

UNPOPULAR POLICY v POPULAR RESULTS



The unseen effects of COVID-19 on the illicit drug trade

It's that time of year again. The Queensland summer, a time for beaches, nightclubs and music festivals. COVID-19 has made 2020 a year like nothing we have ever seen. With the pandemic restricting many of our usual freedoms, one has to ask, what impacts from COVID-19 are we yet to see rear their ugly head?

One major issue that needs serious and immediate thought is how the virus has impacted the illicit drug trade in Australia. What impacts can we expect to see in the immediate future? As a result of international and interstate travel and trade restrictions, and increased security measures to prevent the spread of COVID-19, the related reduction in the importation of illicit drugs means a higher demand for these products domestically.

The reduced supply of imported drugs, particularly MDMA or 'ecstasy' and the precursor chemicals used to manufacture them will lead to an even greater risk and percentage of 'dirty pills' entering the illicit market. As these 'dirty pills' enter a market driven by soaring demand so too comes the increased risk of serious injuries and death.

The composition of illicit drugs, most notably 'ecstasy' is widely varied and highly unpredictable. This is particularly significant within the domestic manufacturing market, almost exclusively controlled by criminal organisations and driven completely by commercial motivation. The illicit drug trade has no ability for oversight or regulation. Motivated only by profit, manufacturers of illicit drugs 'cut' unknown substances into the base ingredients of party pills like ecstasy, often with infinitely more dangerous, but more readily available substances. This has been a live and contentious issue for many years.

Creevey Russell /LAWYERS

excellence in law, service and communication

It has been a year of stress, frustration and lockdown. With COVID-19 seemingly under control in Queensland and across Australia, kids and young adults who are ready to let their hair down are facing another set of invisible risks as domestically manufactured pills, produced by unscrupulous suppliers are set to flood the market

Whilst the idea of 'pill testing' at music festivals is not a new one, it is something that has never been trialled in Queensland. This is despite testing's proven success both in the ACT and internationally. Parliament and the Queensland Police Service have instead preferred the more politically popular approach of an increased police presence around music festivals, despite the absence of any evidence to support that policy deterring people from drug use.

Is 2020 the year we should look towards implementing a new policy? Should we at least trial pill testing at music festivals this summer given the added risks that will be present?

If we have learned one thing from 2020, particularly with the recent re-election of the Palaszczuk Government, it is that brave leadership, even in the form of unpopular policy, can be necessary to show the public that 'unpopular policy' does not mean 'bad policy'.

For those people who were up-in-arms about the COVID-19 lockdowns this year, take a long, deep, COVID-free breath and compare Queensland and Australia to the USA. Now ask yourself, was the inconvenience of the unpopular lockdown worth it?

Having seen the indisputable benefits that can flow from common-sense, but sometimes difficult to accept policies, can we agree that it is time to reconsider the issue of 'pill testing' at music festivals in 2020/2021 and learn not only from the mistakes of the past, but the successes of 2020. Should we follow the science that suggests pill testing works, or pass it off as just another unpopular policy to ignore?

Nobody is suggesting that pill testing is the solution to the drug problem. However, the evidence does support that it saves lives and provides valuable education to those people who are already taking the risk, but without the fully informed choice.

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Recent Results in Relation to Serious Drug Matters



Creevey Russell's Crime & Misconduct Division has had an exceptional month, with a number of significant results achieved by our Team in the Supreme Court. Fully suspended terms of imprisonment were obtained in two separate and complex drug trafficking cases.

The first case, decided in late October, involved 2 charges of Drug Trafficking against the same Defendant, across separate indictments. One charge occurred whilst the Defendant was on bail for the earlier drug trafficking and the possession of commercial quantities of numerous schedule 1 & 2 dangerous drugs. The Defendant received an effective sentence of 5 years imprisonment, suspended immediately after 62 days of presentence custody.

The second case involved an offence of drug trafficking in the schedule 1 drug, MDMA. That offence took place whilst the defendant was both on bail and then subsequently on a 15 month parole sentence for possession of commercial quantities of a number of Schedule 1 drugs.

The continuation of the offending whilst the Defendant was being sentenced for the earlier offences was a significant aggravating feature. Again, the Creevey Russell Team, led in both cases by the Head of our Crime and Misconduct Division, Michael Burrows who appeared as solicitor advocate in both sentencing hearings, were able to achieve an outcome that did not see immediate imprisonment imposed. In that case a 4 year suspended sentence was imposed by the Supreme Court. These outcomes show the high quality of work, speciality and dedication of our Crime & Misconduct Team to achieving outstanding results for our clients.



Dan Creevey



Michael Burrows



Craig van der Hoven



Dan Creevey Jr.

OUR SERVICES INCLUDE

Summary offences; Private criminal offences; CCC proceedings; Environmental Protection Act prosecutions; Animal prosecutions; Vegetation Management Act prosecutions; Health investigations; OHO and AHPRA investigations; Employment matters and internal discipline matters; White collar prosecutions; Director's breaches; Misconduct proceedings; Show cause proceedings.