

The path towards drug checking in Queensland

Cameron Francis



Acknowledgement of Traditional Owners

The Loop Australia acknowledge the Traditional Owners of the land we meet on and pay our respects to Elders past and present.



WILL TREGONING
Co-Founder & Director

Will's professional experience is in drug and alcohol program evaluation, social policy research, communications and campaigning. He completed a Bachelor of Arts and a PhD in Cultural Studies at the University of Sydney before beginning a career as a research and evaluation consultant to Australian government departments and agencies. He founded Unharm in 2014 to work with communities of activists to promote policy innovation, wellbeing and practices of care. He co-founded The Loop Australia in 2018.



FIONA MEASHAM
Co-Founder & Director

Professor Fiona Measham is Chair in Criminology at the University of Liverpool, has conducted research on drug use, drug policy and nightlife for 3 decades, and has been going to clubs for even longer. Fiona co-founded The Loop as a non profit harm reduction NGO and university action research project in 2013 and led The Loop's subsequent introduction of event-based drug checking in the UK in 2016 and community-based drug checking in the UK in 2018. She co-founded The Loop Australia in 2018.



CAMERON FRANCIS
Chief Executive Officer

Cameron is a Social Worker with almost 20 years experience in the youth alcohol and other drugs sector. Cameron has worked in a number of different roles including peer education at dance parties and music festivals, needle and syringe program work, individual counselling, and more recently in a role that involves training and complex case consultation.



MONICA BARRATT
Research Lead & Victoria Stakeholder Engagement

Monica is a Senior Research Fellow with 17 years experience in the AOD sector. She has worked in two of Australia's national centres doing AOD research. Harm reduction for festival- and club-going populations has been a sustained theme of Monica's research, which includes surveys about the acceptability and feasibility of drug checking services in Australia and a global catalogue of drug checking services operating in 2017. Monica is responsible for stakeholder engagement in Victoria and also guides research design and processes for The Loop Australia.



JACOB FRY
Chemistry Convenor

Jacob is a PhD student researching the field detection of hazardous material. He has previously worked as an analytical chemist in both industry and government. Jacob coordinates the chemistry team that undertakes the analysis of samples.



ISABELLE VOLPE
Communications Convenor

Isabelle is a research officer and PhD student, with interests in harm reduction and health communication. She is currently undertaking a PhD focusing on drug policy, participation, and young people. She is responsible for overseeing national communications.



ELLEN WESSEL
Researcher

Ellen is a researcher with backgrounds in public health and criminology. Her research focuses on drug use among young adults and reducing harm for this group. She is part of The Loop Australia's research team.



RICHARD KEVIN
Chemist

Richard is an analytical chemist and psychopharmacologist at The University of Sydney. His research focuses on understanding the health impacts of new psychoactive substances and medications, and he has a strong interest in harm reduction strategies and drug policy reform.



CHARLIE PIERCE
Chemist

Charlie is an independent contractor who has worked in environmental consulting and analytical chemistry for over 40 years. He still can't believe that drug use is treated as a criminal matter rather than a health issue in the 2020s. For this reason, he welcomed the opportunity to work with the Loop Australia. Charlie is grateful to Envirolab Pty Ltd for their support in providing bench space along with consumables and extending their authority to possess prohibited substances for the purpose of analysis to him.



CHENEAL PULJEVIC
Research Convenor

Cheneal is a public health researcher who is passionate about finding ways to reduce harms related to substance use. Cheneal co-ordinates The Loop Australia's research team and the design, implementation and evaluation of the team's research projects.



ROB PAGE
NSW State Convenor

Rob is a Sydney-based GP and Addiction Medicine specialist who works to provide and advocate for high-quality care to people who use drugs and other marginalised populations. Alongside clinical work, he works with peer and user organisations to deliver education and training on substance use, drug-related health issues and harm reduction.



