



Integrity Sampling

DRUG & ALCOHOL MANAGEMENT SOLUTIONS

Welcome to our latest newsletter. We aim to update our valued partners and the workplace (generally) about issues that face our industry; drugs and alcohol in the workplace. We highlight the latest trends, what concerns are filtering through to the shop floor, and help to educate those who strive for a safer and harm free workplace.

Integrity Sampling P/L is Australia wide, with 130 staff and technicians. We are Australia's leading drug and alcohol testing company. We service the transport, warehousing, manufacturing, building, construction, logistics, aviation, marine, mining, forestry, automotive and allied industries, performing in excess of 50,000 tests annually.



MAY 2017 NEWSLETTER

SA doctors can now prescribe medicinal cannabis

What does it mean for workplace drug testing?

Recent news that patients can now access medicinal cannabis in South Australia has again raised the question of what this means for workplace drug testing. Can a person who's been prescribed medicinal cannabis provide a positive drug test at work?

The recent announcement in South Australia means that doctors in that state will be able to prescribe medicinal cannabis to patients, for periods of up to two months, without government approval.

Patients in South Australia could already access medicinal cannabis due to changes in federal legislation that came into affect in November 2016. The changes made by the South Australian government cuts some of the red tape involved in the process, allowing patients who may benefit from medicinal cannabis to more easily access the drug.

That doesn't mean anyone can access medicinal cannabis, however. In South Australia, for example, only medical practitioners who've gained approval from the federal government will be able to prescribe the drug and only medicinal cannabis products approved by the Therapeutic Goods Administration can be prescribed. In addition, only patients who are identified by medical specialists as potentially benefiting from using medicinal cannabis as a treatment option will gain access to the drug.

Essentially, the prescribing of medicinal cannabis will be handled in a similar way to the prescription of other potentially addictive drugs, such as morphine.

Other states and territories are also allowing patients to access medicinal cannabis where it's deemed appropriate by a medical specialist. But, importantly, it will only be patients who are suffering from certain debilitating or terminal conditions who will be able to access the drug.

For example, in Victoria, children suffering intractable epilepsy became the first Victorians to legally use medicinal cannabis earlier this year. In Queensland, certain specialist doctors can prescribe medicinal cannabis for conditions such as epilepsy, and patients undergoing treatment for cancer or brain tumours.

It's this qualification that should ease any concerns for workplaces that conduct drug testing. Due to the restrictions imposed on the prescription of medicinal cannabis and the conditions of patients who will be prescribed the drug, Integrity Sampling doesn't believe the new laws will have any major impact.

If one of your employees is prescribed medicinal cannabis it's highly likely they'll be unable to work or will be on restricted duties due to their condition. While it is possible one of your employees may claim to have recorded a positive drug test due to medicinal cannabis, their 'medicinal cannabis' will have been self-prescribed and you can deal with the employee in the same way that you would deal with any employee who failed a drug test.

IN OTHER NEWS...

What's the difference between the cannabis people smoke and medicinal cannabis?

There's a big difference between recreational cannabis and medicinal cannabis.

Firstly, most recreational cannabis is smoked, which means it contains at least 50 of the same carcinogens as tobacco. So, no credible medical specialist is going to prescribe cannabis that is smoked. More importantly, the exact concentration of active cannabinoids is known for approved medicinal cannabis products; the concentration dosage in recreational cannabis isn't known and can vary markedly.

If you'd like to find out more about medicinal cannabis, the Alcohol and Drug Foundation have an excellent resource at <http://adf.org.au/drug-facts/medical-cannabis/>.

Drug testing turns to waste (water)

While studying wastewater wouldn't be everyone's cup of tea, the results can prove interesting. Indeed, the National Wastewater Drug Monitoring Program, which is using wastewater to test for levels of illicit and licit drugs amongst Australia, is unearthing some thought-provoking findings and proving very useful as a high level drug testing tool.

The first report of the program was released in late March and you can see some of the findings on the Integrity Sampling website at <https://integritysamplingaust.com.au/2017/03/drug-testing-wastewater/>.

A further eight reports will be produced over the next three years. Fifty-one sites in capital city and regional areas, across all states and territories, are being used for collection and analysis. The program covers approximately 58% of the Australian population, or over 14 million people.



Are breathalysers accurate?

You probably won't be surprised to hear that most of the cheaper breathalysers you can buy in stores and online aren't accurate.

The cheaper models – generally called semiconductor breathalysers are certainly not accurate and should at best only be used as a guide. The more expensive semiconductor breathalysers, which we use to conduct workplace alcohol testing, are more accurate but they must be calibrated regularly by trained professionals to maintain this accuracy.

But even these breathalysers are not 100% accurate. Which is why the police and professional workplace alcohol testers use portable breathalysers as guides and conduct follow-up testing to ensure the result of the initial breathalyser testing is accurate.

See <https://integritysamplingaust.com.au/2017/04/are-breathalysers-accurate/> for full details.

Roadside (and workplace) drug testing saving lives

Random drug testing on our roads may be controversial in some circles (see <https://integritysamplingaust.com.au/2017/04/random-drug-testing-saves-lives/> for more) but there's little doubt it has the potential to save lives.

Drug driving is a serious road issue – 41 per cent of drivers and motorcyclists killed on Victorian roads alone in the past 5 years have had drugs in their system. If random drug testing on our roads can help to stop just one of these fatalities it's hard to argue its importance.

It's the same message in workplaces. We don't want people who are having issues with alertness, vision, physical coordination, reactions and the ability to make decisions on our roads due to drug use, and we don't want them in our workplaces either.



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