

PRESS RELEASE

8/1/2024

[starts]

Festival overdoses preventable

The eight overdoses which occurred at the Hardmission music festival on 6 January 2024 are distressing, not only due to the pain and suffering experienced by those directly affected but also for the broader community who view the overdoses as preventable.

The Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA) is thankful that to date, there have been no fatalities from this event. The scale of the overdoses however highlights the need to progress with the establishment of a Drug Checking Service in Victoria as a matter of priority.

VAADA with the support of 79 other organisations called on the Victorian Government in October 2023 to [implement a drug checking service](#) in line with recommendations from five Victorian coronial inquiries. The ACT already operates a drug checking service with Queensland soon to follow.

Chris Christoforou, CEO of VAADA says, 'we will continue working with the Victorian Government to progress sensible and effective mainstream harm reduction measures such as drug checking to reduce overdoses. We note that there is a Bill before Parliament on drug checking and encourage all sides of Parliament to work together to legislate this vital health intervention.'

'Drug checking services offer a handbrake for people who have otherwise opted to consume illicit drugs to reconsider their decision. Importantly, it can provide lifesaving information prior to consumption, rather than through pathology tests from people in emergency departments or morgues'.

'We are gravely concerned regarding the risk of further harm in the community given the likelihood that the substances attributed to causing these overdoses are still in circulation.'

'We hope that those who experienced harm over the weekend from these substances have a full recovery.'

For more information or to arrange an interview please contact David Taylor on 0413 914 206.

[ends]

Media stories on alcohol and other drugs may be traumatic for some people. Support is available and we ask that media agencies consider publishing the details below:

If this story has raised issues about your own or others drug and alcohol use, please contact the national hotline for confidential counselling and referral on 1800 250 015

VAADA is the peak body that represents over 80 Alcohol and other Drug services across Victoria. On a daily basis these services are dealing with the effects of harmful alcohol and other drug consumption.