SARAH HILEY
Victoria State Convenor & Senior Harm Reduction Worker

Sarah has worked in Harm Reduction for 17 years, having accidentally fallen into it when working in homeless services. She's worked in Harm Reduction services in the UK, New Zealand and Australia and has worked in every Supervised Injecting facility in the Southern Hemisphere (addit: there are only two).



GINNY MCKINNON
Victoria Organiser & Senior Harm Reduction Worker

Ginny has been passionate about harm reduction for as long as she can remember. Her work in the community sector in Melbourne has included working in the community legal sector, working in youth homeless & outreach services & in drug and alcohol & harm reduction services. Ginny has long been a part of the festival & live music community and currently also volunteers as a peer educator/harm reduction nerd at several events in her 'spare' time.



MATTHEW DUNN
Victoria Organiser

Matthew is a public health researcher with 15 years experience in the alcohol and other drug field. He is a lecturer and researcher in the higher education sector and is passionate about evidence based policy and reducing the harms related to alcohol and other drugs.



RITA BRIEN
Victoria Organiser

Rita is an Assistant Lecturer and researcher in the alcohol and other drugs sector. She has a keen interest in the political and social context of AOD use, and is passionate about evidence-based information sharing and capacity building that promotes sensible and compassionate discussions about drug use and reducing drug-related harm.



JEFF BUCKLEY
Health and Harm Reduction Convenor

Jeff is a Social Worker with 20 years' experience in alcohol and drug practice, youth homelessness, community development and adult education. He also has experience providing rest and recovery and first aid services in late night entertainment precincts across south-east Queensland. He is responsible for overseeing the national health and harm reduction team.



MATT DIBBAYAWAN
Health and Harm Reduction Team, NSW Organiser

Matt supports all things harm reduction and has worked and volunteered for harm reduction services since 2014, including the Medically Supervised Injecting Centre in Sydney and Dancewize Victoria and NSW. Matt believes that knowledge is vital for empowerment, and that drug checking services play a crucial role in empowering people who take drugs to make informed, conscious, and safer decisions about what they choose to take.



How did I get here?

Professor Fiona Measham travelled to Australia in 2017

Professor Measham established The Loop in the UK in 2013

An action research project that commenced public drug checking in 2016



How did I get here?

Volunteered at UK festival Boom Town in mid 2018

Connected with like-minded colleagues in NSW, Victoria & Queensland

Established The Loop Australia as registered charity with DGR status in late 2018



What have we been up to?

