

# Media Release

**Ingrid Stitt MP**  
Minister for Mental Health  
Minister for Ageing  
Minister for Multicultural Affairs



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## PILL TESTING AT FOUR MORE FESTIVALS

The Allan Labor Government's mobile pill testing trial continues this festival season, with the next four events set to host the service confirmed – giving more Victorian festivalgoers access to this life-saving service.

Minister for Mental Health Ingrid Stitt today announced pill testing will be available at a mix of single-day and multi-day events over the coming months, including Hardmission Festival (8 February), Pitch Music and Arts Festival (7-11 March), Ultra Music Festival (12 April) and The Warehouse Project (25 April).

Pill testing was introduced following a spike in drug harm last year, with nine people critically unwell at Hardmission Festival – all experiencing life-threatening hyperthermia after using high potency MDMA in a hot and humid environment, and one death related to a suspected overdose also occurred at Pitch Music and Arts Festival.

The service is completely free and confidential and is staffed by an experienced team of experts who not only test substances with world-leading technology, but also provide confidential health information to help people make safer, more informed decisions.

The announcement of the final four events for this festival season follows the highly successful launch of Victoria's first mobile pill testing service in December at the Beyond the Valley.

More than 700 people used the service – the majority in their late teens or early twenties – and staff tested more than 600 samples – or about one in 50 festivalgoers.

But it's not just about the analytical results. Pill testing is about changing people's behaviour by giving them access to the information they are asking for.

For more than 70 per cent of patrons who used the service at Beyond the Valley, it was the first time they had ever had an open, judgment-free discussion about drug and alcohol safety with a health professional. These conversations are at the heart of the service's harm reduction focus – and they're already working.

Nearly 40 per cent of patrons said they would use a smaller amount of their drugs following their discussion with a healthcare worker at the service, while one in six people intended to discard their drugs after having them tested.

A significant number of festivalgoers were also interested in understanding the interaction of recreational drugs with mental health conditions and prescription medications, particularly antidepressants – many did not know that recreational drugs can interact dangerously with prescribed medications.

Operated by The Loop and Harm Reduction Victoria, in partnership with Youth Support and Advocacy Service – Victoria's pill testing service uses state of the art mobile testing equipment with capacity to conduct up to 30 tests an hour, more than any other pill testing service in Australia.

### Quotes attributable to Minister for Mental Health Ingrid Stitt

*"Following a spike in drug harm last festival season, this service is more important than ever – it offers a sensible health-led approach that will save the lives of young Victorian festivalgoers."*

*"The results from Beyond the Valley speak for themselves: pill testing does not encourage people to use drugs. It allows people to see what's really in their substances and make informed health decisions."*

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