

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****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 12/12/2019**

INDEPENDENT EVALUATION SHOWS PILL TESTING INCREASES FESTIVAL GOERS INTENTION TO USE ECSTASY.

Chief Executive Officer, of Rural Health Tasmania, Robert Waterman said today that an independent report released by the Australian National University on the ACT Pill Testing Trials confirmed his worse fears. Mr. Waterman said he is horrified but not surprised at the results in the [evaluation](#) and this confirms the dangers of pill testing for our society. Mr. Waterman said that the report found that “those determined to use remained determined before and after receiving the testing service” and “those who reported moderate levels of intention to use, increased their intention ([page 32](#))”. Mr. Waterman stated that the independent evaluation conducted by the Australian National University also showed that in general, “those determined to use remained determined before and after receiving the testing service” ([page 32](#)). This is clearly contrary to claims by pill testing Australia and Harm Reduction Australia that have been promoted to parents, the community and the media with claims that pill testing is a harm reduction strategy when in fact, there was no change in behaviour or intention of those who intended to use ecstasy. Mr. Waterman said, this clearly shows that pill testing increases harm.

According to the post-drug test data, among the participants of the evaluation, only around one-fifth of the participants (18%) reported being told by staff that the test revealed a substance known to be associated with significant harm/overdose/death. 12% percent of participants were not sure if they had been so advised, and a staggering 70% reported that they had not been advised that their tested drug was associated with significant harm/overdose/death. Mr. Waterman said that this is another serious and potentially dangerous failure associated with pill testing. It is certainly not what pill testing advocates have been telling the community. The foundational argument by pill testing advocates is that it provides them with an opportunity to warn drug users of the dangers associated with drug use. Pill Testing Australia and Harm Reduction Australia state categorically that they tell all participants that MDMA can cause harm and no drug use is safe. According to the evaluation, this clearly is not happening Mr. Waterman said.

Mr. Waterman said the damning evidence from the evaluation doesn't stop there. The evaluation found that “as new synthetic drugs are constantly being produced, one limitation of FTIR (pill testing method) is that these substances will not be able to be identified” and nearly half of the participants (47%) reported being told by staff that “the drug tested may have been of higher strength/purity than average ([page 20](#))” but the evaluation clearly shows that “quantification, or purity, is not possible, as described in the PTA 2019 Pill Testing Service report (Vumbaca et al. 2019)” using their current testing methods. In simple terms, according to the evaluation, claims by pill testing advocates that they can test for purity at festivals are totally false ([page 22 and 23](#)). Mr. Waterman said that this also implies that pill testing staff may be misleading patrons about the accuracy of pill testing and the purity of the tested drug.

Conclusion – Mr. Waterman stated, based on the evaluation, pill testing represents a real and present danger to the community, especially considering that generally, those who reported moderate levels of intention to use a drug before entering the pill testing service, increased their intention to use a drug after using the pill testing service. This is the exact opposite to what our Members of Parliament, the community and the media have been led to believe. Mr. Waterman said, this is absolutely damning evidence and confirms what I have said from the start, Pill testing normalises drug use and will likely lead to an increase in drug use as a result. The evaluation exposes pill testing for what it really is, Dangerous! Mr. Waterman said, If you were ever unsure if pill testing normalises and increases drug use, I will leave you with a quote from a patron “It's good to know that we can test if it's safe and we're not going to get in trouble for using it. Male, 19” ([page 17](#)). Clearly, pill testing is sending the wrong message, no drug use is safe!