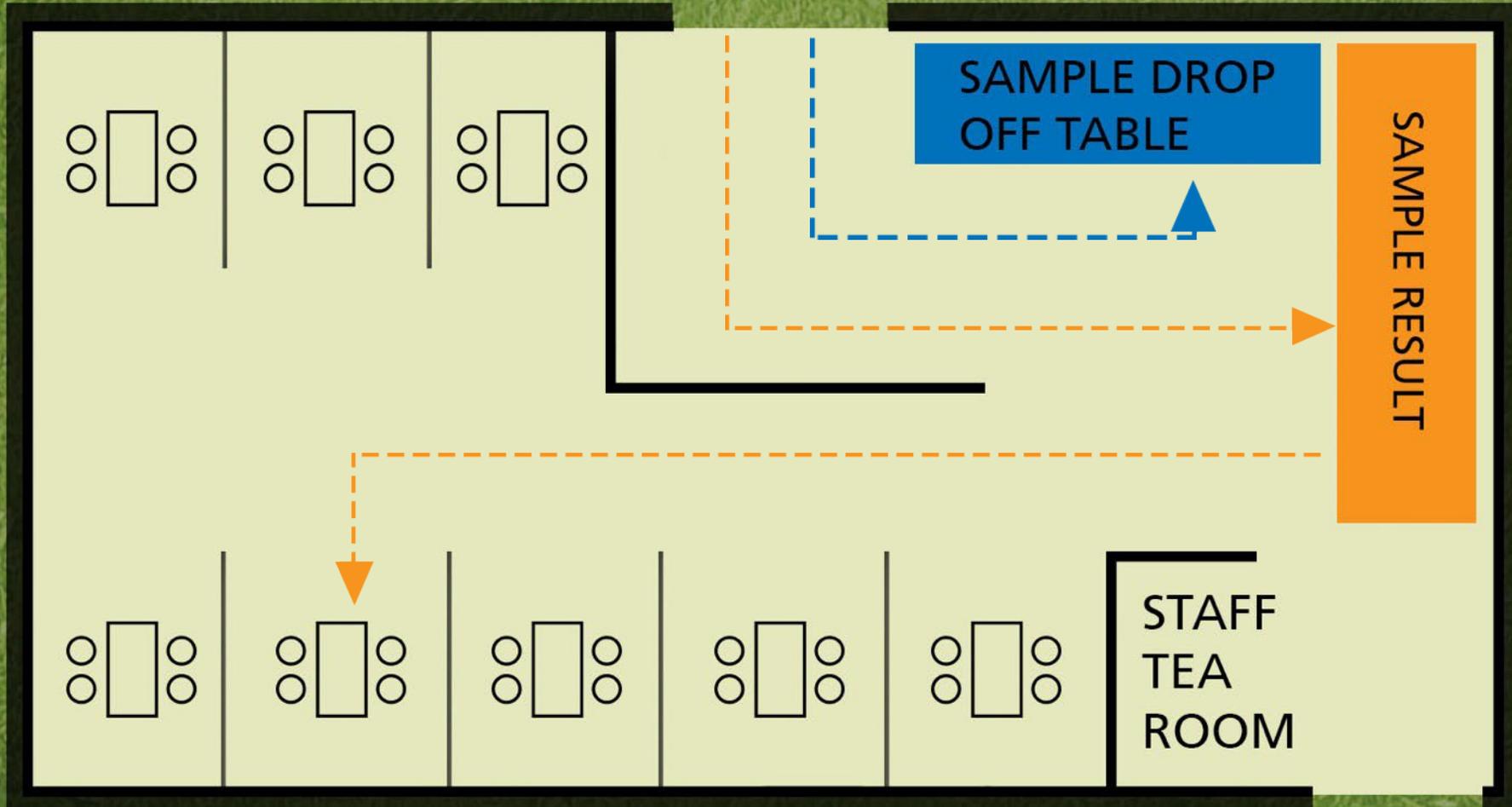
- ▶ Working with private philanthropists to gain funding
- ▶ Purchased our lab in January 2020
- ▶ Running demonstrations of the equipment
- ▶ Conducting research – festival wastewater, MSIC trial
- ▶ Building our team, developing our capabilities
- ▶ Working with NGO AOD services to co-design fixed site



DRUGS TESTING



↑ FESTIVAL



CHEMISTS



SAMPLE DROP OFF

- Please put 1 pill or small scoop of powder from tip of stirrer into a small baggy
- Complete sticky label identifying what it was sold/acquired as, if you have taken it & what you think it might be if different & stick on Larger baggy
- Take a raffle ticket number, put in large baggy with sample & keep the other ticket half
- Deposit sample into amnesty box
- Return in _____ minutes/hours for your results consultation

