



THE AUSTRALIAN
DRUG OBSERVATORY

Introducing 'Pill Testing' to Australia- A 15 Year Saga, in 15 Minutes.

Associate Professor David Caldicott,
B.Sc(Hons), MBBS(Lond), FRCEM, PG Dip.Clin.Tox

Emergency Specialist, Calvary Hospital
Clinical Senior Lecturer, ANU
Designer, WEDINOS Project / Convenor, ACTINOS Group



EURO vision

SONG CONTEST





EUROPE

Mystery Kangaroo Is At Large In Austria, Confusing Everybody

September 4, 2018 · 3:01 PM ET



CAMILA DOMONOSKE



A kangaroo of unknown origin is on the loose in Austria, raising eyebrows in the area around Hellmonsödt and causing confusion on the Internet.

Kangaroos are, of course, indigenous to Australia.

Austria is, of course, not Australia.

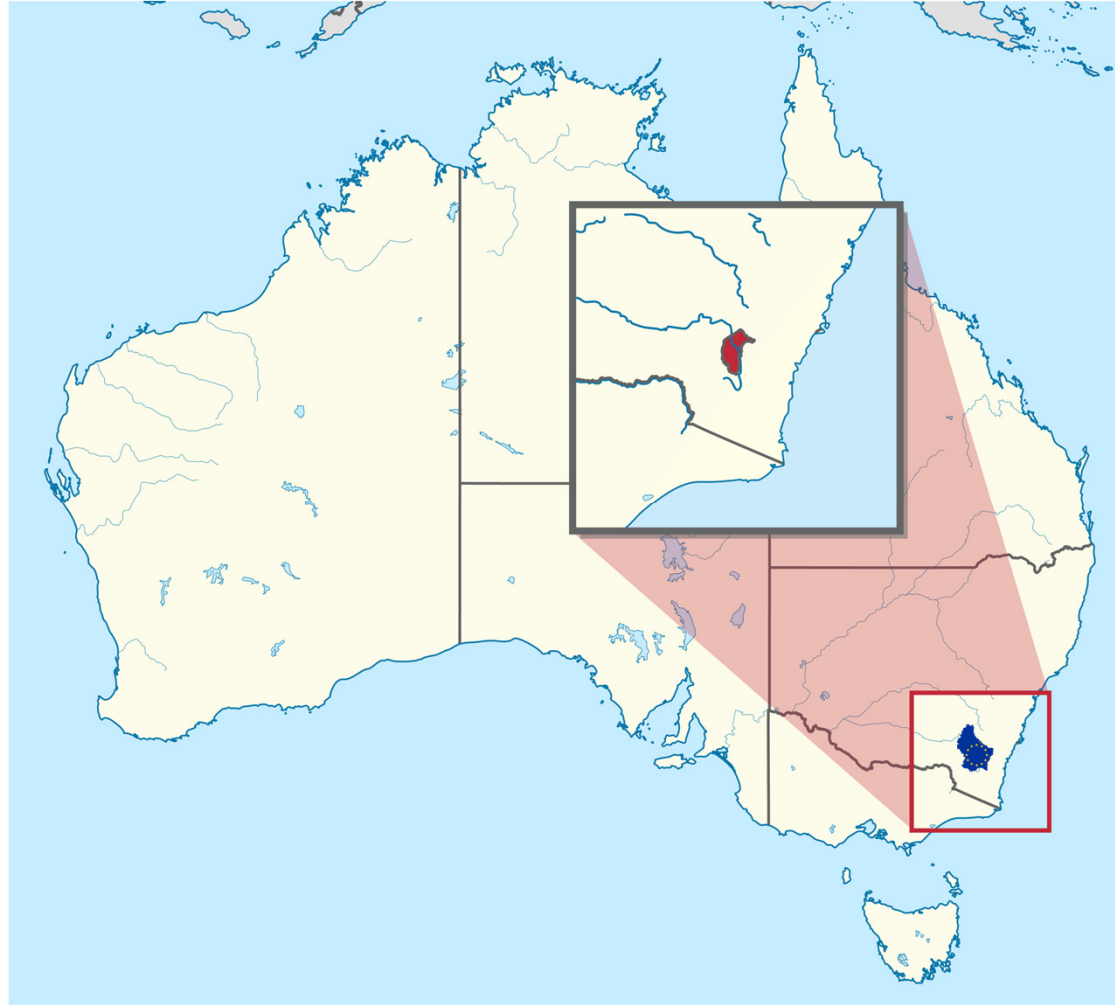
But there's a marsupial hopping about in Upper Austria, and no one knows why.

The suspected kangaroo — we add a caveat because it could well be a wallaby instead — has been seen "numerous times" over the past week or so, [according to Agence France-Presse](#).

EUROPE

[A Giant Python On The Loose Has Rattled Poland](#)





I'm a fairly simple man...







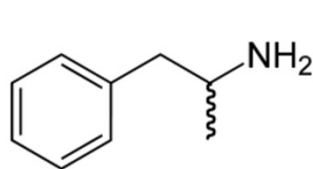
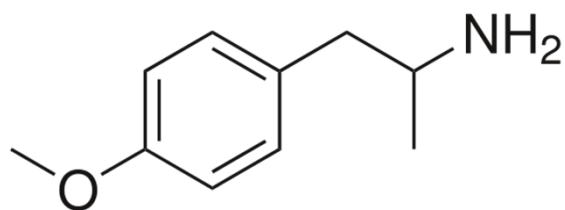


Where to begin...?

