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Prompt Response Network, Drug Alert Report Q4, 2025

Drug alerts republished on TheKnow.org.au

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From 1 October to 31 December 2025, a total of 22 drug alerts were issued in Australia. These included 8 for high-dose MDMA, 3 for nitazenes, and 2 for ketamine analogues.

Overview for Q4, 2025

As of January 2026, the Australian Capital Territory (ACT), New South Wales (NSW), Queensland (QLD), South Australia (SA), Victoria (VIC), and the Northern Territory (NT) had established processes for issuing public drug alerts. The remaining Australian jurisdictions, Western Australia and Tasmania, had not implemented a system for issuing drug alerts.

In summary for Q4, 2025:

- **Number of drug alerts**: A total of 22 unique drug alerts were republished on The Know. Eight were issued by government agencies and 14 by drug checking services (DCS).
- **Substance detections:** Alerts related to detections of a range of substances, most notably for high-dose detections of MDMA (8 alerts), nitazenes (4 substances reported in 3 alerts), and detections of ketamine analogues (3 substances reported in 2 alerts).
- **Reasons for concern:** Fourteen alerts were issued for unexpected detections, and eight of these alerts related to the detections of at least one novel/new psychoactive substance[1] (NPS). Eight alerts were issued due to the detection of 'high-dose' MDMA pressed pills/tablets or capsules.
- **Issuing organisations:** Alerts were issued by five different government and drug-checking organisations in four jurisdictions: ACT, NSW, QLD, and VIC.
- **Limitations to interpretation:** Currently there are no standardised national reporting guidelines for drug alerts in Australia. Organisations differ in their decision-making and reporting processes, but also in their capacity and willingness to disclose certain information in drug alerts. As such, drug alerts in Australia vary in the type of information they include and the level of specificity with which information is reported. These inconsistencies may limit the interpretation and comparability over time of the summaries reported below.

  Moreover, alert counts related to particular substances are not accurate indicators of how frequently a substance is detected. Drug alerts are issued on the basis of perceived risk by jurisdictional decision-makers (which involve a range of contextual factors), and analytical certainty regarding detected substances. They are a public health function aimed at reducing drug-related harm, not at providing accurate metrics about substance detections over time. This report summarises drug alerts republished on The Know, utilising only information contained in these alerts.

Background

Drug alerts are publicly issued communications on signals (most commonly substance detections) of public health concern issued by government and community agencies across Australia. Terminology differs between agencies and jurisdictions, and they may be referred to as public drug warnings, drug alerts, or community notices.

The Prompt Response Network (PRN) brings together agencies with the aim of enhancing public health decision-making and responses to emerging drugs and drug trends. The network is facilitated by the National Centre for Clinical Research on Emerging Drugs (NCCRED) which monitors drug alerts issued in Australia and shares these via the following PRN communication channels:

- The Know public website (theknow.org.au) and social media accounts
- An online professional community platform (The Know Community)
- Email distribution lists

The PRN is funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health, Disability and Ageing and guided by an advisory group comprised of jurisdictional lead agencies and community organisations.

This report provides an overview of drug alerts issued in Australian jurisdictions that have been republished through TheKnow.org.au in Quarter 4 (Q4; 01 October – 31 December), 2025. It is not an exhaustive summary of all substance detections of concern than occurred in Australia in Q4, 2025. Targeted (e.g. clinician safety notices) and other drug related communications including routine drug checking reports are not included in this report. One alert can include multiple detections - we report on both the alert and the substances detected. In some cases, different organisations may issue alerts relating to the same signals/detections of concern. For statistical summaries, only the first 'unique' alert issued is included, but all alerts, including those that did not contain information regarding new substance detections (such as reposts by other organisations), are listed in Appendix 1. Only information included in the original alert is reported here.

