



## Research Paper

## Drug dog affects: Accounting for the broad social, emotional and health impacts of general drug detection dog operations in Australia

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## ABSTRACT

**Background:** Drug detection dogs are increasingly being deployed by policing agencies in Australia and elsewhere to home in on people carrying illicit drugs in a broad range of social contexts including at music festivals, on public transport and in a range of everyday urban spaces. Significant concerns have been raised about their limited deterrence and detection efficacy and tendency to increase drug-related health harms including overdose. Yet the complex ways in which these effects play out, and the broader impacts they have on social and emotional wellbeing, are not yet well documented. This study builds on a growing body of poststructural critical drug studies research to explore the complex social, emotional and health impacts of drug dog use in these broad social contexts.

**Methods:** Semi-structured in-depth interviews were conducted with 22 people who had been searched by drug detection dogs at or near music festivals and events, licensed venues and public transport spaces in Australia. Participants were asked about their experiences of being searched, how it impacted upon them in the short and long term, and how it shaped their drug use behaviours, sense of self and social relations, including relations with police.

**Results:** This study supports previous findings that these drug dog operations do not tend to deter people from consuming illicit substances, but instead encourage a range of adaptations that increase the likelihood of health harms including overdose. The rationalities underpinning responses to drug dogs, and the impacts of those responses, are shown to be deeply spatial, temporal, social and embodied. More specifically, drug dog deployment is shown to have significant short and long term impacts on social and emotional wellbeing and can produce deep embodied trauma.

**Conclusion:** These findings suggest that the use of drug dogs in these broad social contexts is based on untenable assumptions about the rationalities of deterrence, is producing substantial harm without evidence of benefit, and should be urgently reconsidered.

## Introduction

In Australia today, as in many other countries, specially trained drug detection dogs (drug dogs) are regularly deployed by policing agencies to home in on people carrying illicit drugs. In addition to their use in anti-trafficking efforts at airports and ports, or when a warrant has been issued to search a property, over the last 15–20 years they have been increasingly deployed to find drugs on people in a range of more general public contexts, including at music festivals and electronic dance parties, in nightclubs, bars and pubs, on trains and train-stations, and along city streets. The dogs, usually Labradors, are trained to sit down when they detect the odour of certain illicit substances (predominantly cannabis, MDMA and amphetamines), and this identification is then used by police to constitute, or supplement, the

reasonable suspicion that is legally necessary to conduct a physical search of a person or vehicle without a warrant.

A range of concerns have been raised about their use in these broad public contexts (Lancaster, Hughes, & Ritter, 2017), with evidence pointing to their low accuracy (NSW Ombudsman, 2006), civil liberty implications (Hunt, 2005; Neocleous, 2016; NSW Ombudsman, 2006; Race, 2014), legal ambiguity (Braverman, 2013; Feinberg, 2006; Marks, 2007; Meagher, 2009; Meyers, 2006; NSW Ombudsman, 2006;), high monetary and resource costs (NSW Ombudsman, 2006), limited deterrence capacity (Grigg, Barratt, & Lenton, 2018; Hughes, Moxham-Hall, Ritter, Weatherburn, & Maccoun, 2017; Nabben, 2010; NSW Ombudsman, 2006), orientation toward users rather than high-level dealers (Nabben, 2010; Race, 2014); limited capacity to diminish supply (Nabben, 2010; NSW Ombudsman, 2006), stigmatising effects

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(NSW Ombudsman, 2006; Race, 2014), negative effects on police-community relations (NSW Ombudsman, 2006; Race, 2014) and potentially discriminatory impacts, particularly for young people, ethnic and Indigenous minorities, and queer (LGBTIQ) communities (Race, 2014, 2011).

Of most significance though, have been the concerns raised about the potential of the drug dogs to increase, rather than decrease, drug-related health harms including incidences of fatal overdose. Reports suggest, for example, that drug users have panicked at seeing the dogs and attempted to avoid detection by quickly consuming all their drugs at once, thereby significantly increasing their chances of becoming ill (Grigg et al., 2018; Hickey, McIlwraith, Bruno, Matthews, & Alati, 2012; Hughes et al., 2017; Nabben, 2010; NSW Ombudsman, 2006; Race, 2014). At least two overdose-related deaths at music festivals have been directly linked to this kind of dog-induced panicked ingestion (ABC News, 2013a; Coroners Court WA, 2013, 2013b). Drug users have also been reported to be more likely, when drug-dogs are expected to be present, to transport drugs in vaginal and anal cavities (Grigg et al., 2018; Race, 2014), buy drugs from unfamiliar suppliers inside a venue (Demant & Dilkes-Frayne, 2014; Grigg et al., 2018; Hughes et al., 2017; Nabben, 2010; NSW Ombudsman, 2006), consume higher quantities of drugs prior to arriving (Demant & Dilkes-Frayne, 2014) or switch to carrying and using less detectable but potentially more dangerous substances like GHB (Grigg et al., 2018; NSW Ombudsman, 2006; Race, 2014). Compounding these concerns are reports that drug users are more likely to be deterred from accessing health and support services at events when dogs are being deployed nearby (NSW Ombudsman, 2006).