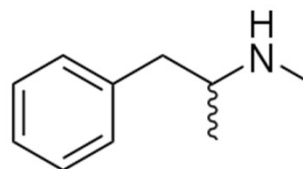


Let's start
at the very
beginning
A very good
place to
start

26th August 2001



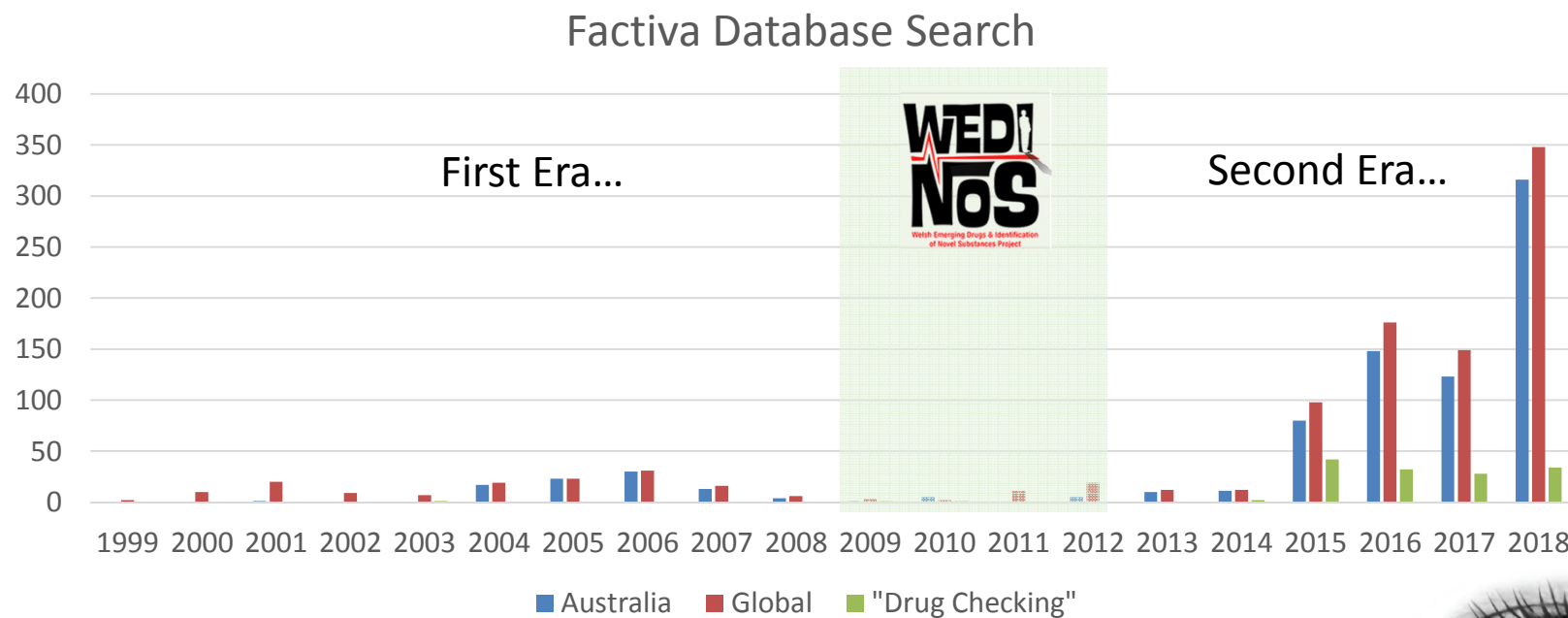
Amphetamine



Methamphetamine



'Pill Testing' vs. 'Drug Checking'





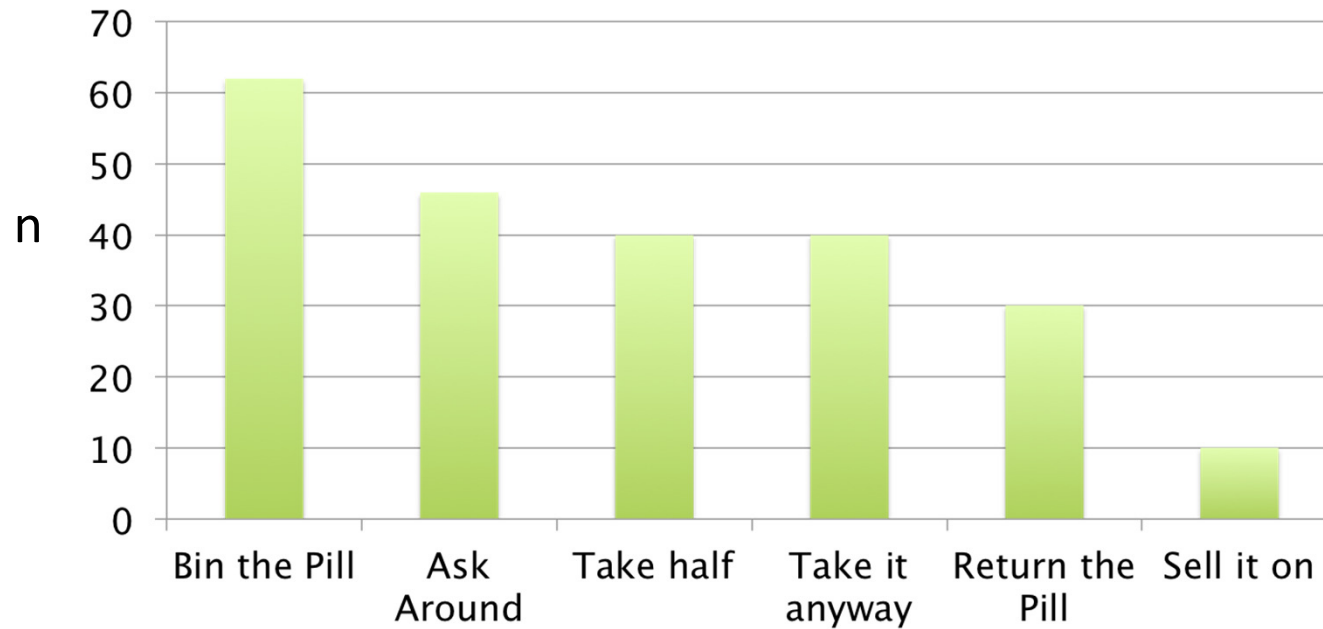
- Over 5 years of data...
- 13 events...
- Over 5000 interviews...
- 2 MLCs escorted..