Abbreviations

ACT = Australian Capital Territory

CanTEST = CanTEST Health & Drug Checking Service

DCS = Drug checking service

MDMA = 3,4-Methylenedioxymethamphetamine

NSW = New South Wales

NPS = Novel/new psychoactive substances

NT = Northern Territory

O-PCE = deschloro-N-ethyl-ketamine

PRN = Prompt Response Network

QLD = Queensland

VIC = Victoria

VicDoH = Victorian Department of Health

VPTS = The Victorian Pill Testing Service

Substance Detections Leading to Alert

In Q4, 2025, 22 unique alerts contained information about the detection substances from a range of drug classes[1]. Substance detections of concern tend to be unusual or unexpected (e.g., adulteration or substation) or of potentially dangerous quantities of substances contained in a sample that may easily be consumed as a single dose (e.g., high-dose MDMA pills or capsules).

Many alerts contained information regarding multiple detections of either the same or distinct substances in one or more analysed sample. The most reported substances detections were high-dose MDMA samples (8 alerts). The most commonly reported subclasses in alerts related to *unexpected* detections were nitazenes (3 alerts), ketamine analogues (2 alerts), and cathinones (2 alerts). Unlike in the previous quarter (July 1 – August 31), there were no detections of novel benzodiazepines reported in alerts.

Reasons for Concern

A total of the 22 unique drug alerts were republished on The Know in Q4, 2025. Fourteen were related to unexpected substances, of which eight included information relating to the detection of NPS. Eight alerts reported detections of high-dose MDMA samples.

Unexpected Substance Detections

An 'unexpected detection' occurs when either the substances detected in a sample differ from what the sample was expected to contain, or when an unusual/uncommon (in an Australian context) substance is detected in a sample where no expected substance is recorded. In Q4, 2025, 14 alerts contained information about unexpected detections. Expected and detected substances both ranged in terms of class.

It should be noted that there are differences in reporting between organisations and some alerts do not contain information about *all* substances detected in a sample, how many samples were analysed, or how many detections of a given substance made. Table 1 summarises unexpectedly detected substances reported in alerts by class, subclass[2], and individual substances and indicates the number of instances that each substance was reported in an alert.

In 5 of the 11 alerts related to unexpected detections for which an expected substance was reported, the drug class of at least one detected substance was different to those expected to be contained in a sample or that an individual believed they had consumed.

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[1] *Classified using the Health Canada Drug Analysis Service and Cannabis Laboratory classification framework. See https://health-infobase.canada.ca/drug-analysis-service/drug-classification.html*

[2] *Subclass is a more precise categorization of substances that reflects chemical structure, drug effect, and/or use(s) of a substance.*

Unlike in previous reporting periods, there were not distinctly common 'expected substances' substances reported. No expected substance was reported more than twice across 11 alerts.

Table 1: Summary of the unexpectedly detected substances reported in drug alerts, Q4, 2025

Drug Class* (no. of alerts)	Drug Subclass (no. of alerts)	Substances** (no. of alerts)
Stimulants (2)	Cathinones (2)	*N*-Ethylpentylone (1), *N*,*N*-Dimethylpentylone (1)
Opioids (7)	Nitazenes (4)	5-Cyano-isotodesnitazene (1), isotocyanozene (1), protonitazene (1), *N*-pyrrolidino protonitazene (1)
	Fentanyl/analogues (1)	Fluorofentanyl (1)
	Opiates (1)	Heroin (1)
	Other opioids (1)	Tramadol (1)
Sedative/hypnotics	Quinazolinones (1)	Methylmethqualone (1)
	Other (2)	Medetomidine (1), Rilmalzafone (1)
Dissociatives (2)	Ketamine/analogues (2)	2'-fluoro-2-oxo-PCE (1), 2-oxo-PCE (1), tiletamine (1)
Other (2)	Cutting agents (1)	*N*-Benzylcyclohexamine (1)
	Other (1)	5-Hydroxytryptophan (1)

Table 1 contains data from 14 unique alerts. Italicised drug names denote NPS.

