and will contact affected people. The Authority is mindful that potentially some thousands of people have been impacted by the errors made, and calls on the various arms of the State – DPP, Courts and Gardaí – to work together to speedily remedy matters.

In January 2017, the Authority began to seek answers and to challenge the Garda Síochána regarding discrepancies in road side breath test data and has previously expressed its disappointment at not being advised at that time that an audit into that matter was underway. Against that background, while it is encouraging that information is being put in the public domain today, the Authority is alarmed at the scale of the discrepancies disclosed between actual alcohol tests administered and the numbers recorded by Gardaí

This is not just an academic statistical matter, it is an ethical one. It raises serious questions of integrity for the Garda Síochána organisation and combined with previous issues regarding inflated activity levels, erodes confidence in the credibility of Garda data generally. The gap between the Medical Bureau of Road Safety data of 1,058,157 tests administered and the Garda recorded data of 1,995,369 tests is close to one million and it raises a widespread concern in the way Gardaí go about their daily work. It again raises concerns about management and supervision, echoing findings of the Garda Inspectorate, Judge O'Higgins and others. In the view of the Authority, the scale of the discrepancy is further evidence of deep cultural problems within the Garda service – a culture in which such behaviour was possible.

These concerns were raised with the Commissioner and her team at the Authority meeting this morning and were also raised in the context of the Code of Ethics for the Garda Síochána recently established by the Policing Authority. These issues will continue to be pursued by the Authority as part of its oversight role.

The Authority is also concerned about a broader range of issues including around the issue/non-issue of summons and what happens to cases generally between checkpoint, detection and conviction. Against the backdrop of a worrying increase in fatalities and serious crashes on Irish roads, the Authority will be raising questions about these and other matters relating to roads policing during the coming weeks and at its next meeting in public with the Garda on 27 April.

Separately, the Authority welcomes the Tánaiste's announcement of arrangements to increase the size of the Garda Reserve and hopes that the Garda Síochána is putting in place enhanced arrangements for induction, deployment and day to day management of a valuable resource.

23 March 2017

ENDS