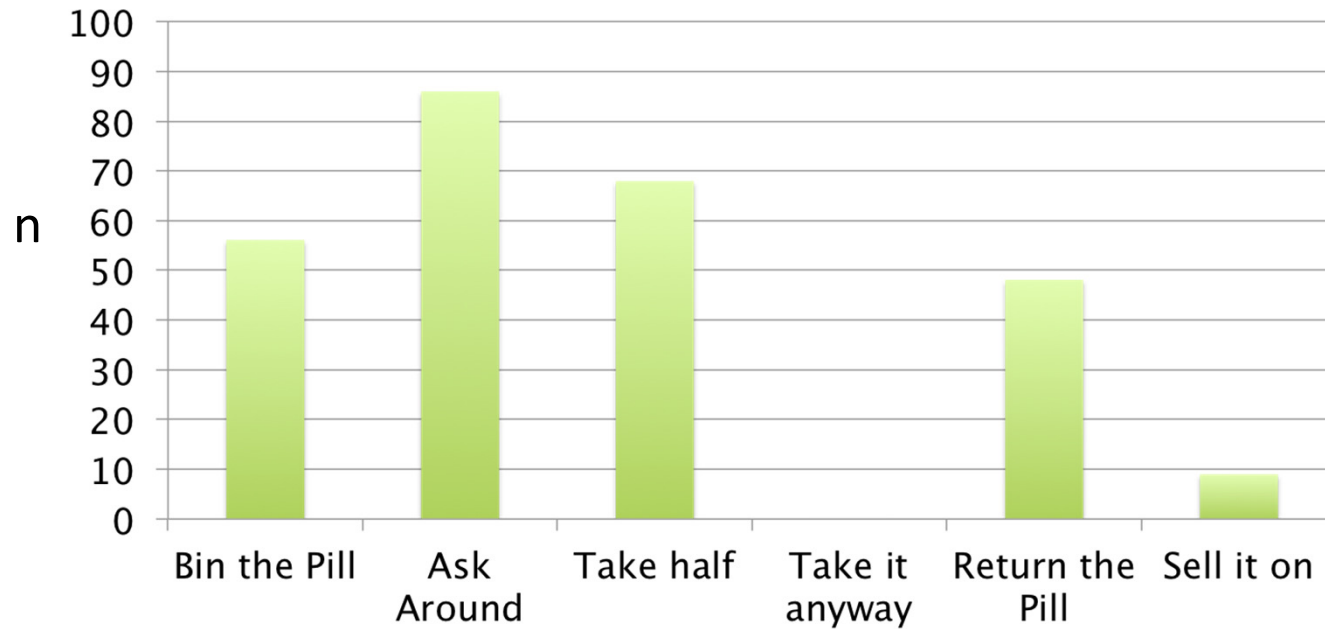
Enchanted 2003 (n=235)

What would you do if your pill tested positive for something other than MDMA?



Enchanted 2004 (n=413)

What would you do if your pill tested positive for something other than MDMA?





Available online at www.sciencedirect.com

SCIENCE @ DIRECT®

Forensic Science International 151 (2005) 53–58



www.elsevier.com/locate/forsciint

Underground pill testing, down under

Andrew M. Camilleri^{a,*}, David Caldicott^b

^a*Forensic Science South Australia, 21 Divett Place, Adelaide, Australia*

^b*Emergency Department, Royal Adelaide Hospital, Adelaide, Australia*

Received 22 April 2004; received in revised form 7 July 2004; accepted 9 July 2004

Available online 1 September 2004



Over a decade ago...

David

The following resolution was passed by the Federal Council of the Australian Medical Association at their November 2005 meeting. I will provide you with a more formal letter in due course

2. Ecstasy Pill Testing

RESOLVED

That the AMA recognise that there is no data from Australia on the usefulness of ecstasy pill testing at large events, such as raves, as a harm minimisation strategy although there is evidence from Europe that it might reduce consumption, morbidity and mortality. Therefore the AMA supports in principle targeted, ethically approved research to clarify if there is a role for pill testing within the Australian context.

Federal Council of the AMA, November 2005



There has been *a lot* of resistance...

“Dr Caldicott is one of a long line of medical people who treat drugs as a health issue, rather than the self-harm and criminal offences that they are”

“He has some dangerous views, which if allowed to become mainstream, would undermine the Governments policy of being tough on drugs”



First real taste of 'politics'...



"Pyne's Pain" The Advertiser. May 31, 2007

- MCDS 2005
- Letters demanding 'funding' details
- Smith & Nephew



Ion Mobility Spectroscopy



Club Health, Sydney, 2005...



The “winnable war on drugs

The impact of illicit drug use on families

House of Representatives
Standing Committee on Family and Human Services



September 2007
Canberra





Some notable exceptions...





Contents lists available at ScienceDirect

Forensic Science International

journal homepage: www.elsevier.com/locate/forensi



Chemical analysis of four capsules containing the controlled substance analogues 4-methylmethcathinone, 2-fluoromethamphetamine, α -phthalimidopropiophenone and N-ethylcathinone

Andrew Camilleri^{a,*}, Martin R. Johnston^{b,1}, Michael Brennan^c, Sean Davis^d, David G.E. Caldicott^e

^a Forensic Science SA, 21 Divett Place, Adelaide, Australia

^b School of Chemistry, Physics and Earth Sciences, Flinders University, Adelaide, Australia