**Drug classes and subclasses are adapted from the Health Canada Drug Analysis Service and Cannabis Laboratory classification framework. See Drug classification - Drug Analysis Service | Public Health Infobase - Public Health Agency of Canada*

***Different organisations choose to use different naming conventions when reporting detected substances. For the purpose of collating data in Table 1, substance names have been standardised by the authors, but it should be noted that the name used here may differ from that used in the original alert.*

Detections of NPS

Detections of NPS (as defined in the context of the Australian illicit drug market), were reported in seven drug alerts in Q4, 2025. The most frequently reported NPS came from the sub-classes nitazenes (4 unique substances in 3 alerts) and ketamine analogues (3 unique substances in 2 alerts). Three alerts reported the detection of more than one NPS.

High-dose MDMA

A threshold of 150mg MDMA free base[1] is often used to support decision-making about issuing high-dose MDMA alerts.

Eight drug alerts were issued for pressed pills/tablets or capsules containing potentially dangerous amounts of MDMA. Twenty-two pills/capsules were described across these alerts, with some sample descriptions relating to multiple samples analysed. High dose detections ranged from 138mg to 294mg of free base MDMA present in a given sample. High-dose MDMA detections described in alerts from Q4, 2025 are summarised in Table 2.

Table 2: Summary of 'high-dose' MDMA detections Q4, 2025.

Description of sample*	Reported dose of MDMA free base	Issuing organisation, date of alert
Green irregular shaped tablet with 'Rick and Morty' marking	251	NSW Health, 31 Dec
Green shield shaped tablet with skull 'punisher' marking	169	NSW Health, 31 Dec
Yellow heart shaped tablet with 'GOYA' marking	174	NSW Health, 31 Dec
[Multiple] blue 'Hello Kitty' tablets**	"up to 186"	NSW Health, 31 Dec
Yellow square tablet with 'facebook' logo marking	256	NSW Health, 31 Dec
Pale orange 'Hello Kitty' tablet	151	NSW Health, 15 Dec
Pink skull shaped tablet with 'MYBRAND' marking on reverse	229	NSW Health, 15 Dec
Grey 'grim reaper' press pill	162	CanTEST, 12 Dec
Grey 'grim reaper' press pill	162	CanTEST, 12 Dec
Grey 'grim reaper' press pill	225	CanTEST, 12 Dec
Grey 'grim reaper' press pill	282	CanTEST, 12 Dec
Grey irregular shaped scored tablet marked with a grenade and "NL" on reverse	146	NSW Health, 12 Dec
Blue, Ace of Spades pill	160	NSW Health, 12 Dec
Green 'punisher' press pill with a score mark on the rear	160	CanTEST, 09 Dec
*Multiple hexagonal tablets with Philipp Plein markings, skull on reverse [varying in weight, colour, and dose]	"at least 138"	NSW Health, 27 Nov
Yellow ***capsule*** with 'Boba Fett' markings	142	NSW Health, 27 Nov
Blue ***capsule*** with ghost markings	233	NSW Health, 27 Nov
Green, skull shaped tablet	214	NSW Health, 27 Nov
Yellow, sparkly square tablet with Facebook 'F' marking	229	NSW Health, 27 Nov
Grey, 'Maserati' press pill	294	CanTest, 14 Nov
Blue, shield shaped tablet with 'Punisher' markings	209	NSW Health, 07 Oct
[Multiple] blue, skull shaped tablets**	152	NSW Health, 07 Oct

Distinct samples reported in the same alert are recorded here separately. *Descriptions are copied from original alerts. [Any added information is denoted in brackets]; **Multiple samples matching description were detected.

