

## Media Release

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### **EVERY REASON FOR COMMUNITY TO BE CRYING OVER SPILT MILK DECISION**

Denying permission for pill-testing at the upcoming Spilt Milk Festival in Canberra reduces the ability of Canberrans to make informed choices and is particularly short-sighted in light of recent overdose deaths at similar events.

“Pill testing at the ACT’s Groovin the Moo festival was ground breaking. It provided indisputable evidence that testing can help improve safety,” Directions Health Services CEO, Bronwyn Hendry said.

“We know people take recreational drugs at music festivals, so we must arm them with information about the drugs they are choosing to ingest. It has been demonstrated that when people know that a drug includes substances they were not expecting or are harmful, they are less likely to take it.

“Just this weekend, two young people died from a suspected overdose at a music festival.

“Testing won’t necessarily stop people taking drugs, but neither does banning testing. What testing does do is tell people what dangerous substances pills contain and let them determine the risk.

“It also puts people in touch with trained health professionals with whom they can have a non-judgemental discussion about drugs and harm minimisation and can link them to longer-term support services.

“If testing saves one life and prevents one family from having to grieve over the preventable death of a loved one, surely as a community we think it is worthwhile.”

The ACT GTM Pill Testing Pilot found that less than half of the pills people bought contained relatively pure MDMA and the rest were adulterated with other substances, some of which were dangerous.

“While we are currently focused on pill testing at festivals, Directions Health Services would like governments to consider implementation of wider and more regularly available drug checking services,” Ms Hendry said.

The ACT 2017 Ecstasy Related Drug Reporting System found that two-thirds of people who use ecstasy use it fortnightly or more frequently.

“Recreational drug use is not limited to festivals and availability of drug checking must reflect this reality,” Ms Hendry explained. “However, festivals would be a great start, and it is disappointing that even this level of testing is being met with opposition.

“The ACT has been leading by example on pill testing and we must continue to do so.”

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