



**HON JENNY MACKLIN MP  
SHADOW MINISTER FOR SOCIAL SERVICES  
MEMBER FOR JAGAJAGA**

**HON LINDA BURNEY MP  
SHADOW MINISTER FOR HUMAN SERVICES  
MEMBER FOR BARTON**

**WESTERN SYDNEY RESIDENTS TARGETED BY TURNBULL'S DRUG  
TESTING TRIAL**

The Turnbull Government's announcement today that it will establish a drug testing trial for social security recipients in Canterbury Bankstown is another sign of a desperate government looking to distract from its political problems.

This trial might sound like a good idea but all it will do is push vulnerable people in Western Sydney into poverty, homelessness and potentially crime.

Health experts, medical professionals and community organisations have said that they oppose this ill-conceived drug testing trial.

This includes the Australian Medical Association; The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP); St Vincent's Health; Rural Doctors Association of Australia; Harm Reduction Australia; The Penington Institute, The Australian Drug Law Reform Foundation; National Drug and Research Centre; Australian Council of Social Service; Uniting Care Australia; Homelessness Australia; and St Vincent de Paul Society.

Labor has listened to expert advice from health professionals and we oppose this trial.

The Government can't name one expert who thinks that this trial will work.

They have been unable to provide any evidence to support this trial.

Drug testing of income support recipients has been tried in several countries and there is no evidence to suggest that it is effective.

The New Zealand government instituted a drug testing program among welfare recipients, in 2015 only 22 of 8,001 participants tested returned a positive result for illicit drug use.

In Utah in the United States, 838 of the state's 9,552 social security applicants were screened with 29 returning a positive result.

Addiction medicine specialists have expressed concerns about the technical aspects of the trial, including the type of drug testing that would be used, its cost and accuracy.

The Government still can't say how much this trial will cost.

The Government has been unable to confirm if treatment places will be available.

This trial will likely put pressure on an already overstretched system with long waiting lists, displacing people seeking help.

The Government should be focusing its resources on helping vulnerable people seek treatment for drug addiction as well as policing, they shouldn't be targeting residents in Western Sydney.

### **WHAT THE EXPERTS ARE SAYING ABOUT THE DRUG TESTING TRIAL:**

***“International experience shows when you push people to the brink, like removing their welfare payments, things just get worse.***

***There will be more crime, more family violence, more distress within society. We can expect at Centrelink offices there will be aggression and violence as people react to this. Had [the government] spoken to the various bodies who work in this area and know about this work, we would have been able to advise them this is not the right way. Pushing people to the brink won't make it better.”***

- Associate Professor Yvonne Bonomo, director of St Vincent's Hospital Melbourne's department of addiction medicine

***“The AMA considers these measures to be mean and stigmatising. The AMA considers substance dependence to be a serious health problem, one that is associated with high rates of disability and mortality.***

***The AMA firmly believes that those affected should be treated in the same way as other patients with serious health conditions, including access to treatment and supports to recovery.”***

- The Australian Medical Association (AMA)

***“The RACP and AChAM are concerned that these measures are not based on evidence of what works - either at a policy or a clinical level.***

***“In our view they will not only fail to achieve the Bill's stated aim of assisting people struggling with drug and alcohol addiction to access treatment and***

***secure employment, but will harm an already vulnerable group of people and increase their social and financial disadvantage.”***

- *The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) and the Australasian Chapter of Addiction Medicine (AChAM)*

***“This approach has been implemented in some areas of the United States and it hasn’t shown to be effective in combating substance abuse.***

***“People who are looking for a job do not generally have any higher incidence of drug use than those in the general population, even if they are receiving government assistance.***

- *Dr Ewen McPhee, Rural Doctors Association of Australia*

***“What it can do is actually make people's social circumstances even more precarious and perhaps tip people into more dangerous ways of living, and even more criminal ways of living if they can't support themselves.”***

- *Nadine Ezard, St Vincent's Clinical School*

***“There is no evidence that any of these measures will directly achieve outcomes associated with reductions in alcohol or other drug use or harms, and indeed have the potential to create greater levels of harm, including increased stigma, marginalisation and poverty.”***

- *National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre*

***“I strongly urge the Government to reconsider and reverse this retrograde approach to welfare before we see the increase in crime it is likely to create.***

***“In Australia there is a real lack of funding for drug treatment services – including medically supported drug treatment. The Government would have been better off making stronger investments there rather than attacking the vulnerable.”***

- *John Ryan, CEO Penington Institute*

**TUESDAY, 22 AUGUST 2017**