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**AMA FORMALLY BACKS SUPERVISED PILL TESTING TRIALS**

The AMA has reaffirmed its support for sanctioned, appropriately supervised, and monitored high-quality pill testing trials to minimise the risk to young people, and build an evidence base to determine the effectiveness of pill testing in Australia.

At its meeting last week in Canberra, the AMA Federal Council formally and unanimously reinforced the AMA’s support for the trials.

AMA President, Dr Tony Bartone, said the AMA considers the pill testing trials as an important element of broader harm minimisation strategies.

“The AMA strongly backs pill testing trials, but they must be medically supervised, involve suitably sensitive testing equipment, and be supported by the State and Territory Governments,” Dr Bartone said.

“The trials must not be in isolation. They must be part of an overarching harm minimisation strategy.”

The AMA’s support for authorised trials of pill-testing is longstanding, and part of the AMA’s position on harm minimisation.

The AMA’s Position Statement on *Harmful Substance Use, Dependence, and Behavioural Addiction – 2017* outlined support for innovative trials that might reduce harms and improve outcomes for users.

Dr Bartone said that it is important that there are appropriate controls, funding, and evaluation of any pill testing trials.

“We also want to see rigorous evaluation of these trials being considered by the COAG Health Council as part of a suite of measures to promote harm minimisation,” Dr Bartone said.

“The AMA believes that there should be less focus on policing and prosecution, and increased investment in interventions that avoid or reduce harm to young people.

“Pill testing will not completely solve the problems associated with illicit drug consumption by young people at music festivals, but it does provide an avenue for opportunistic engagement with health professionals, drug and alcohol counsellors, and highly-trained peer educators.

“Authorised and medically-supervised pill testing provides an avenue to establish rapport, and to provide important harm minimisation messages to young people attending music festivals and other events.”

Dr Bartone said the AMA remains concerned about pill testing kits sold online and at pharmacies, which are being used as alternatives to properly-conducted, medically-supervised trials.

“These kits are not sophisticated, sensitive, or appropriately accredited and regulated to accurately assist in identifying alternative and often harmful substances in drugs,” Dr Bartone said.

“Controlled pill testing at festivals, using suitably sensitive equipment, provides an opportunity to deliver education on the health risks to attendees who are considering taking illicit drugs.

“Pill testing can provide important information about what is in a drug, but no pill test can tell an individual how a drug will affect them.

“The AMA is not condoning illegal drug use, but we understand the realities.

“Young people will experiment with drugs. We must use all available and recognised means to reduce the chance of harms.”

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