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**FESTIVAL ORGANISERS SHOULD PUT SAFETY FIRST**

Music festival organisers should ensure partygoers have access to free drinking water, shade, ‘chill out’ zones, and adequate first aid services to help ensure the safety of patrons, according to the AMA.

AMA President, Professor Brian Owler, said today that a spate of drug-related deaths and hospitalisations at music festivals in Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Brisbane late last year, had highlighted the need for organisers and those attending to take care when attending such events.

“Summer can be a great time to get together with friends and attend outdoor events like music festivals,” Professor Owler said.

“But sometimes things can go tragically wrong, and the AMA wants people to have fun in safety.”

In late 2015 two young people died and dozens were taken to hospital in a critical condition after taking illicit drugs at a series of Stereosonic festivals in the major capital cities.

Professor Owler said taking illicit drugs, particularly in an environment where people are outdoors all day in the sun surrounded by large crowds, was extremely dangerous.

“Taking illicit substances is a dangerous activity, and tragically we have seen the consequences when someone takes a pill, powder, or liquid without knowing the active ingredients,” he said.

But the AMA President said it was not just illicit drugs that posed a safety risk.

He said consuming too much alcohol, not drinking enough water, and spending hours in the sun without a hat or sunscreen all put the health of partygoers at risk.

“In everyday life, drinking too much alcohol often leads to harm,” Professor Owler said. “But particularly doing it on a hot day at a music festival can result in some serious health problems.”

Professor Owler said festival organisers should make fresh drinking water freely available.

“Providing free drinking water is a health prevention measure. Festival organisers have a duty of care to their patrons to ensure that profit is not put ahead of health.”

He said they should also provide sufficient shaded places and chill out zones for festivalgoers seeking a break, and they need to ensure there are first-responders and first aid-trained staff commensurate with the crowd size.

He said partygoers also had a role to play in ensuring their own safety by not engaging in risky and potentially harmful behaviour, and by taking some sensible precautions like wearing sunscreen, protective clothing and sensible footwear, and keeping an eye on the weather.

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