

2024: the year of multiple drug checking services in Australia

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Aim: In 2024, multiple new drug checking initiatives have commenced in Australia, including a community-based service in Brisbane, festival drug checking services in Qld, drug checking services at Sydney's medically supervised injecting centre, and a testing service specifically for people who use performance and image enhancing drugs (PIEDs) in Qld. The aim of this interactive panel is to help answer questions from conference attendees from jurisdictions still working towards implementing drug checking services (DCS), by bringing together a panel of people who are actively conducting DCS in Australia.

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Detailed Description of Topics to be Discussed:

The first 20 minutes of the panel discussion will update the audience on the progress of the drug checking services that began in 2024: community-based, festival-based, embedded within the supervised injecting centre, and outreach to different populations, including people who use PIEDs. This discussion will cover the different design elements of the DCS that have recently been activated in Australia, for example: populations served, technologies used, the nature of the health and harm reduction conversations, settings, overcoming barriers to implementation or delivery, dissemination of information beyond the individuals attending the service, and legislative or regulatory contexts. The panellists include the perspectives of peers with relevant lived and living experience, who are involved in the co-

design and delivery of services. The final 40 minutes will involve a Q&A with the audience, see below.

Discussion Section: For those attending the symposium, our aim is to help answer their questions relating to the next steps in their jurisdiction to move closer to implementing drug checking. We expect that questions will fall into two categories (but we will be open to other possibilities): (a) technical questions about how drug checking works and the different elements of design across the multiple new Australian initiatives, and (b) the politics of drug checking advocacy, including specific strategies that improve the audience members' capacities to implement DCS in their jurisdiction. Our desired outcome is that more jurisdictions in Australia feel empowered to build and implement a strategy or plan for drug checking in their local area; ultimately, we hope this symposium helps increase the likelihood of DCS growth nationally. We know that most jurisdictions that currently lack DCS have working groups or networks actively making plans, and there are already connections between those groups and jurisdictions where drug checking has been implemented. We believe that APSAD is a perfect opportunity to bring those people, and others who may wish to join those networks, together to learn from each other in-person, to further activate these policy changes nation-wide. Our process for managing the interactive session will be a simple Q&A style where people wishing to ask questions raise their hand and the chair facilitates the discussion between audience members and the panel.

Disclosure of Interest Statement

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