

Prescription drug deaths spike

THE drugs Australians get legally on prescription from their GPs are killing more people than those bought illegally from criminal drug dealers, a shocking new report shows.

A hidden epidemic of deaths from pain killers and sleeping pills has been exposed in a report that shows drug overdoses now kill twice as many people as car accidents.

The report from the Pennington Institute also shows

SUE DUNLEVY

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Australians aged between 30 and 59, not young adults, are most likely to suffer a drug overdose death, accounting for seven out of 10 fatalities.

The rates are disturbingly higher per head of population in regional areas compared to the city.

In 2016 there were 2177 drug-related deaths — the highest number in 20 years.

The report shows 1237 people died from amphetamines from 2012 to 2016 and 1183 from heroin over the same period, far lower than the number being killed by prescription pills.

Benzodiazepines, a class of sleeping pills and anxiety medications, killed 2177 in the period and opioids — including oxycodone, codeine, morphine, fentanyl, pethidine and tramadol — claimed 2810 lives.

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