Thank you 😊



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1527

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FTIR

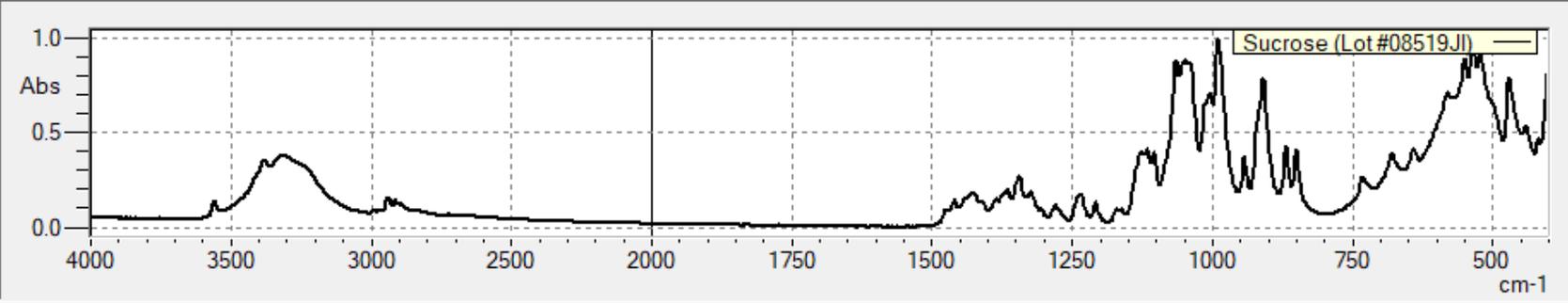
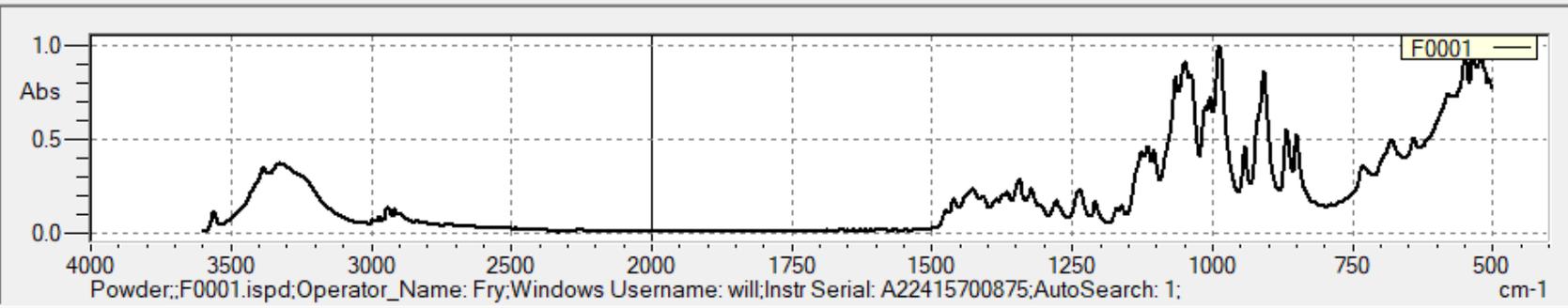
- Fourier-transform Infrared Spectroscopy
- Puts infrared light through the sample
- Measures the way the light bounces
- Checks this against a database of known substances

Open Save Print Measurement View Search Edit Printform Manipulation Arithmetic Normalize Easy Macro Add Macros...

File Edit View Graph 3Dim Tool Window Help

- C:\Users\will\Documents\2021
- Active Data: F0001
- F0001
 - Properties
 - Interferogram
 - Background Interferogram
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 - Search Result1(Spectrum)

Join Difference Factor



	Score	Library	Name	Comment
1	954	396 - SWGDRUG Version 2.1	Sucrose (Lot #08519Jl)	
2	948	2 - ATR-Organic2	D_Sucrose	Sucrose DuraSampIR
3	681	4 - ATR-Organic2	D_Starch	Soluble Starch DuraSampIR
4	671	8 - ATR-Polymer2	D_Cellulose2	Paper DuraSampIR-II
5	668	10 - ATR-Polymer2	D_Cellulose3	Cotton DuraSampIR-II
6	667	12 - ATR-Polymer2	D_Cellulose5	Ramie DuraSampIR-II

Status
4:10:59 PM 12/01/2020 Search Hitlist f
4:10:59 PM 12/01/2020 Reached end

Overwrite to last result Fix search result Close

General Spectrum Peaks

Library

- A_FoodAdditives2
- ATR-Inorganic2
- ATR-Organic2
- ATR-Polymer2
- IRs Agrichemicals
- IRs ATR Reagent2
- IRs Pharmaceuticals
- IRs Polymer2
- IRs Reagent2
- SWGDRUG Version 2
- T_FoodAdditives2
- The Loop General Lib
- T-Inorganic2

