




Speech By
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MEMBER FOR NOOSA

Record of Proceedings, 28 February 2019

PRIVATE MEMBER'S STATEMENT

Illicit Drugs, Pill Testing

 **Ms BOLTON** (Noosa—Ind) (2.18 pm): There are many issues that are of increasing concern to Queenslanders and with every one of them there are many aspects to consider and to debate. One such issue is the use of illicit drugs and whether these should be tested at festivals in order to save lives. As an MP, parent and grandparent with a genuine love and commitment to how best to protect and save lives, I share in the dilemma that we as a society must confront every day.

How do we keep everyone safe from others and, at times, from themselves? The one entity that can create a better environment for our physical and mental self and make decisions about our life is ourselves. I am not including those too young to make informed decisions or those who, for a variety of medical conditions, do not have the capacity to do so. The decision to take a drug, illicit or otherwise, must be made with an understanding that regardless of testing, whether in controlled environments, with assurances or otherwise, there is an inherent risk. Statistics are alarming with regard to drugs that are legal and available by prescription. Benzodiazepines and other opioids—oxycodone and codeine, but not heroin—were responsible for more than two-thirds of the total number of drug induced deaths in Australia in 2016.

That is not to say that safety testing is at fault. Warnings clearly outline the risks of overdosing or mixing with alcohol, illicit drugs or other prescription drugs. The infinite combinations of what substances can be mixed, along with the unique attributes of each individual's biochemistry plus medical and genetic factors coupled with lifestyle choices, cannot be calculated in a laboratory yet. It is up to everyone to comprehend that, when you put a substance in your body, whether to create an artificial high, address an imbalance or treatment an ailment, there is risk. We must take responsibility for that decision. Assurances that it is safe—illegal or otherwise—are never a guarantee.

Do we test illicit drugs in order to keep our kids safer as part of harm minimisation at festivals, or could this create a false sense of security that could lead to a higher percentage of deaths as a result? Or would this, as indicated by a small trial at a New South Wales festival in 2018, provide an opportunity to connect with users to counsel them to reconsider what they are ingesting. It is an important discussion, and one that needs to be had at every dinner table. It tugs at the hearts of mothers, fathers and the loved ones of our youth, our young and not-so-young adults and the MPs that serve them.