

CONSTITUENT QUESTION

House of Assembly

ASKED BY: Member for Clark, Helen Burnet MP

ANSWERED BY: Hon Roger Jaensch MP
Minister for Mental Health and
Wellbeing

QUESTION:

1. My question comes from constituent Sophie from South Hobart. With the summer festival season approaching, will the government follow the examples of Victoria, Queensland and the Australian Capital Territory and trial mobile or fixed-site pill testing, which has been shown to be effective in reducing harm. In the Australian Capital Territory at pill testing sites, a third of those surveyed chose not to take their drugs when tests came back that their pills were either not what they thought or contained other substances. In the United Kingdom, it was a clear majority who chose not to consume. In Tasmania, a February 2024 poll showed nearly two thirds of the respondents supported pill testing.

If you are not willing to implement pill testing, what is the government's plan to keep people safe at festivals while there are increased reports of overdoses and hospitalisations, and while fentanyl, nitazene and other synthetic substances are increasingly being detected in recreational drugs?

ANSWER:

The Tasmanian Government is committed to improving health outcomes for all Tasmanians.

We recognise that alcohol, tobacco and other drugs use is a health issue and there are many factors that can influence the use and misuse of both legal and illicit drugs.

Previously our Government, through the Department of Health, worked successfully with festival organisers behind the Falls Festival and Party in the Paddock, to establish a Safe Space and increase health resources. And we are always open to having discussions with festival organisers.

Our Government will not be introducing pill testing for illicit drug at festivals and events.

Our Government, through the Department of Health keep abreast of current emerging novel substances, including nitazenes and drug contamination.

Last year, the Government released the *Tasmanian Drug Strategy 2024-2029* last year, which takes a health-focused, strengths-based approach to alcohol, tobacco and other drugs use. It provides a framework that will encourage collaborative action and activities across agencies, organisations and the community.

The vision of the Strategy is a State that is inclusive and safe for all Tasmanians, without stigma and discrimination, where people are treated equitably, and make informed health decisions when it comes to use of alcohol, tobacco and other drugs.

Key activities under the area of illicit drugs include:

- Expand overdose prevention initiatives, eg. Access to naloxone, develop safe festival guidelines, safe injecting and prevention of blood-borne infections, eg. Needle and syringe programs; and
- Form a cross-sectoral working group to investigate, build understanding of and report on evidence-based harm reduction, and health-focused responses to illicit drug use, including communicating current and emerging risks related to alcohol, tobacco and other drugs use eg. Drug contamination, toxicity warnings.

The Government has broadened the access to the anti-overdose drug, naloxone, which is available free from Needle and Syringe Program outlets across Tasmania, from community pharmacies and through our Alcohol and Drug Service in the South, North and North West.



Hon Roger Jaensch MP
Minister for Mental Health and Wellbeing

Date: 26 February 2025