

**Contact:**

**Robert Waterman**

Rural Health Tasmania Inc.

Phone (03) 6452 1266

Mobile: 0407 135 733

68 Emmett Street

Smithton Tasmania 7330

# MEDIA STATEMENT

RURAL HEALTH  
TASMANIA INC



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## **PILL TESTING SUBTERFUGE – EVIDENCE SHOWS 97% of MDMA RELATED DEATHS DON'T HAPPEN AT MUSIC FESTIVALS.**

Rural Health Tasmania CEO said its time the community and youth are made aware of just how badly they are being manipulated and deliberately misled by pill testing advocates. He said there campaign is full of omissions, cherry picking of data and deceptions. Mr. Waterman said this lack of transparency, may well be due to a much larger hidden agenda.

Mr. Waterman said that Pill testing advocates continue pointing to threats and fear mongering about the need for pill testing and the large number of Ecstasy related deaths at music festivals. What they are not doing, is telling Australians that in 25 years from 2001 to 2016 there were 392 Ecstasy related deaths in Australia but over the past ten years, only 12 (3%) of these were at music festivals (NSW Coroner 8 November 2019). Mr. Waterman said that 97 out of every 100 Ecstasy related deaths occurred either at home, at parties or elsewhere but not at music festivals according to the evidence. This certainly represents a serious omission from their sales pitch. So why this big push for decriminalisation of drugs and pill testing and music festivals?

The Harm Reduction campaign started in earnest in 2015/16, with the Four Corners program Dying to Dance the best example of their narrative. There they claimed that pill testing was needed because of three dangers:

- a. People were dying from adulterants, contaminants and impurities in ecstasy pills (the fact was that nobody in Australia has died from impurities. (Deception # 1)
- b. People were dying from deadly drugs mixed into ecstasy pills (we now know that 9 people have died this way in 25 years of ecstasy use in Australia – 6 in SA in 1995/6 and 3 in Melbourne in January 2017 **BUT** the pill testing equipment they use is incapable of detecting the mix of drugs in the 3 Melbourne deaths so would have provided no protective effect there anyway. (That's Deception # 2)
- c. People were dying from overdoses due to higher purity and dose of MDMA in ecstasy pills (It was demonstrated to the NSW Inquest that overdose is actually very rare. The truth is that people die from individual vulnerabilities and using ecstasy pills at the same time as alcohol, cocaine, amphetamines and other drugs. (That's Deception # 3)

All this time they were downplaying the harm of ecstasy as a cause of death. Alex Wodak – Catholic [Weekly](#) said that pure ecstasy at an appropriate dose carries a small risk but the black market pills available may contain high doses of MDMA and/or lethal contaminants." Clearly misleading and possibly advocating for decriminalisation and legalisation (Deception # 4)

When you look at all the deaths from ecstasy in 25 years, very few are from other causes (none of which were from impurities). Wodak's words are ludicrous because almost all deaths were from normal recreational doses of MDMA as can be judged from the median blood concentrations in the scientific studies. Evidence of this is in the Daily Mail this week when a girl in the UK was reported as dying from "an adverse reaction to a ""minuscule amount"" of MDMA" and again, not at a dance festival. This begs the question, why are pill testing advocates testing for impurities when there is no evidence that impurities are associate with cause of death. Another fear mongering technique deliberately spread through the media to further their agenda! In fact, why are they pushing pill testing at all when all drugs perceived to contain Ecstasy should be considered as harmful and potentially lethal and pill testing cannot predict who will or will not die from Ecstasy use. (Deception # 5)

Looking more closely at their campaign where they said pill testing was needed because of increasing purity and dose in ecstasy. They cynically knew that they were operating on a scare-campaign platform where they knew full well that their equipment could never deliver because Bruker Alpha II's just don't measure purity and dose ([see Link page 17](#)) (Deception # 6)

