

MEDIA RELEASE



VAC and Harm Reduction Victoria call for trial of pill testing in Victoria in light of Four Corners report

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

15 February 2016 — Responding to an investigation by the ABC's Four Corners program this week into drug-related deaths, Harm Reduction Victoria (HRV) and the Victorian AIDS Council (VAC) call on the Victorian Government to implement a state-based pill testing trial.

The organisations join calls by former law enforcement and judicial officials quoted in the Four Corners report to introduce pill testing at events and help our communities remain safe. A Victorian trial could see pill testing machines implemented at parties and events, operated by trained staff, to give drug users more information about what they are taking.

HRV President Bill O'Loughlin said the organisation's DanceWize program, which uses a peer education model to reduce drug and alcohol related harm at Victorian dance parties, could easily incorporate pill testing in partnership with medical experts.

"The time has come to do a trial of pill testing at events. Dancewize are constantly being asked if pill tests are available—the program is respected by dance patrons and would easily be able to incorporate pill testing in partnership with medical experts," said O'Loughlin.

"People want to know what they are taking. They don't want to go out for an evening and run the risk of dying."

As of last year VAC has been working with DanceWize to deliver peer education around drugs and alcohol at Trough, a gay dance party in Melbourne.

VAC CEO Simon Ruth said this was an important issue for LGBTI communities. Last week the Kirby Institute released results from the Flux study, which indicated that while recreational drug use is common among gay and bisexual men, dependency is low.

"We agree that current drug measures have failed, and it's clear we need a new approach. Pill testing has proven effective in Europe for over a decade at reducing harm, and a trial in Victoria is a clear way forward to help our communities to stay safe," said Ruth.

Ruth also criticised the use of sniffer dogs to detect drugs at events: "We have to put an end to using sniffer dogs at events and parties. We know they don't work, and can even lead to people taking all of their drugs at once to avoid detection, risking overdose. Victoria needs to support measures to keep people safe, not place them at further risk."

In November VAC launched TouchBase, a national resource on alcohol and drugs for LGBTI communities.

ENDS

For more information on DanceWize, visit: hrvic.org.au/dancewize

For more information on TouchBase, visit: touchbase.org.au

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