

Dear Premier Minns,

Every year in New South Wales, more than 1,000,000 people from all walks of life use drugs. Helping them stay safe shouldn't be illegal.

Banning drug checking is putting lives at risk. It's impossible for people to know what they're really taking, and the consequences can be deadly. With the return of El Niño, this summer is set to be a hot one, and we know that heat drastically increases the risk in taking unknown substances. That's why we're calling on you to urgently establish an implementation pilot of drug-checking services this summer.

Drug checking is a simple, proven step you can take to prevent drug-related health emergencies including overdose deaths. Scientific analysis and stigma-free advice in drug checking services helps people make informed decisions for their own well-being. For many people, it's the first time they've talked to a health professional about managing the risks of using drugs.

The ACT has shown how effective drug checking can be. Testing over 1,000 samples brought in by members of the public in its first year, CanTEST found that about half contained unexpected substances. After getting expert advice at the service, about 10% of clients binned the substance on the spot. And 98% of people who used CanTEST would recommend it to others, demonstrating that the community sees drug checking as a valuable tool to help them stay safe.

The 2019 Coronial Inquest into Festival Deaths led by Deputy State Coroner Harriet Grahame and the Special Commission of Inquiry into the Drug 'Ice' led by Professor Dan Howard both recommended that the New South Wales government set up drug checking services.

Among the NSW public, support for drug checking is over 60%. That support is backed by experts across the health, legal, justice and alcohol and other drugs sectors. We are calling for fixed and festival-based drug checking services to be piloted and evaluated now.

More than twenty countries around the world have drug checking services already operating, including Australia and New Zealand. With the QLD government following the ACT's lead and working to get drug checking services up and running by the end of the year, it's time New South Wales got with the times and took this simple step to help people stay safe.

Premier Minns, it's time to act.

Signed,

