



# MEDIA RELEASE

## Tasmanian Legislative Council Drug Checking Notice of Motion

**Monday, 12 August 2019**

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The Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council of Tasmania is calling upon the Tasmanian Legislative Council to put politics aside and focus on the evidence ahead of their debate on drug checking this week.

On Tuesday, Independent member for Murchison, Ruth Forrest will bring forth a notice of motion calling upon the Legislative Council to acknowledge the evidence supporting drug analysis services, commonly known as drug checking, as a health service that successfully reduces risky illicit drug use.

Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council chief executive, Alison Lai said that support for Ms Forrest's motion will not mean the Tasmanian Government is compelled to deliver a trial but stressed that it would provide another voice to the growing calls from across the Tasmanian community for a trial to be explored.

"Over the past few weeks we've seen more community organisations across Tasmania step forward to support a trial of drug checking including the Hobart City Council, Health Consumers Tasmania and the Tasmanian Aboriginal Centre," Ms Lai said.

"Some may say that it is not the role of these organisations, particularly local government to get involved in social policy matters like drug checking, but we believe that they have a significant role to play in representing the views of their communities and members.

"As an elected representative group, the Legislative Council also has an opportunity to communicate their position, as they have done previously on other policy matters including calling on the Tasmanian Government to take action on issues as diverse as solar energy, container deposit systems to fox eradication."

When questioned if party politics could impact the debate on Tuesday, Ms Lai confirmed this was a possibility.

"Based on our discussions, we do have concerns that politics might outweigh the evidence, but we are hopeful this won't be the case because Ms Forrest's notice of motion is a very pragmatic one," she said.

"It is not asking for a commitment to introduce drug checking but rather asking the members of the Upper House, regardless of whether they are liberal, labor or independent, to acknowledge that drug checking is first and foremost a health service, supported in evidence and by Australia's leading national health and medical professional bodies.

"We are hopeful that Ms Forrest's motion can help to cut through the misinformation out there about what drug checking services are and how they operate so that we can give it genuine consideration, and it's incredibly important that politics are put to the side to enable this objective assessment to occur.



"Problematic illicit drug use is happening in Tasmania, and the only reason we haven't lost someone at a music festival or event is not because of the police, or good behaviour it's simply been good luck and it's critical that we do something and that what we do is founded in best-practice evidence and supported by Australia's leading health and medical professional bodies – which drug checking is.

"We hope that the members of the Tasmanian Legislative Council acknowledge this."

Regardless of the outcome on Tuesday, Ms Lai said that the calls for a trial of drug checking services in Tasmania were likely to continue.

"Last week New Zealand passed legislation to introduce drug analysis services and last month the Forensic and Clinical Toxicology Association of Australia was the most recent, and the 12<sup>th</sup> national medical/health professional body to join the call for trialling drug checking, alongside the likes of the Australian Medical Association, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, and the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia," she said.

"We are aware that there are discussions happening in other states including Victoria and Queensland, and it's highly anticipated that the recommendations from the NSW Coronial Inquiry in the deaths at their festivals last year will call on the NSW Liberal Government to make their festivals safer, and drug checking services are likely to be among the strategies recommended.

"Pill Testing Australia will be in Hobart at the start of September, and we are hopeful to progress tri-partisan discussions to explore how a drug checking trial could be delivered at Tasmanian music festivals and events."

The ATDC's full position statement can be viewed [here](#).

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**Who are the ATDC?** The Alcohol, Tobacco and other Drugs Council of Tasmania is the peak body representing and supporting community organisations, and the people they assist, to reduce alcohol, tobacco and other drug related harm for all Tasmanians.

Our vision is a Tasmania without alcohol, tobacco or other drug related harm or discrimination.

**LANGUAGE MATTERS** – Language is powerful, especially when discussing alcohol and other drugs and the people who use them. Stigmatising language reinforces negative stereotypes. "Person-centred" language focuses on the person, not their substance use.

When reporting on people who use alcohol and other drugs....	
Try this 🍀	Not this ☠
Substance use, non-prescribed use	Abuse, misuse, problem use, non-compliant use
Person who uses drugs	Drug user, drug abuser
Person with a dependence on...	Addict, junkie, druggie, alcoholic
Person experiencing drug dependence	Suffering from addiction, has a drug habit
Person who has stopped using drugs	Clean, sober, drug-free
Person with lived experience of drug dependence	Ex-addict, former addict, used to be a...
Please see the attached Language matters resource attached or at: <a href="http://www.nada.org.au/resources/language-matters/">www.nada.org.au/resources/language-matters/</a>	