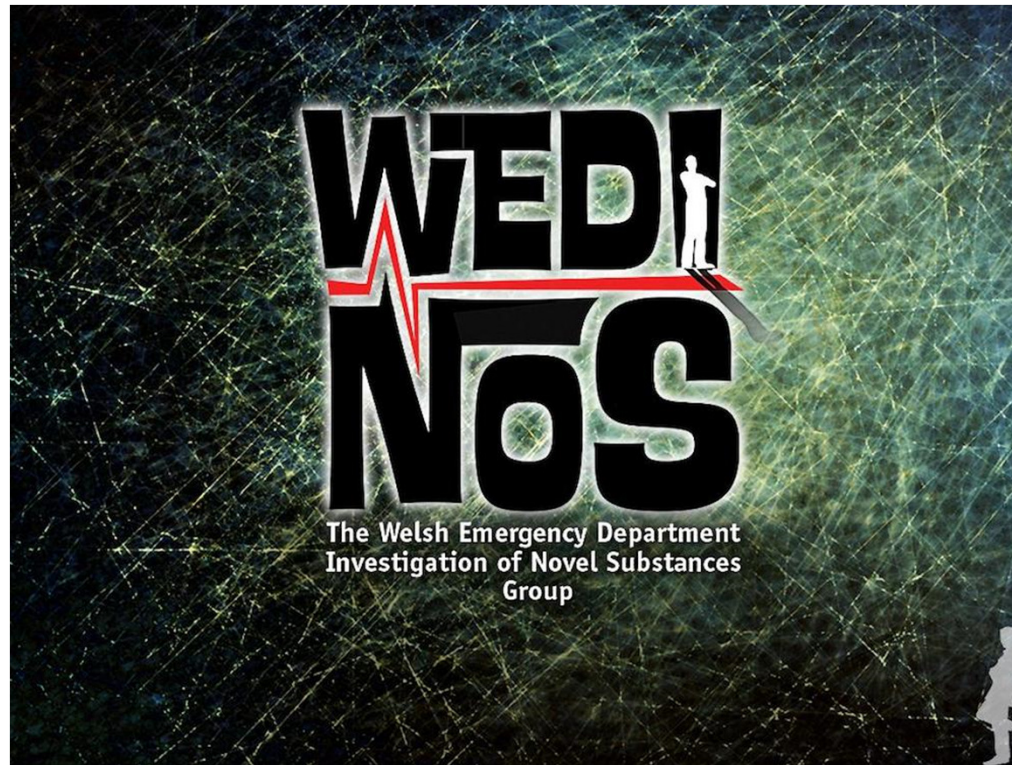
^c RaveSafe, Queensland, Australia

^d Queensland Health Forensic and Scientific Services (QHFSS), 39 Kessels Rd, Brisbane, Queensland, Australia

^e Emergency Department, Royal Adelaide Hospital, Adelaide, Australia



WEDINOS



Correspondence case report

Received: 20 January 2012

Revised: 27 April 2012

Accepted: 30 April 2012

Published online in Wiley Online Library: 26 June 2012

(www.drugtestinganalysis.com) DOI 10.1002/dta.1375

The identification and chemical characterization of a new arylcyclohexylamine, methoxetamine, using a novel Emergency Department toxicosurveillance tool

A. D. Westwell,^a A. Hutchings^b and D. G. E. Caldicott^{c*}

Medical Model of Pill-Testing

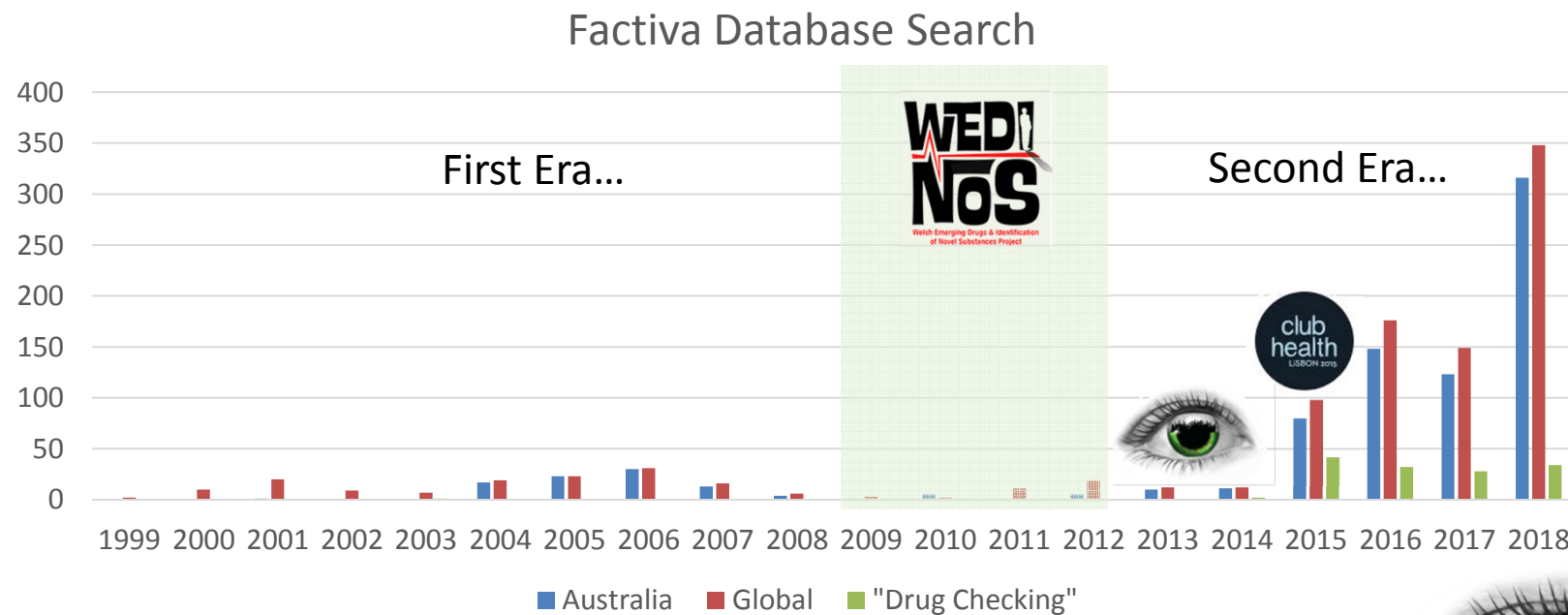
- Avoids law-enforcement implications
- Stated aim is to prevent harm, not facilitate use
- Aimed at outcomes, not publications or grants
- Avoids reference to the term 'safety'...



“Safety...?!”



'Pill Testing' vs. 'Drug Checking'



Australian AOD Community went from...



...being nervous to even talk about pill-testing...



...to full-on, blood-lust activists.