Add Delete Select all Deselect all Information

Parameters

Maximum hits: 20
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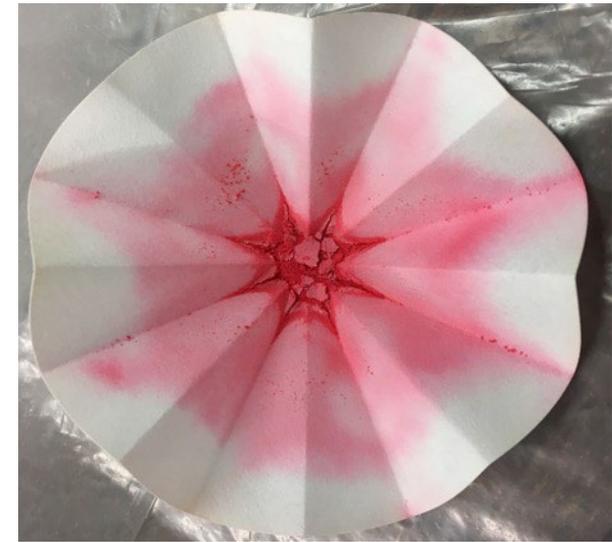
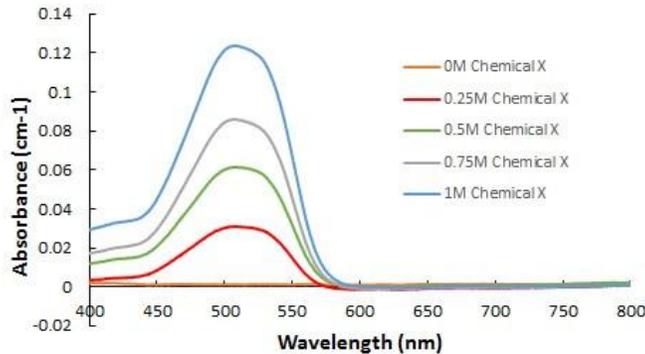
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MDMA Pill Strength Measurements



UV-Vis Spectrophotometry quantifies a solution of MDMA based on its absorption of ultra violet light



Mass Loss Analysis separates soluble MDMA from insoluble binder and calculates the mass of MDMA that was present

Reagent Testing

Reagents are reactive chemicals which produce colour changes when reacting with other compounds.

- Fillers do not give a colour change
- Active compounds do
- No need for reference sample to see there is something
- Highly sensitive



Fentanyl Test strips

Used when:

- The sample is suspected to be an opioid
 - Testing indicated the sample contains an opioid
 - The user suspects the sample is contaminated with an opioid
 - The user intends to inject the sample
-
- One Line = Positive
 - Two lines = Negative
 - One strong and one weak line = Negative
 - The top line is the control line. Repeat if it doesn't show

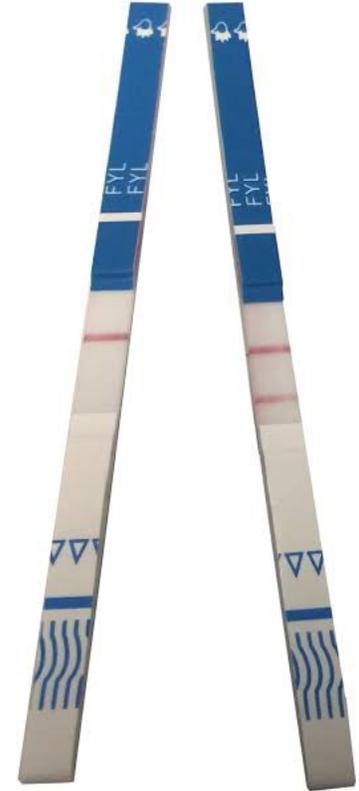


Photo from DanceSafe



Brief intervention

- ▶ Demographics
- ▶ Current health issues & medications
- ▶ Drug use history and intentions
- ▶ Harm reduction advice relevant to personal circumstances
- ▶ No samples are described as “safe” or “passing” the test
- ▶ No samples are returned to service users

Sydney music festival deaths: Two young people dead

LEADING doctors have made a stunning claim about why two people died at a Sydney dance music festival at the weekend.