Pill testing advocates insist that the method used at the ACT GTM Pill Testing Pilot are accurate. This could not be further from the truth. For 53% of samples tested, none of the hit quality scores were above the threshold. This increased the uncertainty surrounding compound identification. In plain English the results were inconclusive more than half of the time. Mr. Waterman said, that's just not good science any way you cut it. (Any yes, that's Deception 7)

Pill testing advocates claim that Australian festival deaths are so much higher than Europe because our sniffer dog policing, forces users to swallow multiple pills to avoid detection. This again is totally untrue and (Deception # 8). By the very fact that almost all deaths in Australia (approximately 97%) were not at dance festivals and approximately 99% of all ecstasy related deaths in the UK were not at dance festivals. This fact testifies to the deadly nature of MDMA, without police prompting 'overdose' deaths. And MDMA related deaths continue to climb despite pill testing. In fact this has now been recognised by the UK's largest event organizer who has now withdrawn pill testing from dance festivals stating "it sends the wrong message to community". There is a lesson to learn here said Mr. Waterman.

Harm Reduction Australia's senior organisation, the US Drug Policy Alliance, says ecstasy overdoses are rare. So why does HRA keep promoting this dangerous deception that misleads the public into thinking the MDMA purity of a single pill needs quantifying? (Deception #9)

Mr. Waterman said the reality is that most ecstasy deaths outside polydrug use are due to something akin to an individual allergic reaction to MDMA. In 1995, Anna Wood took the same tablet as five other friends, but she was the one that died. Even Anna's Father stated that "pill testing would not have saved his daughter". So, advising a potentially allergic user to take only half an MDMA pill won't help any more than eating half a peanut instead of the whole thing will stop anaphylactic shock for those allergic to peanuts (Deception #10). It is extremely unlikely that pill testing would have saved Anna.

Mr. Waterman also stated that it is offensive that an organisation that so freely uses the words "harm reduction" can continue to support and promote the idea of heroin injecting rooms as a good idea after the evidence that heroin use in East Melbourne has almost tripled since it opened. Whilst they argue it saves lives, the true math's of it is normalisation and decriminalisation is without doubt causing more addiction and more overdoses and deaths. This is harm maximization not harm reduction. (Deception # 11)

Mr. Waterman also said that these Pill testing advocates continually refer to the success of decriminalisation of drugs in Portugal. Another deception. The Mayor of Portugal has just made a public statement this last week stating "Drug decriminalization is not possible," and added that such policies have "consented" to illegal drug trafficking. The Mayor stated that the policy of decriminalization "simply does not protect the overwhelming majority of the population." And "this problem he says is "everywhere," (Deception # 12)

Mr. Waterman said, with this knowledge, the results of pill testing will be absolutely frightening. What better way is there to increase the number of prospective drug users than to covertly suggest pill testing makes ecstasy use safer? Governments can expect an accelerating number of deaths from this craven misinformation.

Mr. Waterman stated that he agrees with Drug Free Australia in that once Australians see the real statistics, it will expose pill testing as a complete and utter failure with no protective effect against the actual cause of almost every party pill death within our country. Mr. Waterman said whole pill testing agenda reeks of a hidden agenda "decriminalisation".

**Conclusion** – Mr. Waterman stated, we can in time, PREVENT our way out of drug use. We were told the legal and completely socially acceptable drug of tobacco would never be dealt with. But here we are with the lowest daily tobacco use in the world. As with the QUIT campaign, we need One Focus – One Message – One Voice in the illicit drug space and that cannot be ‘normalisation, decriminalisation or legalisation’ which is the current nefarious narrative being ‘pushed’ by the promoters and permitters of drug use in our social-political arenas.

Mr. Waterman said your community, your family and your children deserve a stronger committed investment in an evidence based approach that has to date already been highly effective in reducing new drug use for 20-29 year olds by reducing rates of Ecstasy use from 3.5% down to 2.2% over the last ten years, not the harm facilitating agenda of the pro-drug use minority.