AUSTRALIAN 2016 DRUG SUMMIT



- Drug checking presents as a potentially valuable option for reducing harm at public events and governments should enable trials to be implemented as a matter of priority.



#TimeToTest





ALL

LISTEN

SEX

DRUGS

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MORE ▾



**'We will do pill testing at a
Canberra music festival this
summer'**

POSTED TUE 30 AUG 2016, 7:18PM Updated Tue 30 Aug 2016, 7:48pm

Like 1.2K



Communication?





Yes, we can do on-the-spot drug testing quickly and safely

February 22, 2017 3:29pm AEDT

The not-for-profit UK group The Loop said it tested the drug ecstasy with 'loop lasers' at a festival in July 2016. The Loop UK/Facebook, Author provided

Email

Twitter 87

Facebook 589

LinkedIn 6

Print

The Victorian Police Chief Commissioner Graham Ashton's recent claim that it's not practical to conduct on-the-spot drug tests "[safely and quickly](#)" is, at best, misinformed. These tests have been taking place successfully in Europe for more than a decade.

Ashton's statement came in response to renewed calls for on-the-spot drug testing in Victoria after more than 20 people were hospitalised as a result of a [mass overdose](#) at a dance party in Melbourne on Saturday night. The incident occurred just weeks after [three people died](#) after taking a "bad batch" of MDMA in Chapel Street nightclubs.

In response to the calls, Ashton [appeared to question](#) the availability of the systems required for on-the-spot drug tests.

That's a bit of a myth really, that there is a proper testing regime that can suddenly test on-the-spot what quality drugs [are]. We take quite a long time to test drugs when we seize them.

Author



David Caldicott
Emergency Medicine Consultant,
Australian National University

Disclosure statement

David Caldicott is a member of Harm Reduction Australia and ATODA, and is the Clinical Lead in the Australian Drug Observatory. He has offered bipartisan academic advice in the development of medical cannabis legislation and drug early warning systems in Australia and overseas. He has no political affiliations or financial disclosures to make.

Partners



Honesty?



SAFETY ALERT

Warning to members of new emerging illicit drug

The Drug Taskforce wish to alert members of the existence and rise of an illicit drug that has been seized in recent times. Intelligence holdings suggest the drug is being sold and purported to be MDMA. The drug actually contains a cocktail of illicit substances, including 4-Fluoroamphetamine (4-FA) and 25C-NBOMe. It is possible for the drug to have various presentations, including powder, capsules, tablets and paste. The colour of the drug will range from an off-white to a dark brown.

The drug is causing consumers to react far differently to what they would expect if they had consumed MDMA. Members should be aware that routine spot testing with VicPol NARK-II test kits may return a negative finding to illicit drugs containing 4-FA and 25C-NBOMe. If there is a presence of MDMA, the spot test may return a positive test to this drug.

Members should seize all substances believed to be illicit drugs, regardless of a negative spot test result. Members should also seek immediately medical assistance to persons exhibiting erratic behaviour after the consumption of MDMA-type drugs and appropriately report and investigate the source of the drugs.



For further information or advice please contact:

DISTRIBUTION: Globally - [REDACTED] Organised Crime

FOUO (Not for Public release)
Prepared by: DTF TJO VP25191 Date: 27-Jan-2017
INTELLIGENCE ALERT NO: 02-2017



Honesty?





THE AUSTRALIAN
DRUG OBSERVATORY

A Good Day, but A False Start...



September 22rd, 2017





Media Release

AMA (ACT) WELCOMES PILL TESTING AT SPILT MILK

22 September 2017

AMA (ACT) President, Prof Steve Robson, today welcomed the ACT Government's announcement giving permission for pill testing at the Spilt Milk Festival in November, "AMA (ACT) supports a harm minimisation approach to the use of illicit substances. On this basis and with the right safeguards, we welcome pill testing at Spilt Milk."

"The AMA (ACT) has previously been briefed on the proposed arrangements for pill testing in the ACT and the safeguards and processes to be used and they seem sensible and workable," Prof Robson said.

"It's a fine line between encouraging the use of illicit substances and doing what we reasonably can to keep people safe but I think pill testing, under the arrangements proposed for Spilt Milk,



Drug testing decision long overdue

The ACT government's decision to permit a pill testing trial to go ahead at next month's Spilt Milk festival, while controversial, is justified, readily defensible and long overdue.

The trial, a first for Australia, marks a welcome shift towards a harm-minimisation approach.

If only one life is saved, it will have been worthwhile. It will be even better if a successful trial paves the way for the introduction of such testing at music events throughout the country.

The Canberra trial, to be conducted by qualified personnel using state-of-the-art equipment, offers a unique opportunity for medical staff to educate festival attendees about the risks of drug taking while they are having their pills tested. This could even extend to suggesting individuals review their decision to take an illicit drug whether or not it tests safe.

Data from New Zealand indicates 60 per cent of people who do have their drugs tested decide not to take them.

Given the pill testing trial issue has been on the boil in Canberra for more than a year, nobody can accuse the Barry government of acting in haste.

Twelve months ago, ACT Labor was drawing fire from groups and individuals disappointed by its decision not to support a proposal by the ACT Greens for such a trial at the 2016 Spilt Milk Festival.

The Barry government subsequently rejected a call by Harm Reduction Australia for a pill testing trial at the Groovin' the Moo festival in May this year.

"The government came to the conclusion the proposal would need a significant amount of work," a spokesman said.

Chief Minister Andrew Barry, while not unempathetic, said a range of complex legal and health issues had to be worked through before any trial could proceed.

That was done in a timely fashion, allowing the Spilt Milk trial to be announced late last month.

Opposition has come from two fronts. The first was from conservatives who argue that as drug use is illegal, pill testing should not be offered. It runs the risk of "legitimising" risky behaviour.

The second front is from recognised experts who argue there are limits to what pill testing can achieve, that it is not a "magic bullet", and that substances that cannot be identified will be found.

Pill testing advocates, such as Canberra-based emergency medicine specialist David Caldwell, say this is a moot point. If the tests throw up an unknown drug, the consumer would be advised "in the strongest possible terms" not to take the pill.