We already have, therefore, quite a substantial evidence base suggesting that the deployment of drug dogs in these wider social contexts is not only ineffective at deterring most illicit drug use, but also likely to increase, rather than decrease drug-related health harms. There is also some research suggesting that this kind of dog deployment is likely to have a range of other negative or unintended impacts on sociability and well-being more broadly. Being stopped, questioned or searched by police can, in any context, produce shame and stigma, reduce police-community relations and cause emotional distress, particularly when such interventions are seen as unfair or discriminatory, or are conducted aggressively (Bowling & Weber, 2011; Bradford, 2015; Butler, 2014). Looking specifically at drug dog operations, research has shown that they can produce fear and anxiety not only in relation to potential criminal charges, but also the possibility of public humiliation (Demant & Dilkes-Frayne, 2016; Dilkes-Frayne, 2014). And disproportionate targeting of the dogs toward marginalised groups, such as the queer community in Sydney, not only criminalises and stigmatises those groups, but can negatively impact on urban sociabilities, and further reduce police-community relations (Race, 2011, 2014).

However most research on the impacts of drug dog operations has thus far been quantitative, and focused on drug-use behavioural changes and likely drug-related health impacts. We do not yet, therefore, have a rich qualitative understanding of the processes of rationalisation mediating these behavioural changes, nor do we have a good sense of the broader social, emotional and embodied impacts that the drug dog operations may be having, not only for those who use drugs but for anyone who encounters them. Given that in 2017 in NSW alone, over 10 thousand people, mostly young, were searched by police after a positive dog indication, and approximately 10% of those involved in invasive strip searches (Parliament of NSW, 2018a, 2018b), understanding the complex impacts these searches might be having seems particularly important. And given only 35% of these searches resulted in police locating any illicit drugs, the vast majority (80%) of which were small quantities of cannabis or other drugs personal use (Parliament of NSW, 2018a, 2018b), documenting the broader impacts of the dogs is crucial if any potential benefits to their deployment are to be meaningfully balanced against risk.

In this paper, therefore, I draw on qualitative interviews with 22

people who have been searched by drug dogs at or near music events, venues, public transport or leisure spaces in Australia, to examine the broad social, emotional and health impacts of their use in these contexts. Drawing on a range of concepts drawn from the work of Deleuze and Guattari (1987), this paper builds on a growing body of critical drug studies literature highlighting the potentials of post-structural and posthuman approaches for engaging with the complex materiality, spatiality, temporality, agency and affectivity of drug related practices. It shows that responses to drug dog interventions, like drug-using 'rationalities' more broadly, are deeply embodied and mediated by social, spatial and temporal contexts. Rather than being deterred from using drugs, those who use or intend to use drugs are adapting their drug-related practices in ways that are more likely to increase, rather than decrease, the potential for harm. Moreover, drug dog operations are having complex negative impacts on social relations and emotional wellbeing. Taking into account these affects, which include short and long term experiences of fear, distress, shame and stigma, as well as more negative relations with police, this paper raises serious questions about the legitimacy and ethics of deploying drug dogs in these broad leisure and transport contexts.

## Methodology

### *Theoretical framing*

This research builds on a growing body of Critical Drug Studies literature that takes seriously the complex relationships between drug using practices and social, spatial and temporal contexts when mapping the production of harm. Despite Zinberg showing, as early as 1986, how dependent the experiences and effects of drugs are on both individual traits (set) and socio-spatial meanings and contexts (setting) (Zinberg, 1986), these forces still tend not to be taken adequately into account in drug policy and practice. This is particularly frustrating given that over the last 15 years or so, Critical Drug Studies researchers (see for example: Barad, 2003; Böhling, 2014; Demant, 2013; Dennis, 2016; Dilkes-Frayne, 2014; Duff, 2012; Farrugia, 2015; Fitzgerald, 1998; Fraser, 2006; Malins, 2004; Weinberg, 2013) have been drawing on a range of poststructural and post-humanist concepts to develop more and more nuanced understandings of the ways in which embodiment and context interact to shape drug using practices and harms.