Megan Palin and Natalie Wolfe

6 min read September 18, 2018 - 1:05PM news.com.au



The Defqon1 Music Festival, held in Penrith, Sydney, 15 Septer

'Forever in my heart': Tributes flow for man dead after Lost Paradise music festival



Sarah Keoghan

December 31, 2018 - 7.56am

A 22-year-old Brisbane rugby player has been identified as [the victim of a deadly pill](#) at Lost Paradise music festival.

Friends and family of Josh Tam took to social media in tribute of the young man's life, with one describing him as "my little mate".

He was taken to Gosford Hospital from Lost Paradise at Glenworth Valley about 8pm on Saturday, but died a short time later.



Josh Tam has died after attending the Lost Paradise music festival. FACEBOOK

National NSW Pill Testing

This was published 3 years ago

Family of 'beautiful' teen plead for pill testing after suspected festival drug overdose

Sarah Keoghan & Lucy Cormack

January 13, 2019 - 5.44pm

Save Share A A A

The family of the latest young person to die of a suspected overdose at a music festival has pleaded with NSW Premier Gladys Berejiklian to show "strong leadership" and introduce pill testing.

Central Coast teenager Alex Ross-King, 19, died after taking a suspected dose of pills at the FOMO festival in Parramatta at the weekend.



Ms Ross-King is the fifth young person to die at a music festival in recent months. FACEBOOK

Sept 2018 - Jan 2019

Coroner to hold public hearing into series of suspected drug deaths at NSW music festivals

Avani Dias

Posted 15 Jan 2019



Pill testing plans for Spilt Milk's 2017 event were also scuttled . (Facebook: Spilt Milk)



Amanda Lyons

08 Nov 2019

Coroner's report recommends drug policy overhaul in NSW

The report has recommended trialling pill testing and stopping the use of sniffer dogs and strip searches at music festivals in the state.



The NSW Coroner's report report has recommended implementation of pill testing at music festivals in the state, as well as a reduction in punitive policing measures.

“The faces of these young people will remain with me going forward, along with the hope that improvements will be made”, Deputy State Coroner Harriet Grahame told the New South Wales Coroners Court when handing down the findings of her report.

Grieving mother wants music festival pill deaths to be 'catalyst for change'

By [Jocelyn Garcia](#)

January 18, 2020 – 9.28pm



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Leave a comment

TODAY'S TOP STORIES

TRAFFIC

Breakdown and crashes cause Monday morning traffic headaches

1 hour ago



EDUCATION

Knives, punches, abuse: Violence against teachers a 'growing problem'



EXTREMISM

Man shot dead following London knife attack 'a convicted terrorist'



This time last year, Julie Tam was [surrounded by hundreds of mourners grieving the shock death of her 22-year-old son](#) after he took an "unknown substance" at a music festival.

On Saturday, she was surrounded by people working to prevent more young revellers like Joshua Tam dying from taking drugs they knew hardly anything about.



Drug Checking in Australia

The ACT remains the only jurisdiction to allow drug checking

Two festivals have conducted drug checking in 2018 and 2019

Independent external evaluation was very positive

Fixed site trial commenced in August 2022 with another external evaluation underway



Community News

CanTEST staff provided 140 health and AOD brief interventions to people who attended and 16 samples were discarded.

Heroin tested shows a wide range of purity - exercise caution when using especially from different sources.

Ketamine testing showed highly variable results with K found in less than half the samples.

Previous months' data can be found on our social media and on our website.