By opening the door to the possibility of a national testing regime that will indicate if a drug is potentially lethal before it is consumed, the ACT government has done much to drag Australia's drug risk management policies into the 21st century.

18 **Sunday** Focus

SEPTEMBER 24, 2017 **SUNDAY CANBERRA TIMES**

Government deserves praise for pill plan

The ACT government has made a courageous decision to proceed with a pill testing trial at a music festival in the territory.

While the nation's capital is thought of as one of the more progressive jurisdictions in the country it is still nonetheless a big step to green light such a proposal.

There will always be strong visceral reactions to decisions of this sort from anti-drug campaigners and those opposed to any perceived acceptance of illegal substances.

But the time had come to accept that the safety of predominantly young people attending such festivals is more important

Sunday Canberra Times

than black and white guidelines that rule society.

Studies in countries that have already held such trials show that people are not likely to consume pills when the test indicates problematic quality.

As ACT health minister Meegan Fitzharris said on Friday when the decision was revealed, the government gave permission for a trial program at the Spilt Milk festival

"to keep people safe". She said the government had to find the right balance between letting young people know it's illegal to take drugs but still be realistic about the use of them.

"We've seen deaths at festivals, five in 2015 alone, so if that helps to keep people safe, it's worth doing," Ms Fitzharris said.

The ACT Greens recently tabled a petition with 1000 signatures in the Legislative Assembly calling on the government to allow testing at the festival.

There will always be moral sensitivities about the acceptance of illegal drug con-

sumption but the benefits of reducing harm and saving lives must rise above these concerns.

The ACT government will be the first state or territory to implement such a trial and for that it must be praised.

But what is perhaps more crucial is again the willingness to listen to the views of the community.

The government was also right not to rush into a decision even though criticised after not allowing a trial at an earlier music festival this year. We wait with interest as to how the trial will be received.





PILL TESTING
AT SPILT MILK
health.act.gov.au/pilltesting



ACT
Government
Health



Clouds...

OCTOBER 9 2017

SAVE PRINT

Toxicologist Andrew Leibie says Canberra's pill testing trial at Spilt Milk is no magic bullet



Daniella White



SHARE



TWEET



MORE

A forensic toxicologist has warned Canberra's pill testing trial is no "magic bullet" for preventing drug deaths.

Andrew Leibie, from Safework Laboratories, says he and other toxicologists – who can't speak out because they work in the public sector – were concerned about a lack of scientific debate.



Clouds...



Elizabeth Lee MLA @ElizabethLeeCBR · Oct 8



[#Pilltesting](#) is "definitely no magic bullet" and pill related deaths higher in countries with pill testing



Canberra's pill testing trial has been oversold to the public, says toxi...

A forensic toxicologist thinks the benefits of Canberra's pill testing trial have been oversold.

canberratimes.com.au



Clouds...

OCTOBER 11 2017

SAVE PRINT

ACT laws need changing to protect pill testing facilitators at Spilt Milk, lawyer says



Daniella White



SHARE



TWEET



MORE

People conducting Canberra's pill testing trial could face criminal charges unless the territory's Criminal Code is amended, a lawyer says.

The ACT government last month gave the green light to a nation-first pill testing trial at Spilt Milk festival in November, allowing consortium STA-SAFE to offer the service free to festival goers.



Lightning...

●●●●○ Virgin 4G 6:26 pm ↗ VPN 12% 🔋



Tweet



Shalailah Medhora ✓

@shalailah



BREAKING: Kick Entertainment tells
[@triplejHack](#) that pill testing WILL
NOT take place at this year's Spilt
Milk festival in Canberra.

12/10/17, 6:01 pm



W.T.

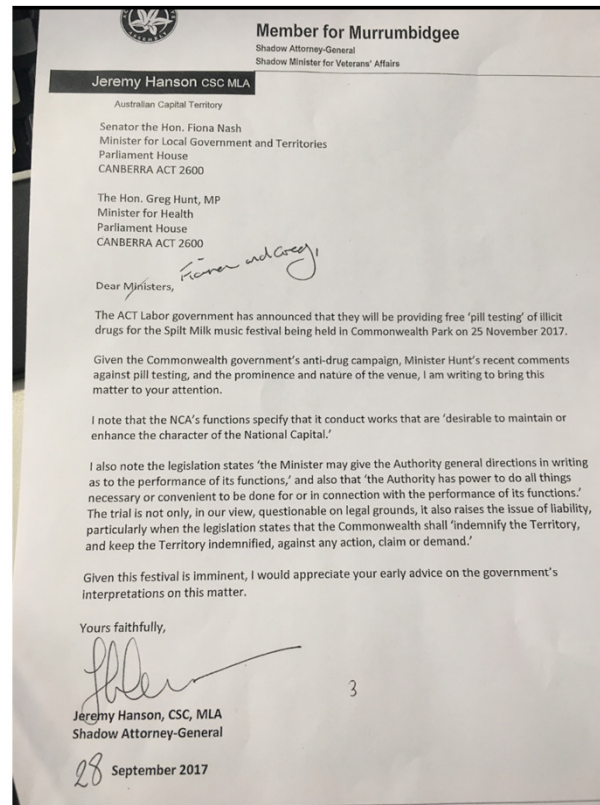


Hansard 22nd August, 2017

Let me give Ms Fitzharris some free advice. She has a get-out clause. The Spilt Milk festival is at Commonwealth Park, which is on commonwealth land. Pill testing will need commonwealth government approval, and I doubt that they will give it.



The smoking gun...





Canberra Liberals @CanberraLibs · Oct 12

Well done [@JeremyHansonMLA](#) for intervening on [#ACT](#) Labor Government's dangerous pill testing trial in [#Canberra](#) [#CBR](#)



Denials of political influence on pill testing

**Sherryn Groch
Daniel Burdon**

The National Capital Authority has said that no federal minister sent it any "instructions" regarding a proposed pill-testing trial at this year's Spilt Milk Festival, despite continued concerns of "political interference".

