



MEDIA RELEASE

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First drug checking at a multi-day festival: Pill Testing Australia at Rabbits Eat Lettuce QLD

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Warwick, QLD – Pill Testing Australia (PTA) is proud to announce the successful delivery of Queensland's first drug checking service at the music festival, Rabbits Eat Lettuce (REL). This is the first-time drug checking services have been delivered at a multi-day festival in Australia.

"The success of QLD's first pill testing service at the multi-day festival Rabbits Eat Lettuce (REL) would not have been possible without the leadership team", comprising of Professor Malcolm McLeod (Chemistry Lead), Dr David Caldicott (Medical Lead) and Dr Penny Hill (Data Officer), said PTA's Executive Officer Steph Tzanetis, who was the onsite Service Manager. This marks the fourth music festival where the PTA leadership team have delivered festival based pill testing services since the first trial in the ACT in 2018.

Dr Caldicott highlighted the *"Importance of the chemists in providing professional services"* and that we *"enjoyed the collaboration with onsite medics and locals."*

Prof McLeod was pleased to see the service *"delivered as planned"* and the *"close collaboration between medical [HEST], Conscious Nest, and PTA"*. He added *"half our team came from QLD, including chemists and peers [educators]"*.

Ms Tzanetis added *"We are grateful to a number of supporters for their valuable contributions throughout the service planning process, including Harm Reduction Australia, Queensland Injectors Health Network (QuIHN), Queensland Injectors Voice for Advocacy and Action (QuIVAA), Conscious Nest, Family Drug Support QLD, the University of QLD, Directions Health (the CanTEST lead agency), among others"*.

"We also acknowledge the vital role played onsite by the event's Director, Operations Manager, Emergency Service Coordinator and key stakeholders, including QAS, QPS, the onsite health provider (HEST Paramedical) and the peer-based harm reduction services (Conscious Nest). These key figures worked in harmony with PTA, underlining the festival's commitment to the safety and wellbeing of its attendees" Ms Tzanetis said.



“Crucially, PTA would like to thank the patrons who accessed the service. We engaged with a statistically significant proportion of the festival’s patrons. Your feedback is so important, and PTA is committed to the continual improvement of our service” Ms Tzanetis concluded.

PTA’s service at REL will be independently evaluated by a team of researchers appointed by the QLD Government from the University of Queensland, University of New South Wales, Australian National University, and University of Tasmania. Patrons who used the PTA service at REL should look out for invitations to participate in the evaluation.

While there were no 'high risk' substances found over the weekend, there were some unexpected results. PTA intends on sharing information about these unexpected detections for the benefit of the community.

PTA recognises the significance of the Australian live music industry and its vibrant contribution to our cultural landscape. Right now, the live music industry is struggling after a series of challenges including the pandemic, weather events, and associated price increases. PTA’s work at REL aligns with the industry's ongoing efforts to ensure safe and enjoyable experiences for all patrons.

Drug checking as a harm reduction service is a way to enhance event safety, but it also provides an opportunity to monitor unregulated markets and get early warnings about any concerning trends, which can ease the burden on the public health system and provide education for the benefit of the whole community. As such, the cost of drug checking services should not be borne solely by event organisers and PTA commends the QLD Government for its investment in health and harm reduction.

Pill Testing Australia remains dedicated to promoting health and safety within our communities and looks forward to continuing our service in future events, contributing to a safer and informed environment for all.

For more information about the festival-based service at REL, please contact:

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