Ketamine

was expected in 14 samples and detected in 6

Purities ranged from 65 - 75%

1 sample contained procaine.

When Ketamine wasn't found, 4 samples contained the new psychoactive substance

2'-fluoro-2-oxo-PCE (2F-NENDCK) an emerging research chemical with unstudied and unknown effects. Users of K are highly encouraged to test their supply and exercise high caution.



MDMA

was expected in 34 samples and detected in 30

Samples tested & their purity ranges consisted of:

5/6 capsules contained 36 - 78%
10/12 powders contained 5 - 82%
9/9 pills contained <5 - 23%
6/7 crystalline contained 20 - 81%

2 pills also contained caffeine, 1 pill contained both caffeine & **methamphetamine**, 1 powder also contained **dimethylpentylone**.

1 sample expected to be MDA instead contained MDMA (58%).



Cocaine

was expected in 14 samples and detected in 13

Purity ranged from <5 - 71%

One sample which contained no cocaine, was found to contain **methamphetamine**.



Heroin

was expected in 3 samples and detected in all 3

Purities ranged from 27 - 71%

To date, no fentanyl have been identified in any samples tested.



Methamphetamine

was expected in 3 samples and detected in all 3

Purities ranged from 60 - 69%



Other Findings

A range of other expected drugs were detected, including the psychedelic 2C-B (2),

4-acetoxymethyltryptamine and morphine.

2 found/unknown samples were presented, of which 1 was identified as methamphetamine.

25 samples were tested for the presence of fentanyl and all returned a negative result.



Community Notices

CanTEST released 2 Community Notices in its second month.

The new ketamine derivative **2'-fluoro-2-oxo-PCE (2F-NENDCK)** was identified in 4 samples that were expected to be ketamine.

The cathinone stimulant **dimethylpentylone** was identified as a major component in 1 sample that was expected to be MDMA.

Thursday 10am - 1pm
Friday 6pm - 9pm

City Community Health Centre,
1 Moore Street, Canberra City
www.directionshealth.com/CanTEST

PILL
TESTING

Directions
Health Services

cahma
Canberra Alcohol and Other Drug Services

Drug Checking in Queensland

Prior to the ACT's successful festival trial in 2019, the Queensland Government's position was they were awaiting the evaluation

The evaluation has been published and was successful – no negative outcomes, and successfully led to behaviour change

[News](#) > [Queensland](#) > [Queensland Government](#)

Palaszczuk government considers pill-testing program to protect drug users at summer music festivals

A controversial pill-testing program is being looked at by the Queensland Government, as the state grapples with ways to better protect drug-users

Domanii Cameron and Nic Darveniza

🕒 2 min read January 1, 2019 - 12:00AM [Courier Mail](#)

🗨️ 103 comments



NSW govt urged to bring in pill testing after festival death

Drug Checking in Queensland

Queensland quietly doing pill-testing groundwork



Matt Dennien

August 12, 2022 – 8.04pm



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Queensland is quietly looking into the use of pill-testing services as part of a harm reduction approach to drug safety in the state.

Police say the work, being led by Queensland Health but including other state government agencies, is focused on the “suitability” of the approach as part of a broader suite of measures.



Advocacy groups have called for a revisiting of the harm-reduction policies as large events like music festivals return from pandemic-related lulls.

The Loop Australia holds authority licenses to handle schedule substances for the purpose of chemical analysis

These authorities cover us for one music festival, and seven locations attached to an NGO AOD service provider

Existing Queensland Police Service operations manual is likely enough for service to commence operating

Groovin the Moo music festival cancels pill testing service after insurers pull out

by [Roxanne Libatique](#)
21 Apr 2022

SHARE [f](#) [t](#) [in](#)



Canberra's biggest music festival, Groovin the Moo, will not provide a testing service for illicit drugs anymore after insurers backed out only a few days before the event.

Groovin the Moo is the first event in Australia that provides free pill testing, supported by the event organisers and the ACT government, for festival-goers to check whether their drugs contain dangerous substances without getting in trouble with the law.