Rumours swirled this week after the festival organisers, Kicks Entertainment, announced on Thursday the consortium had not handed over the documents needed to hold the festival on federal land in November, so the trial could not go ahead.

Concerns of possible political interference followed the release of a letter Canberra Liberals MLA Jeremy Hanson wrote to federal Health Minister Greg Hunt and Territories Minister

Fiona Nash raising the prospect the trial was not consistent with the Commonwealth's "anti-drugs" stance.

But on Friday afternoon, an NCA spokeswoman said the "final operational planning documentation" from the organisers had not included a specific "request to hold [a] pill-testing trial at Spilt Milk 2017".

She also said that the authority had received "no instructions or directions from any Australian government ministerial offices in regard to the operations of Spilt Milk".

It remains unclear what the specific documentation it is that the authority needed, given such a trial has not been held anywhere in the country previously,

Continued Page 8





*Nevertheless
we persisted.*





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On Thursday 27 April 2018 , ACT Minister for Health and Wellbeing, Meegan Fitzharris announced a pill testing service will be available during the Groovin the Moo Canberra music festival on 29 April 2018.

feedback









<https://www.harmreductionaustralia.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2018/06/Pill-Testing-Pilot-ACT-June-2018-Final-Report.pdf>



So where are we now?



So where are we now?

- The ACT Government and AFP 100% supportive



So where are we now?

- The ACT Government and AFP 100% supportive
- Other jurisdictions are *not* on-side... yet.
 - Probably gone BACKWARDS in last 6m

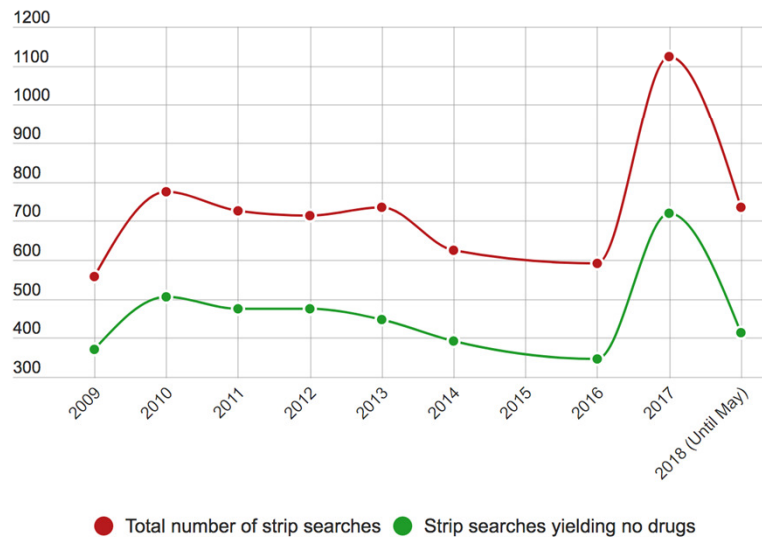


New data shows the number of police strip searches rocketing

SHOCKING new statistics show cops are cracking down on us more than ever before, and critics say it is leaving us “humiliated”.

Ben Graham

news.com.au AUGUST 30, 2018 6:53PM



*Figures for 2015 are unavailable.

The 2018 data is an incomplete year, figures are up until May.

Source: The data was obtained through questions on notice to parliament, it was compiled by the NSW Greens



Current Situation in Oceania...



Interesting Southern Summer Season ahead...

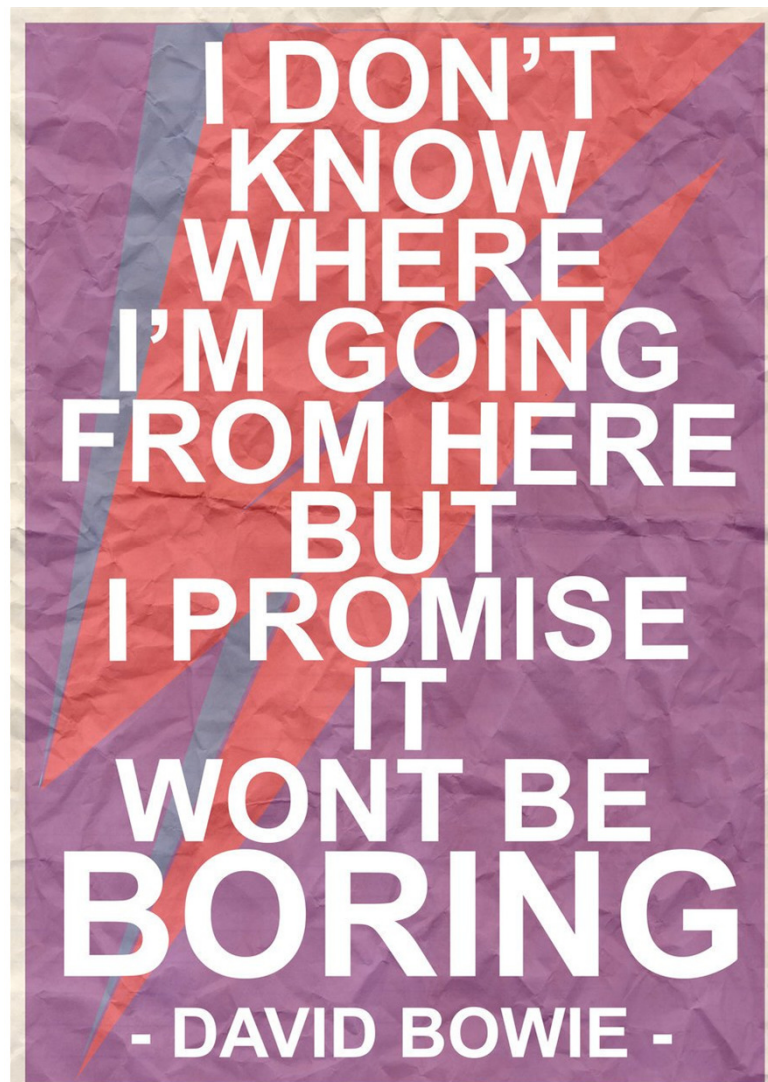


Trans-Tasman Charter for Pill Testing

- Front-of-House Testing
- No fee-for-service
- Peer-Driven
- Information Sharing
- Open Science







