



## Harm Reduction Victoria and DanceWize HardMission 2023 Medical Episodes Media Statement

Jan 8, 2023

[DanceWize](#) was contracted to provide peer-based harm reduction health promotion and a care space for patrons, for the HardMission event on Saturday the 6<sup>th</sup> of January.

Our thoughts are with the people who were affected by the adverse health events, as well as their friends and family and the health care workers involved. None of the eight medical episodes that were escalated to critical care by the medical services involved the DanceWize service or volunteers. We work closely with medical services and it appears that this stressful circumstance was handled very well.

Nick Wallis, DanceWize Coordinator said, *“this event and the past few seasons has highlighted that extreme weather has become the norm and we implore everyone to take this into account when partying.”*

As the event was on a very hot and humid day, the DanceWize key peer educators were sure to share information about the interaction of heat, alcohol and some drugs. We were pleased to see the event organizer had ensured a number of demisters and water stations were available for patrons.

Five coronial findings have recommended that the Victorian Government proceed with introducing drug checking in Victoria, following a series of preventable fatal overdoses over the past few years, and Harm Reduction Victoria and many other organisations support this: [Drug Checking and Early Warning Systems: Knowing the harms can prevent the harms - Vaada](#)<sup>1</sup>.

Sione Crawford, Harm Reduction Victoria CEO said, *“In the absence of a legal drug-checking service in Victoria, DanceWize is one of the only ways to help keep people safe when they take illicit drugs at festivals in our state, but we already stretch ourselves to keep up with demand.”* DanceWize had some 558 people in care for 576 hours over the past season, and with presentations of increasing complexity. Funded to attend 15 events per year, it often supports up to 30 events, and due to capacity issues has no option but to refuse supporting dozens more each year. With a suitable uplift, we could service four times as many events as we do now, provide care and also support safety for thousands more Victorians who attend festivals. The service has two full-time equivalent positions funded by the Victorian Department of Health, and relies upon more than 200 amazing volunteers to staff the care space. Our social media accounts and resources are crucial ways for us to share information and promote harm reduction, but we aim to reach even more.

Please attribute comment to Sione Crawford, CEO, Harm Reduction Victoria and DanceWize. For further comment please contact [admin@hrvic.org.au](mailto:admin@hrvic.org.au)

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.vaada.org.au/aod-advocacy/drug-checking-and-early-warning-systems-knowing-the-harms-can-prevent-the-harms/>