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MEDIA STATEMENT

**RURAL HEALTH
TASMANIA INC****FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: 10/12/2019**

PILL TESTING DECEPTION - PUSH FOR PILL TESTING AN ABSOLUTE FARCE! CORONERS REPORT DOES NOT RECOMMEND PILL TESTING IN TASMANIA.

Chief Executive Officer, of Rural Health Tasmania, Robert Waterman, came out today with further evidence that the push to trial pill testing in Tasmania is based on a deliberate deception. Mr. Waterman stated that the foundational rationale being used by pro pill testing lobbyists are the (MDMA related deaths at music festivals and the recommendations of the NSW coroner). Mr. Waterman said these factors have no bearing in Tasmania and certainly carry no weight as a basis for considering pill testing in this state. MR. Waterman said, in the first instance, the common message being pushed by pro pill testing lobbyists, is that Tasmania should consider the coroner's recommendations contained in the report [Inquest into the death of six patrons of NSW music festivals \(8 November 2019\)](#).

The Coroner's report so often referred to by pro Pill Testing lobbyists, states very clearly "*Of course drug checking is not a magic solution to these tragic deaths. Of course its introduction will not guarantee further deaths will not occur*" [page 119](#). Not anywhere in the coroner's report does it recommend pill testing trials in any state other than NSW and certainly not in Tasmania. In fact, the word Tasmania does not even get a mention in the 179-page coroner's report, period! Mr. Waterman said. Generally stating or inferring that the coroner's report recommends pill testing and it should be considered in Tasmania is deliberately deceptive Mr. Waterman said. Mr. Waterman said there are good reasons why we should not be considering these recommendations for Tasmania. First and foremost, they are recommendations specifically for NSW not Tasmania. Secondly, the continuous rhetoric in Tasmania that people are dying at music festivals is also deceptive in the Tasmanian context as there have not been any reported MDMA related deaths at Tasmanian Music Festivals Mr. Waterman said.

Mr. Waterman said that extreme caution should always be used when considering the adoption of any population health initiatives from another states or country. Mr. Waterman said that we must always consider factors such as local evidence of need, environmental, cultural, demographic climate and psycho-social factors, predisposition and/or vulnerabilities of certain populations or groups and unintended risks and consequences to name a few. Mr. Waterman said that he believes pro pill testing and pro drug legalisation lobbyists and activist groups are relying heavily on Tasmanians not noticing the abundance of obvious deceptions in their misguided attempts to pull the wool over Tasmanians eyes and he urges all Tasmanians to consider these important facts.

Mr. Waterman said that pro pill testing lobbyists have been extremely negligent in this regard. For example, they cannot justify identified need as there have been no MDMA related deaths at music festivals in Tasmania. Also, Tasmanian youth between 12 and 17 years of age are 50% less likely to use MDMA than mainland Australian youth of the same age which is a significant demographic difference between NSW and Tasmania that they should have considered before going on their pill testing escapade in Tasmania Mr. Waterman said. ([National Secondary school students' use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs in 2017 ASSAD Report](#)) page 74 and ([Tasmanian Secondary school students' use of tobacco, alcohol and other drugs in 2017 ASSAD Report](#)) page 51.

There are also significant environmental factors which play a role which were also not considered Mr. Waterman said. The average ambient temperature in NSW is much higher ([6 °C](#)) than in Tasmania. Hyperthermia (a core body temperature over 37.5 °C) is thought to be a major cause of mortality in people who die from MDMA toxicity. Risk of Hyperthermia is significantly increased by environmental heat, something that is far more likely in the northern states

such as NSW ([page 66 and 68](#)). This is another critical piece of evidence that should have been, but was not provided to Tasmanians Mr. Waterman said.

Mr. Waterman said that the number and type of music festivals also play a role. Tasmania has far fewer and different types of music festivals than the mainland states, another factor that reduces risk. There is evidence that Electronic Dance Music Festivals are far more likely to attract certain types of drug use than other types of music festivals and this type of music is more prevalent on the mainland and particularly in Europe ([page 61](#)). This is another issue that should have been fully disclosed Mr. Waterman said.

Conclusion – Mr. Waterman stated, there is such an overwhelming difference between Tasmania and NSW that you just cannot simply transfer recommendations from one state to another the way that pro pill testing and pro drug lobbyists and activists have been trying to do. And let's not forget, the coroner's report **absolutely does not** recommend a trail of pill testing in Tasmania and to imply as much is completely inappropriate. Mr. Waterman stated that ecstasy use in Tasmania by 20-29 YO's has reduced every year since 2004. Mr. Waterman commended the Tasmanian government's position on pill testing and urged them to stay their course and instead of pill testing, perhaps consider an increased investment in early intervention, prevention, Law enforcement and community education. An approach that to date has served Tasmania well and one that will yield far greater health outcomes with further investment Mr. Waterman said. Mr. Waterman said that nationally 97% of ecstasy related deaths **do not** occur at music festivals and in Tasmania, 100% of Ecstasy related deaths have not occurred at music festivals so the push for pill testing in this state is an absolute farce. A Dedicated early intervention and community education campaign would be a far more effective harm reduction strategy in reducing ecstasy use and harm from a whole of population perspective in Tasmania Mr. Waterman said.

