

PRESS RELEASE

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Drug checking trial will save lives

The Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA) commends the Victorian Government on committing to an 18 month fixed site and mobile drug checking trial for Victoria.

The mobile service will commence this summer and support a number of public events, with the fixed site to be established in 2025. VAADA welcomes the announcement that it is an 'implementation trial' rather than a pilot.

Victoria is now following both the ACT and Queensland in progressing drug checking. This policy commitment is based on a strong evidence base of what's required to address escalating yet preventable drug related harms in Victoria. It follows advocacy from [health organisations, unions, legal services and industry bodies](#) who jointly signed a letter in 2023-24 calling for a drug checking service in Victoria.

Drug checking is fast becoming a necessary policy response to combat the increased public health risks that arise from illicit drugs. At least 31 jurisdictions around the world have established such services. These services provide a necessary early warning system against potent synthetic opioids like fentanyl, which in 2022 contributed to approximately 70,000 fatal overdoses in the USA alone.

Drug checking gives those people who have already decided to take an illicit substance the chance to reconsider their choice following health advice around its chemical composition. Often this is the first time someone will have spoken to a health professional about their drug taking.

Earlier this year, Harm Reduction Victoria and VAADA developed a report titled '[Drug Checking: principles of practice](#)' to advise government on an optimal model of drug checking for Victoria which we anticipate will inform the trial.

Chris Christoforou, CEO of VAADA, says, 'we congratulate the Victorian Government on continuing to take an evidence-based approach to reducing the harms from alcohol and other drug use in our community. We endorse the government's approach of using peer workers in its drug checking model.'

A drug checking service could not come soon enough amidst increasing rates of preventable overdose and the threat of potent synthetic opioids. Drug checking has been recommended by no less than 7 coronial inquests. The new service will be supported by a 'turbo charged' surveillance system which should provide accurate, real time information regarding emerging hazardous substances that are identified through testing. This vital element of the program will keep the broader Victorian community safe from emerging hazardous substances such as fentanyl.'

'We look forward to supporting the development of this new service for Victoria, in conjunction with AOD sector experts, including people with lived and living experience of substance use who are likely to use this service.'

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

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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. Daily these services deal with the effects of harmful alcohol and other drug consumption.