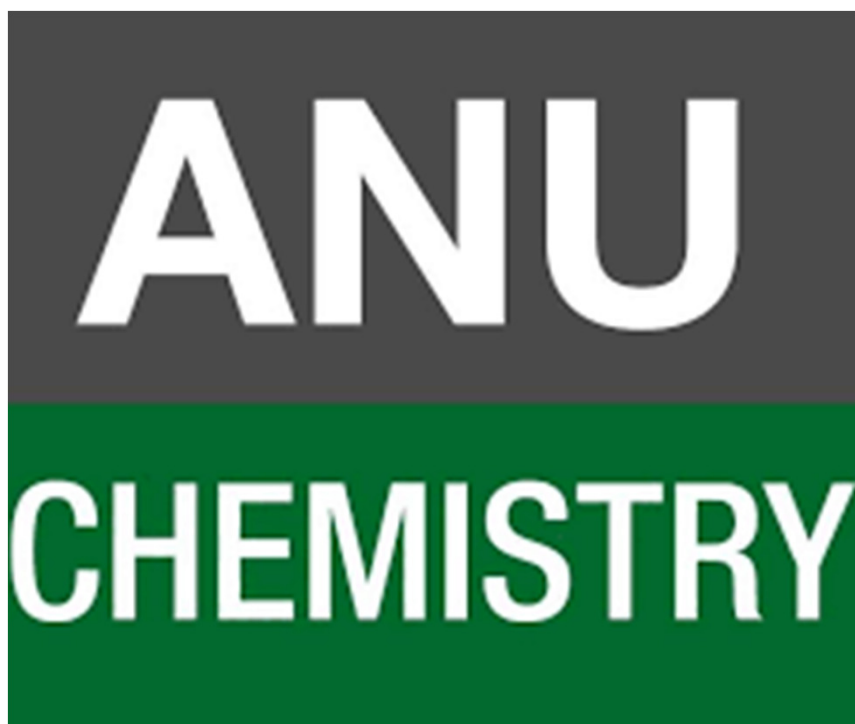
Bigger & Better, in 2018...



- Better tech...
- Bigger teams...
- Broader collaborations...
- More venues...



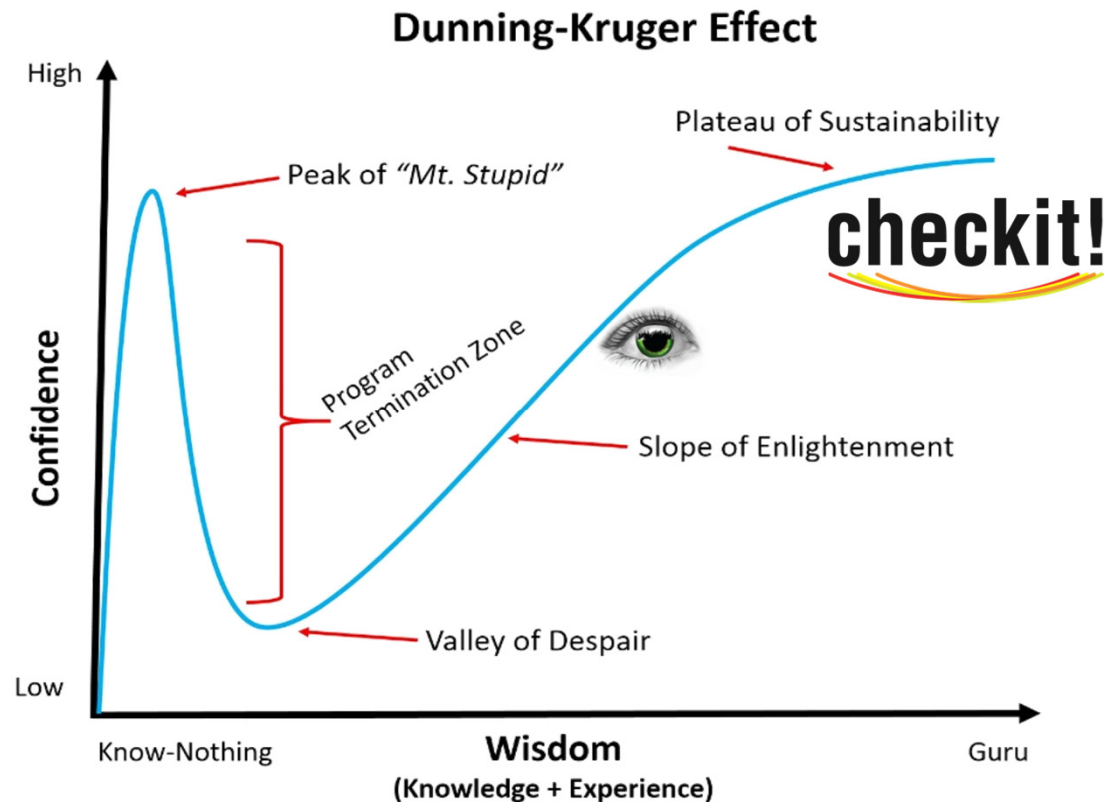
Bigger & Better, in 2018...



DSA-TOF



So, what have I learned..?



So, what have I learned..?



P e a c e &
L o v e &
U n i t y &
R e s p e c t .



In Summary...

- 15+ years in the gestation...
- Huge political experience, for all involved...
- Need to take the politicians with us, to make a lasting change
- Seeing 'Loose Points' in edifice of Prohibition
- Collaboration is key- in spirit of The Old Guard
- Principles & practicality should always take precedence over personality, and politics



With Many Thanks To...

ANU Research School of Chemistry

Calvary Public Hospital

Office of the CHO

The Public

David.Caldicott@calvary-act.com.au

Tel: ++61 2 6201 6810

Mob: +61 478 906 634

 :@ACTINOSProject

