

Media Release

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FIXED SITE PILL TESTING TO SAVE LIVES

To mark International Drug Checking Day on 31 March, Directions Health Services is advocating for a fixed site pill testing pilot in the ACT.

“Last month during Question Time, the ACT Minister for Health assured the community that the Government continues to work towards the introduction of a pilot fixed site pill testing service this year. This commitment is very welcome,” Directions Health CEO, Bronwyn Hendry said.

“While understanding there are issues the Government is striving to resolve, our view is that this pilot needs to be established as soon as possible to protect the lives of Canberrans.”

According to the latest National Drug Strategy Household Survey, in 2019, 14.3 per cent of the ACT population used illicit drugs in the preceding 12 months. This was up from 12.9 per cent in 2016.

“Pill testing allows people to find out what is actually in the drugs they are considering consuming. Overdoses and adverse reactions to drugs can often be linked to the contamination of these substances with things like fentanyl and other toxic chemicals.

“The ACT Groovin’ the Moo Pill Testing pilots found that more than half the pills bought for testing were adulterated with other substances, some of which were dangerous.

“We need to protect people by helping them make informed choices and have joined with Pill Testing Australia to urge the ACT Government to urgently progress this issue.”

Evidence from international pill testing services demonstrates that pill testing can have a positive impact on drug taking behaviour.

“There are several reasons for this,” Ms Hendry explained. “Patrons of pill testing services have been found to discard or state they would decline to take a drug if it contains unexpected or dangerous substances, particularly when trusted experts present this information to them in a clinical manner.

“Pill testing sites also provide people with health and harm reduction information and advice, which they may not otherwise access.

“A great gift for our community on International Drug Checking Day would be a firm announcement on the timing for establishment of ACT’s fixed site pill testing pilot service.”

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