

MEDIA RELEASE

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Synthetic Opioid Detected in Broadmeadows Deaths – Time for Action to Prevent Further Deaths

Police investigating the deaths of four people in Broadmeadows on 25 June 2024, have now revealed that a synthetic opioid was detected in the bodies of all four people. Investigations are ongoing, and although Victoria Police have ruled out fentanyl, they have confirmed that preliminary tests found the presence of a synthetic opioid.

Harm Reduction Australia (HRA) Executive Director, Dr Annie Madden AO said that *“this development is extremely concerning for the Victorian and wider Australian community. We have witnessed the devastation caused by synthetic opioids across North America over the past 10 years with hundreds of thousands of deaths.”*

She added *“There has been a steady increase in the detection of synthetic opioids, especially nitazines, in Australia recently. The four deaths in Broadmeadows last week is a major wake up call for those intent on keeping their heads in the sand on this looming situation.”*

HRA is a member of Keep Our City Alive (KOCA), an active coalition of organisations, services, businesses, and other concerned individuals that have continued to call for a second injecting room in the Melbourne CBD despite the Allan Government’s recent rejection of the idea. This developing situation in Broadmeadows has only served to further underscore how urgently we need government action on a raft of growing issues in relation to opioid-related overdoses.

“Every day that passes without action on this issue is another day where lives are unnecessarily put at risk and where some of the most marginalised people in Victoria do not have access to potentially lifesaving harm reduction services” stated Dr Madden.

We need a comprehensive response. Harm reduction services, such as safe injecting facilities and drug checking services, save lives and connect people with critical information and essential health services. If we want to end the black market and its many associated harms, we also need to get serious about reforming our current drug policies and laws.

“Currently, preventable opioid-related overdose deaths are occurring in Melbourne and wider Victoria in large part due to a lack of commitment and action by our politicians. We ask, as a community, how many more deaths are we willing to accept? Will we wait until synthetic opioids are flooding the community before we ask government to take this issue seriously, or will we demand they take the right, just and humane course of action now?” concluded Dr Madden.

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