

The Loop Australia
Wednesday 25th of February, 2025
For immediate release

Dangerous drugs threat continues to grow with counterfeit pharmaceuticals infiltrating Queensland

Queensland pill testing service “CheQpoint” has seen multiple detections of dangerous synthetic opioids and novel benzodiazepines, disguised as legitimate pharmaceutical medicines.

Experts fear that these detections are the tip of the iceberg, with cost-of-living crisis driving people to seek out unregulated medicines online.

Since December, the CheQpoint pill testing service has seen five detections of the highly dangerous benzodiazepine bromazolam, and two detections of the deadly synthetic opioid nitazene, responsible for a wave of overdose deaths across the country.

CheQpoint is funded by the Queensland Government as a 12-month pilot, with an independent evaluation set to hand down its findings at the end of May. The Health Minister has indicated that he’s waiting to see the findings of the evaluation, before making a decision on the future of the service.

A new report released today reveals the critical role of CheQpoint’s pill testing services in safeguarding our community. Over the past twelve months, 490 people have accessed CheQpoint’s services, with 800 drug samples tested. Alarming, one in ten samples contained an unexpected psychoactive drug, including highly dangerous ketamine variants, potent stimulants as well as deadly nitazenes. One in every seven people who accessed the service disposed of their drugs after talking with a health professional, and an additional one in three people were referred on for additional support including to their GP or to drug and alcohol counselling and treatment.

The data underscores the importance of CheQpoint as a vital health service that is able to detect dangerous substances, warn the community and provide a pathway into treatment and support.

End of Release

Quotes attributable to Cameron Francis, CEO of The Loop Australia:

“We need to maintain and expand access to pill testing right across Queensland.”

“Queensland is seeing super potent synthetic opioids like nitazenes starting to show up. It’s terrifying to think what rate of overdoses we will see from nitazenes if we can’t detect them first and warn the public.”

“The priority should be to stay ahead of emerging threats, ensuring that people are informed and protected.”

“Pill testing services provide a safe, non-judgmental space for people to access critical health services, make informed decisions, and reduce harm associated with drug use.”

“Of the people who have accessed CheQpoint’s service, around 50% have never previously spoken to a health professional about their alcohol or drug use.”

“One in three people who have come through the service were referred for further support from GPs or alcohol and other drug treatment services.’

“One in seven people chose to dispose of their drugs and one in four chose to reduce their dosage after consultation with the services health professionals. No other intervention is able to provide such positive outcomes.”

Quotes attributable to AMA Queensland President Dr Nick Yim:

“The government must retain this vital program, especially until it can be fully evaluated.”

“Referring people who use drugs to a GP is the safest and most effective way to get them the help they need.”

“Pill testing provides a life-saving opportunity for a health professional to talk to people about their drug use and keep them safe.”

“This is even more important given we know people are purchasing unknown medicines online to try to make ends meet.”

“Every person that accesses a CheQpoint service is one less our busy emergency departments may have to treat due to drug misadventure.”

“It saves lives and it saves our health system.”

“If pill testing saves one Queenslanders life, it will be money well spent.”

Quotes attributable to Qld Network of Alcohol and other Drugs (QNADA) CEO Rebecca Lang:

“Unregulated drug markets are becoming increasingly dangerous and services like CheQpoint are vital to reducing those risks.”

“The CheQpoint service has already demonstrated it’s value and we call on Minister Nichols to approve ongoing resourcing for this important harm reduction service and commit to expanding access to regional Queenslanders”.

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[The “12 Months Report” can be downloaded here](#)

Notes to editors:

About CheQpoint:

CheQpoint was funded by the Queensland government to begin pill testing services in Brisbane and the Gold Coast in April.

The pill testing service is run by a collaboration between Queensland drug health organisations QuIHN, QuIVAA and pill testing organisation The Loop Australia.

CheQpoint operates free, confidential drug checking services at two locations.

Gold Coast: Thursdays 2pm-6pm, QulHN Burleigh Heads, Shop 12/89-99 West Burleigh Rd, Burleigh Heads

Brisbane: Fridays 2pm-6pm, QulHN Bowen Hills, 1 Hamilton Place, Bowen Hills

About our organisation:

The Loop Australia is a charitable organisation established in 2018 to deliver drug-checking services in Queensland, New South Wales, and Victoria. The Loop Australia is the sister organisation of The Loop UK, which have been conducting drug checking services since 2013.

We encourage Editors to consult “*Language Matters: A guide to appropriate language when reporting on alcohol and other drugs and the people who use them*”:

<https://nada.org.au/resources/language-matters/>

We encourage Editors to include the following text after any article that addresses alcohol and other drug use:

“If you’re concerned about your own or a loved one’s use of alcohol or other drugs, call the National Alcohol and Other Drug Hotline on 1800 250 015”