



# **We Need More Harm Reduction & Healthcare- Not More Cops and Dogs at Festivals**

**17.01.2024**

**After the recent unfortunate hospitalisations at last week's music festivals due to a mix of mostly MDMA and hot weather, community and experts are crying out for a change but despite this outcry and the coroner's ongoing recommendations for drug checking in Victoria, it feels like we are no closer to drug-checking.**

**On the ABC Melbourne morning radio show yesterday, the Premier was asked straight up, when we will get drug checking in our state. The good news is she did not rule it out. She also namechecked our amazing program, DanceWize.**

DanceWize-a harm reduction event care program, run by Harm Reduction Victoria, was contracted to provide peer led event care and drug harm reduction education at both events, however, with our 25 extensively trained community volunteers, 2 paid staff, and limited resources, it's tough. We handed out free water, sunscreen, and gave harm reduction advice to the 35k strong crowds, but reaching everyone is always a challenge.

DanceWize is a vital frontline service, relying on dedicated community volunteers from all backgrounds for peer harm reduction advice and personalised care at events. The government's move to increase Police sniffer dog (PAD) and search operations was short-sighted, making people more likely to take drugs in riskier ways.



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*Harm Reduction Victoria is crystal clear:*

*"Victoria needs a new approach immediately - based on evidence, experts, and community feedback."*

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**Jaz Masters, from DanceWize, provided care at both events, said, "With drug checking and better resourcing, we could have given real-time harm reduction advice, especially around safer MDMA dosing and strategies to avoid heat-related issues."**

Despite support from experts and the public for a change, the Victorian Government's short-sighted response for the Juicy Festival was for Victoria Police to expand their sniffer dog and strip search operations.

**It's a costly and ineffective strategy, that can traumatise people and encourages riskier drug-taking.**

Harm Reduction Victoria is urging an immediate shift in funding - away from the failed criminalisation approach and towards evidence-based harm reduction services like drug checking, peer education, and community-led safety initiatives.

It's time to make the change for the better.

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*In the meantime, we know that there are ways to reduce the risk of harm -*

***Some Harm Reduction Tips for MDMA Use in The Australian heat:***

***When taking any substance, remember : SUBSTANCE, SET, & SETTING -***

The **'Set'**- (Your Current mindset and body health) *PLUS+* **'Setting'** (your Environment & people around you) *can and will shape your experience as much as the 'Substance' (the drug) itself.*

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### **SUBSTANCE** *(The drug you are taking)*

- **Start Low, Go Slow-** means start with half your usual dose (especially if not batch you've had before or from a source you know - *regardless* of what they say. Then, Wait 2 hours or until after the peak before you RE-dose if you feel you need to.

### **SET** *(Your current Mind and Body health)*

- **Keep your Fluids Up!!** But don't drink **too** much. 1 cup (250mls) per hour when resting or 500mls. per hour when dancing or active is a good general rule. Sip slowly rather than skull!
- **Try to eat** every 3-4 hours or have a smoothie or electrolytes.
- **Taking prescription medications?** Be AWARE of what substance you take with them. Some antidepressants (MAOIs) can put you at higher risk of serotonin syndrome and some can counteract it (SSRIs), leading you to want to take more of the drug (MDMA in particular) to have the same effect.
- Taking stimulants can be extra risky if you have **pre-existing health issues** such as heart conditions, hypertension, high blood pressure, and anxiety.

### **SETTING** *(the Environment you are in/people surrounding you)*

- Taking MDMA and other Stimulants in **heat of over 25 degrees C** can cause hyperthermia (overheating)
- If outdoors, find a shady spot in between sets and cool down.
- If indoors, remove yourself from the 'pit' if possible and cool yourself down regularly.
- Try to use around people you trust, that will have your back if things go 'pear shaped' or go 'bad'.
- Don't bail on friends or strangers who maybe suffering negative effects from heat and/or drugs.

**If you experience (or see someone else experiencing) or are feeling uncomfortably hot, nauseous and / are vomiting, have excessive thirst, confusion, agitation, muscle spasms, seizures or losing consciousness then immediately seek out First Aid / Medical Tent/ Paramedics or DanceWize at festivals or events. Call 000 if at home or out in the city.**

**For More Substance Specific Information, visit [www.hrvic.org.au](http://www.hrvic.org.au)**

**To volunteer as a Key Peer Educator with DanceWize, visit [www.hrvic.org.au/dancewize](http://www.hrvic.org.au/dancewize)**