

8 March 2019

Agenda Item 5.2

Pill testing trial at the Canberra Groovin' the Moo music festival

Originator – Ms Meegan Fitzharris MLA, ACT Minister for Health and Wellbeing.

Purpose

To provide Ministers with information regarding the pill testing trial that took place at the Canberra Groovin' the Moo music festival in April 2018.

Commonwealth Position

The Commonwealth note the outcome of the pill testing trial at the Groovin' the Moo festival in April 2018.

Sensitivities and Risks

Nil

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health impacts/considerations

Nil

Key Points to Raise

- The Governments concern, first and foremost, is the safety, health and wellbeing of young Australians and the recent deaths of people at music festivals is tragic.
- The Government's position is that it does not support decisions to use illicit drugs, and does not in-principle support pill testing, as it could imply that illicit drugs are safe.
 - All illicit drug use contains inherent risks and even taking a known substance can result in unintended harm.
 - Pill testing may not be able to identify all components in an illicit substance and does not take into account any underlying health conditions a person may have or interactions with any other substances or medications a person may have taken.
- The Government does not have a legal framework in place for pill testing to occur at music festivals on Commonwealth land and there is no plan for one to be developed at this time.
- Drug laws in Australia are guided by both State and Federal laws. Laws concerning the possession, supply and manufacture of illicit drugs are largely the remit of states and territories. The Commonwealth Criminal Code covers offences involving importing and exporting drugs.

Background

- On 29 April 2018, the first Australian pill testing trial was undertaken in the Australian Capital Territory at the "Groovin' the Moo" music festival.
- On 20 June 2018, the "Report on the ACT Groovin' the Moo Pill Testing Pilot: A Harm Reduction Service" (the Report) prepared by the Safety Testing Advisory Service at Festivals and Events (STA-SAFE) consortium was published ([Attachment A](#)) that claimed the trial was an "overwhelming success" and highlighted:
 - 125 people visited the pill testing service, with 85 samples tested (and 83 providing

- usable test results);
 - 20% of the samples tested included cutting agents such as caffeine oil, dietary supplements; and
 - 58% of those using the service indicated that the results of the pill testing would not modify their behaviour in the amount of the drug they would consume or decision to use the drug at all.
- ACT Health has provided a copy of the Report to the National Drug Strategy Committee for noting.
- State and territory position on pill testing:

NSW	Does not support pill testing
VIC	Does not support pill testing
SA	Does not support pill testing
WA	Does not support pill testing
TAS	Does not support pill testing
NT	Does not support pill testing
QLD	Is considering pill testing
ACT	Pill testing is in effect

- On 18 September 2018, Minister Fitzharris wrote to you seeking support for pill testing at the Spilt Milk festival planned for 17 November 2018 in Commonwealth Park, Canberra ([Attachment B](#)).
- On 8 October 2018, you responded to Minister Fitzharris and confirmed there is no legal framework in place to enable pill testing to take place on Commonwealth land ([Attachment C](#)).
- A number of experts have expressed support for pill testing, including the Australian Medical Association (AMA) and the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP).

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