Concepts drawn from Science, Technology and Society (STS) Studies, including Actor Network Theory (ANT) (see for example: Latour, 2005; Law, 2004; Mol, 2010), and from the work of continental philosophers such as Deleuze and Guattari (1983; 1987), have helped researchers draw attention to the problematic assumptions underpinning dominant drug policies, particularly those based on criminal justice models of deterrence. Such policies tend to assume, for example, that the potential drug user is a stable, autonomous agent, capable of rationally weighing up of the costs and benefits of drug use and acting independently from embodied emotional, social, spatial and temporal forces and contexts. While many qualitative studies have illustrated the significant ways that these forces and contexts independently shape drug using practices, ANT and Deleuzo-Guattarian assemblage-thinking have both been useful in enabling articulation of the more complex ways they interact in the production of agency and thus in the production of drug-related effects, including harms (see for example: Dilkes-Frayne, 2014, 2016; Fraser, 2006; Malins, Fitzgerald, & Threadgold, 2006).

In these formulations, agency is not the exclusive domain of rational human actors, nor of conscious beings: all things, material and immaterial, physical and discursive, exert some kind of force and thus act upon the world. Agency is no longer confined to the human, nor can it ever be isolated to one person or thing: it makes sense only as a relation of forces that must be traced in each instance or context. Drug-related harms therefore are not exclusively 'caused' - in a linear fashion - by the inherent properties of a particular substance, nor by the essential

characteristics of an individual ‘criminal’ or ‘addict’. They also, in this sense, cannot be assigned exclusively to the actions of policy or police. There is no single ‘actor’ or thing that causes events: “all action, all phenomena, are an effect of networks (or assemblages) rather than individual actors” (Duff, 2013: 168).

While ANT and assemblage-thinking have many similarities, in this paper I will be focusing on the latter, because of the unique ontology of desire and becoming that underpins it. Desire is a central aspect of Deleuze and Guattari’s concept of the assemblage, where desire is not a yearning for something one lacks, but an impersonal energy force that circulates between bodies, motivating, enabling and activating connections and transformations. Flows of desire between assembled bodies produce affects: non-conscious or pre-conscious shifts in bodily sensation and orientation, which transform bodily capacities for movement and connection. These transformations or becomings are what prevent bodies from becoming fixed or stuck, and are crucial to life itself. For Deleuze and Guattari (1987), following Spinoza, the key ethical question to ask of any assemblage is: What kinds of bodily transformations and becomings take place? Or, more specifically, Do bodies emerge with enhanced or reduced capacities for action, connection and transformation? This research, therefore, is interested in examining the kinds of bodies that emerge from assemblages involving drug dogs and the capacities that are being blocked or enabled. It therefore takes seriously the ways that embodiment, sensation, emotion, affect, pleasure and desire shape practices of agency.

Given how intimately drug use is entwined with embodied practices of desire, pleasure, sensory shifts, altered moods and transformations in perceiving and relating (see for example Böhling, 2017; Duff, 2012; Farrugia, 2015; Malins, 2017), it is surprising that so many interventions designed to reduce drug-related harm are still reliant on deterrence models that assume that by increasing certain risks (criminal punishment and stigma for example) people will rationally weigh those costs against any benefits of use. It is also surprising how many evaluations of interventions still only ask questions about how drug-use attitudes and behaviours have changed, rather than exploring the other emotional and embodied impacts those interventions might be having. This research therefore not only asks questions about attitudes and behaviours, but also about the emotional, corporeal and social affects of drug dog operations, and investigates the impacts they might be having on immediate and future bodily capacities for relating and connecting with the world.

#### Data collection and analysis

In this study I used qualitative, semi-structured, open-ended interviews to explore the complexities of people’s experiences of drug dog operations and the deeper emotional, embodied, social, spatial and behavioural impacts these operations might be having. Participants were recruited via a small advertisement featuring a picture of a Labrador dog, calling for people who have seen or been searched by drug dogs in public contexts to participate in a short confidential interview about their experiences and perceptions, with the offer of a movie or food/drink voucher worth \$20 for their time. The advertisement was circulated in hard-copy via a peer harm reduction service at several music festivals and events, and circulated digitally on Facebook pages hosted by several harm reduction and drug policy advocacy organisations. Snowball sampling was also deployed, with participants encouraged to pass on the invitation to others who might be interested in participating. The research was also underpinned by 2 years of fieldwork observations in Victoria and NSW at music festivals, dance parties, train stations and other locations where drug dogs were deployed, as well as interviews with a range of harm reduction and drug policy stakeholders.

