

**Students for Sensible Drug Policy Australia supports  
Coroner's call, demands urgent drug testing services:**

[SSDP Australia welcomes the release of Victorian Coroner's Court findings into the five young men who lost their lives between 2016 - 2017 after consuming what they believed was a form of MDMA or ecstasy.](#) The Coroner found that they had unwittingly consumed a lethal cocktail of substances which could have been prevented with adequate testing measures in place.

**SSDP Australia urges the Victorian Government to move quickly to implement all of the Coroner's recommendations, including the establishment of fixed site testing services and an early warning system.**

As an organisation representing students and young people, SSDP commends the Victorian Coroner for calling on the state government to establish an early warning system and a pill testing (aka drug checking/testing) service. The harms of novel psychoactive substances and contaminated drugs can be avoided, and SSDP calls for young people, as those often most impacted, to be centered in political decision making on this issue.

Coroner Spanos acknowledges the risks associated with using currently illegal drugs, however, "risk is heightened through the proliferation of novel psychoactive substances [...] that are for the most part poorly understood in terms of their potency, their effects on the individual, and their interactions with other drugs." She further notes, "for as long as illicit drug use exists in the community, Victorians will continue to be exposed to the risks of unregulated drug markets."

Chloe Span, Secretary of SSDP Australia's University of Melbourne Club states, "SSDP neither condones nor condemns recreational drug use, rather, we acknowledge that drug use is common in the community, despite decades of criminalising drug users. Drug use is not going anywhere, and young people deserve access to non-judgmental, evidence-based health services that can help them to avoid contaminated substances and make safer choices."

Gulliver McLean, SSDP Australia's Research & Advocacy Officer, added that "While we welcome the Coroner's findings and call on the Government to acknowledge the overwhelming evidence in favour of pill testing, it's important to acknowledge that drug use is not going anywhere. Young people deserve access to services that we know work to reduce harm, including more investment in peer-based education and outreach services. But also, we need to think holistically about drug policy reform in this country, and acknowledge that [substances like MDMA are being found to be therapeutic in certain contexts](#), and that young people often have unique perspectives on this complex phenomena that can contribute to better policy-making."

In partnership with [Harm Reduction Victoria's, DanceWize program](#), we launched [#BeHeardNotHarmed](#) in 2019, a campaign for all young people (not just students) to have our voices heard on pill testing, harm reduction and drug policy reform. SSDP Australia has also participated in the design and implementation of two successful trials of pill testing services in Canberra in 2018 and 2019. We encourage all Australians to [sign our petition for pill testing/drug checking](#), and all Victorians to [send a letter to the Victorian Health Minister, Martin Foley](#) to implement the Coroner's findings.

SSDP is a proud consortium member of [Pill Testing Australia \(PTA\)](#), which in their [2018 and 2019 trials at the Groovin the Moo festival in Canberra](#), showed the ability of mobile drug checking services to facilitate safer choices in young people. Many of whom disposed of their drugs in a bin upon receiving health advice from peer workers. Triple J's '[what's up in your world survey](#)' supports this by finding 86% of young people said they would use a drug checking service if it was available.

SSDP is an Australian youth-led drug policy reform organisation on a mission to represent and empower young people to bring change to drug policies.

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