



Secretary

Department of Health

50 Lonsdale Street
Melbourne Victoria 3000
Telephone: 1300 650 172
GPO Box 4057
Melbourne Victoria 3001
www.health.vic.gov.au
DX 210081

BAC-CO-39434
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State Coroner Judge John Cain
Coroners Court of Victoria

Via e-mail: cpuresponses@coronerscourt.vic.gov.au

Dear Judge Cain

Thank you for providing your findings in relation to the death of [REDACTED] in March 2022. I am sorry to read about his passing.

I understand that [REDACTED] died after consuming high strength MDMA at a festival in Melbourne. I extend my sympathy to his family and loved ones, acknowledging that a death attributable to a drug overdose places unique challenges on those who are left behind.

I note that you recommend the implementation of a drug checking service in Victoria to minimise the risks and number of preventable deaths associated with the use of drugs obtained from unregulated drug markets. I also acknowledge that the Coroners Court has provided the department with a recommendation of this kind previously.

The Department of Health (the department) continues to work to improve both state and national drug surveillance and systems intelligence. In the 2023-24 State Budget, the Emerging Drug Network of Australia – Victoria (EDNAV) received funding for the next four years to continue its work, and the department continues to work with other jurisdictions on this matter under the national Prompt Response Network (PRN).

I am also aware that the coming summer months may present an increased risk of harm due to the combination of more music events and the risk of hot weather. I am pleased to confirm that the department continues to fund frontline harm reduction initiatives, such as Harm Reduction Victoria's DanceWize. DanceWize peer educators engage with attendees at Victorian music festivals and nightclubs, providing chill-spaces, discussing safer drug use with patrons and handing out health resources.

The department acknowledges that drug checking services, where implemented, can provide another source of information to support decision-making but there are no current plans to implement a drug checking service of the kind the Coroners Court has recommended in these and previous findings. The department will continue to consider evidence for additional harm reduction approaches that will prevent further deaths and support improved health and social outcomes for people who use drugs and will brief Victorian Government accordingly.

Should your team wish to discuss this matter further, they can contact Bonnie Rowe, Director, Mental Health and Alcohol and Other Drug Strategy at the Department of Health via [REDACTED]

I would like to conclude by thanking you for this recommendation. Your findings and recommendations will continue to be considered by the department as further work is progressed to enhance harm reduction and surveillance initiatives.

Yours sincerely

Jacinda de Witts

Jacinda de Witts
Acting Secretary
17/10/2023