22 audio-recorded semi-structured interviews were conducted between February 2016 and August 2018 with people who had been searched by the dogs. 20 were conducted face-to-face and two via

telephone and the average interview length was 41 min. All except two interviews were conducted by the author, with the remaining two conducted by a trained research assistant. Participants were predominantly based in Victoria (17), but some were also located in NSW (4), other QLD (1). Participants were asked to self-identify their gender, ethnic background, age-range and marginalisation status. Eight identified as female and 14 as male. 19 identified as either Caucasian or Anglo-Australian, one as Greek/Cypriot, one as Maltese-Caucasian and one as Anglo-Kiwi. Four were between 18–24 years old, 11 were 25–29; four were 30–39; two were 40–49 and one was 60 + . When asked if they identified as being part of any marginalised groups, nine said no, six mentioned illicit drug use, five identified as queer /LGBTIQ, three mentioned low socio-economic status, one identified as part of an ethnic minority, 1 mentioned being a free-thinker, and one mentioned having an abuse background. Participants were then asked a range of open-ended questions, including being asked to describe their encounters with drug dogs, any emotional and bodily responses to those encounters (before, during, immediately after, and since), and reflect on how the presence or potential presence of dogs has changed their attitudes or behaviours in relation to drugs, event attendance, movements through public space, sense of self, social relations, and relations with event organisers, security guards and police.

Interviews were audio-recorded and transcribed, and coded across a range of themes using NVIVO coding software. Primary codes were developed based on themes emerging from existing literature (i.e. - potential behavioural changes in response to dog presence) as well as the question themes mentioned above, and a range of additional and secondary codes were developed based on themes emerging from the data. In what follows I will discuss the key findings of this analysis, which are broken down into two interconnected sections: 1) Drug adaptations (changes in drug related behaviour and attitudes); 2) Embodied affects (corporeal, emotional and socio-relational impacts). Quotes are assigned interview numbers (#x) but not demographic information, because although some interesting themes relevant to age, gender, sexuality or ethnic/cultural differences are evident in the data, these are not the focus of analysis. In the quotes, [...] denotes removal of a section of text in the interests of being more concise, and [] have also been placed around text that has been added to clarify the meaning of the narrative or to give context to something happening in the interview. In all cases, great care was always taken to ensure the meaning and intention of the participant’s narrative was retained.

The findings below demonstrate that rather than deterring people from using drugs, deploying drug dogs tends to encourage a range of adaptive drug use behaviours that are, in most cases, increasing the potential for harm. In addition, drug dog operations can be seen to be having significant impacts on emotional and social wellbeing, including reduced relations with police and experiences of embodied trauma that can persist well beyond the event itself.

#### Drug adaptations

If the main contemporary aim of general drug dog operations in Australia is to reduce harm by deterring people from using illicit drugs (Grigg et al., 2018), it is becoming increasingly clear they are not succeeding. Backing up earlier research showing limited-to-no deterrent effects (Grigg et al., 2018; Hughes et al., 2017; Nabben, 2010; NSW Ombudsman, 2006), none of the participants in this study reported refraining from illicit drugs because of the presence, or potential presence, of drug dogs. Instead, participants reported adapting drug use practices in a range of ways that reduce their risk of being caught by the dogs but increase the risks of a range of health harms.

Deterrence relies on the idea that by increasing the costs associated with illicit drug use, in this case the risks of criminal sanctions and stigma, autonomous actors will then rationally weigh these higher costs against the lower potential benefits and therefore refrain. This model continually underestimates the benefits afforded by drugs (i.e. pleasure,

pain relief, perceptual and proprioceptive changes, social connections, energy), and fails to account for the embodied, emotional, and social factors shaping agency (Malins, 2017).