[1] *150mg MDMA free base is approximately equivalent to 179mg MDMA hydrochloride. Current drug checking methods do not allow for the determination of the MDMA salt present in a sample, however MDMA hydrochloride is the most common form.*

Limitations to Interpretation

This report summarises the unique, public drug alerts issued in Q4, 2025 across jurisdictions in Australia. Currently there are no standardised reporting guidelines for drug alerts and different agencies choose to include different information at different levels of specificity, making simple summaries of alerts challenging to produce. Variability in reporting (between and within jurisdictions) that limit interpretation and analysis over time and place include but are not limited to reporting on individuals compared to groups of people; single or multiple drugs intended/expected or detected; all drugs detected or only those of 'concern'; chemical and/or biological samples tested; testing methodology. Additionally, the heterogeneous naming/labelling of substances detected in a report limits interpretability of aggregate summaries in both the context of consumer-focussed public health communications and in secondary reporting on these communications.

The source of information for each alert also differs. In Q4 2025, all drug alerts contain substance detection data from chemical analysis of a *drug* sample (e.g., drug checking services). Previous periods have contained alerts that referred to substance detection data from chemical analysis of *toxicological* samples (e.g., blood) from persons who have consumed drugs. Despite all detection data relating to chemical analysis of drug samples, analyses may not have been conducted using the same techniques, and results are reported differently in certain alerts.

To aid the move towards standardised reporting, NCCRED has outlined relevant principles of communication in a recent brief - *Emerging Best Practices in the Design and Dissemination of Public Drug Warnings* (https://doi.org/10.26190/unsworks/30774)

Appendix 1 – Drug alerts listed on TheKnow.org.au in Q4, 2025

Date	Jurisdiction	Organisation	Title
03-Oct-25	QLD	QLD Health	Confirmed detection of N-pyrrolidino protonitazene and protonitazene in Queensland
03-Oct-25/a	ACT	CanTEST	Isotocyanozene found in 'benzo' sample
03-Oct-25/b	ACT	CanTEST	Methylmethaqualone and flurofentanyl found in ‘opioid’ capsule
07-Oct-25 [Updated 08-Oct-25]	NSW	NSW Health	Multiple high dose MDMA (ecstasy) tablets and capsules circulating in NSW
15-Oct-25	QLD	QLD Health	First report of 5-cyano isotodesnitazene in Queensland
17-Oct-25	ACT	CanTEST	5-Hydroxytryptophan found in unknown powder
18-Oct-25	ACT	CanTEST	Rilmalzafone found in ‘opioid’ capsule
20-Oct-25	VIC	VPTS	Tiletamine and N-Benzylcyclohexanamine missold as ‘M-CAT’ or 4-MMC
14-Nov-25	ACT	CanTEST	High Dose MDMA Pill
27-Nov-25	NSW	NSW Health	Multiple high dose MDMA (ecstasy) tablets and capsules circulating in NSW
27-Nov-25	NSW	NSW Health	Ketamine analogues detected recently in NSW
27-Nov-25	VIC	VPTS	Medetomidine found in crystal/powder expected to contain bromazolam
04-Dec-25	VIC	VPTS	MDA found in MDMA pills
05-Dec-25	VIC	VicDoH	High-dose MDMA capsules and pills are circulating in Victoria
09-Dec-25	ACT	CanTEST	High dose MDMA pill
12-Dec-25	NSW	NSW Health	Multiple high dose MDMA (ecstasy) tablets circulating in NSW
12-Dec-25	ACT	CanTEST	High dose MDMA pills
12-Dec-25	VIC	VPTS	Heroin sold as alprazolam
13-Dec-25	ACT	CanTEST	*N,N*-dimethylpentylone found in MDMA
15-Dec-25	NSW	NSW Health	Multiple high dose MDMA (ecstasy) tablets circulating in NSW
23-Dec-25	VIC	VPTS	Tramadol sold as oxycodone
24-Dec-25	VIC	VPTS	*N*-ethylpentylone sold as liquid methylphenidate (ritalin)
31-Dec-25	NSW	NSW Health	Multiple high dose MDMA (ecstasy) tablets circulating in NSW