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MEDIA RELEASE

The Government must listen to the Victorian Coroner on drug checking

The Loop Australia is a charitable organisation committed to harm reduction through developing and implementing drug checking (also known as 'pill testing') services in Australia. The Loop Australia calls on the Department of Health and the Victorian Government to heed the advice of the Coroners Court of Victoria and allow drug checking services to operate in Victoria.

Coroner Spanos' investigation into five tragic and avoidable deaths in 2016-17 involving a toxic combination of 25C-NBOMe and 4-Fluoroamphetamine (mis-sold as MDMA or magic mushrooms) consulted a number of health, government, research, community and law enforcement experts. It is clear from The Coroner's thorough evaluation that drug checking can reduce drug-related harms including death, particularly when combined with an early warning system to alert the public to particularly dangerous substances in circulation.

The Loop Australia provided a submission to the inquiry, which included evidence of the effectiveness of drug checking from around the world.

Drug checking provides people with timely and relevant information that allows them to make more informed decisions about drug use at a time when they have already chosen to consume drugs.

Drug checking services not only operate at festivals and other events. They are increasingly being recognised as important services that should be accessible for all members of the community who use unregulated drugs.

Drug checking is a commonsense approach, successfully used to reduce drug-related harms all over the world in countries like New Zealand, United Kingdom, Portugal, The Netherlands, Austria, Canada and the United States. Victoria has the opportunity to be leaders in public health responses to drug-related harms by being one of the first states to make drug checking available for Australians.

It's been proven that when given access to the right information, people make more informed choices. In addition to providing consumers of drugs with important health information, drug checking services are at the forefront of drug market surveillance.

In other countries, these are often the first services to detect dangerous drugs, resulting in public health alerts that can help avert drug-related harms, overdoses and deaths.

The Loop Australia's National Manager Cameron Francis said, "This report from Coroner Spanos is impressive and comprehensive. We want people to enjoy themselves, and to come home safely to their families. These tragedies highlight that we have to do more. We know drug checking can make a difference. The Loop Australia is ready to start testing in Victoria. We've got a team of chemists, health professionals and researchers, and a fully operational mobile laboratory ready to deploy."

For interviews or more information, contact Cameron Francis (National Manager, The Loop Australia) on 0438 179 791.