Drug Checking in Queensland

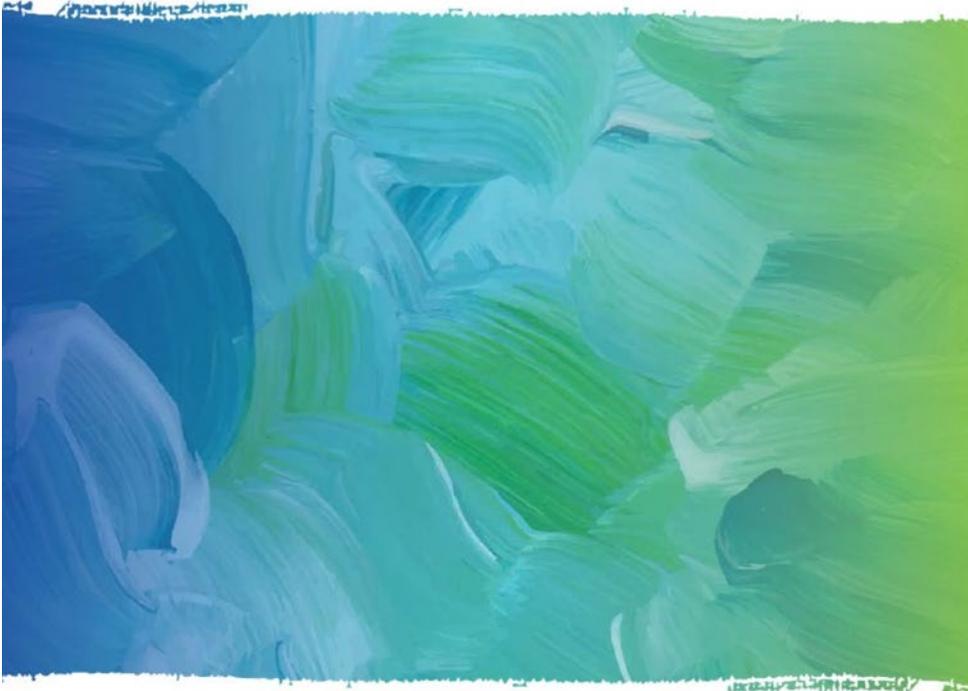
Global insurance industry has a low risk appetite

We need to have public liability / professional indemnity cover to operate

Current advice from insurers is that they would prefer if we were government funded

Shifting minds

Queensland Mental Health, Alcohol
and Other Drugs Strategic Plan
2018–2023



Achieving balance

The Queensland Alcohol and Other Drugs Plan
2022–2027



THE LOOP AUSTRALIA

[Home](#) [About Us](#) [What We Do](#) [Why We Do It](#) [Volunteer](#) [Contact](#) [More](#)

DRUG CHECKING IS JUST AROUND THE CORNER

Donate to help us make drug checking a reality.

Around 3.4 million Australians have used drugs in the last 12 months.

Drug checking services provide crucial information to people who use drugs. We want to deliver an accessible service where people can get advice on how to reduce the risks associated with drug use, informed by chemical analyses of the substances they are considering taking. Our service provides opportunities for open and honest conversations about drugs, and opportunities for knowledge and empowerment.

We're a team of experts in chemistry, healthcare, research, communications and community organising. Over the past three years we've been working hard on getting drug checking services started. We've got the lab equipment and we're working closely with partner organisations, government departments and agencies and MPs.

We can see we're close to a breakthrough and we need your help to keep going.

With \$5,000 we will have the resources to keep on track over the next quarter. \$10,000 will keep us going for half a year.

[Find out more about our crowdfunder.](#)

All donations over \$2 are tax-deductible.
Registered charity number: ABN 22 628 785 973.

1 2 3

ONE-TIME WEEKLY MONTHLY

\$30 \$50 \$100 \$200

\$500 \$ Other

Donating in **Australian Dollars** ▾

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