

Media Release

Ingrid Stitt MP
Minister for Mental Health
Minister for Ageing
Minister for Multicultural Affairs



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EXPANDING ACCESS TO PILL TESTING THIS SUMMER

The Allan Labor Government's mobile pill testing trial continues this summer, with the next three events set to host the service confirmed.

Minister for Mental Health Ingrid Stitt today announced that pill testing will be available at a mix of single-day and multi-day events over the coming months, including Spilt Milk (6 December), Dangerous Goods 6XXL (24 January), and Pitch Music and Arts Festival (6-10 March) – with further events to be announced soon.

The service is completely free, confidential and staffed by an experienced team of experts who provide health information to help people make safer, more informed decisions.

The mobile service can test a range of drugs and if a high-risk substance is detected, the service works with organisers to rapidly warn partygoers through social media and event signage.

It follows successful mobile pill testing at five major music festivals last summer, where almost 1,400 samples were tested – with 11 per cent of samples not what people expected their drugs to be.

While the service seeks to save lives, reduce drug harm and improve public health at music festivals, it is also reducing pressure on frontline services and enhancing Victoria's drug surveillance capabilities by boosting early detection and rapid assessment of hazardous synthetic drugs substances.

Last season, 10 drug notifications were issued across the five events with two escalating to statewide advisories.

To support more Victorians accessing life-saving advice, the Victorian Pill Testing Service fixed site in Fitzroy will also expand its hours of operation over summer.

From 1 December, the fixed site service will operate with extended hours on Thursdays and Fridays. The service will also be open on additional days ahead of New Year's Eve including Monday, 22 December and Tuesday, 23 December, as well as Monday, 29 December, Tuesday, 30 December and Wednesday, 31 December.

In the first six weeks of operating, the fixed site is saving lives and providing critical drug monitoring data – testing more than 500 samples and conducting harm reduction conversations with nearly 300 people.

While 395 samples contained the expected drug, one in eight samples contained an unexpected psychoactive drug that, if consumed, would have unwanted effects, and in some cases caused serious harm.

Two drug notifications were also issued for counterfeit oxycodone pills containing dangerous nitazenes – a synthetic drug up to 500 times stronger than heroin.

The Victorian Pill Testing Service is delivered by the trusted consortium of Youth Support and Advocacy Service, The Loop Australia and Harm Reduction Victoria as part of an 18-month Labor Government's implementation trial.

Quotes attributable to Minister for Mental Health Ingrid Stitt

"The results from last festival season speak for themselves: pill testing works. It doesn't encourage young people to use drugs but allows them to see what's really in their substances and make informed health decisions."

"With a rise in dangerous synthetic opioids, this service is more important than ever – it offers a sensible health-led approach to reduce drug harms, while also delivering critical drug surveillance information."

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