For the participants in this study who used or intended to use drugs, taking steps to avoid dog detection was positioned as neither risk-free nor easy, but nonetheless preferred over forsaking the benefits afforded by drugs:

“The amount that I use, or what I do use, that’s not going to change [...] I’d be scared, and I’d be nervous and everything, but I’m not going to not do it because that might happen.” (21)

“They never affected if I was going to go, or if I was going to use drugs [...] it was more just an annoyance that had to be worked around.” (8)

“Every time [...] I go to a festival or like any sort of big party thing, it’s always like, ‘Do you think there will be dogs?’ [...] like, ‘What should we do?’ [...] ‘How are we going about this?’ [...] it’s like a little bit of a planning mission to like, you know, fool the cops [...] It’s just an actual logistical nightmare, which I just hate dealing with, but it’s like every time you go to a festival you have to think about how you’re getting your stuff up, and how it can be done like the safest possible way [...] it’s not a deterrent, like nobody’s going to stop taking drugs.” (17)

Participants discussed a range of different methods for avoiding detection without having to reduce or stop their drug use. The main techniques discussed – stashing drugs internally, preloading, buying drugs inside events, and panicked ingestion – all resonate with previous research findings and similarly suggest that most adaptations involve increased risks of harm.

Yet the ways that participants talk about the different strategies they deploy, demonstrate that their actions, despite potentially increasing a range of risks, are far from irrational. Each strategy can be seen to involving a rationality that is deeply embodied and which emerges in and through the social, spatial and temporal contexts – or assemblages – people find themselves in.

Transporting illicit drugs in internal bodily cavities, sometimes referred to as body packing or stuffing, was one key strategy discussed by participants. It involves placing drugs in some kind of protective wrap before putting them in the mouth, where they can be quickly swallowed if necessary, or in vaginal or anal cavities, where police are not permitted to search without a court order. As the following excerpts show, these techniques are intimately responsive to the unique socio-spatial-temporal conditions surrounding drug dog operations. They are also deeply embodied, creating new uses for body parts and transforming bodily boundaries, identities and capacities:

“My way of getting through the dogs is just like [...] put an MDMA cap in a bit of glad wrap, just shove it in your mouth so if they do talk to you, you can still like talk to them [...] and at the point where they start searching you saying ‘ok, open your mouth’, [...] just swallow it, and if I really want it back up I can vomit it back up, or I hope I’ll be out of custody by the time it’s hit, and I’ll just have to have a trip on the first bit of a festival.” (20)

“People go to extreme lengths to hide their drugs really carefully and I know so many people that just have no issue whatsoever getting their drugs past sniffer dogs [...] they just tuck stuff away in really clever spots [...] I have been approaching a police stop in a vehicle, not driving, and I have carefully tucked away things [...] I did that I think quite impressively, quite quickly [laughs] [...] but yeah, if it’s not clear in the interview, I hid it in my vagina [laughs]” (1)

“I took somewhat embarrassing precautions to cover myself [...] I guess to elaborate I concealed them internally [anally], which, yeah, the whole time I was thinking ‘This is so fucking ridiculous; I feel like I’m crossing a border here!’” (8)

Decisions to transport drugs in these ways, and their impacts, are

not made in isolation, but are actions that emerge in relation to a range of forces, including policing activities and the visibility of those activities, law and knowledge of legal rights, peer practices and discourses, and forms of gendered embodiment and identity. They also emerge in response to the specific spatial and temporal pressures and affordances that different drug dog operations – at festival gates, roadside stops or train stations for example – produce. Internally transporting drugs transforms the body into a vessel, increasing its capacities for movement and action in relation to drug dog operations. It also, however, has the potential to decrease bodily capacity through infection or overdose (Byard & Kenneally, 2017; Kashani & Ruha, 2004; Wankhade & Chikhalkar, 2018); or – judging by the way participants seem to position anal and vaginal storage as extreme or embarrassing – through shame or stigma. It is hard to tell, for example, if the feeling of ‘crossing a border’ mentioned above was in reference to the crossing of a border security check-point, the transgression of a personal bodily boundary, or both.

Rather than risk carrying drugs past detection dogs, many participants talked about their decisions to pre-load drugs (consume substances prior to travelling to at an event) or to wait and purchase drugs inside an event. As with the pre-loading of alcohol before a night out (Foster & Ferguson, 2014), pre-loading illicit substances is likely to be associated with increased health and safety risks, especially where a greater quantity of drugs are consumed in a shorter period of time, in an attempt to maximise the duration of their effects.

One participant, for example, discussed an experience of pre-loading that did not prevent the dogs identifying him or police searching him, but did allow him to use drugs without being caught:

“They strip-searched me, and went through all my stuff, but I’d consumed everything, because we assumed something might, like this, go down, so it makes you just, instead of consuming the drugs as you would like to consume them [...] we just fully preloaded before we went, me and my mate, and just went absolutely smashed” (6)

Taking drugs earlier or faster than intended transforms the body in ways that can dramatically impact upon its spatio-temporal relations and capacities for action. Travelling heavily drug-affected or ‘smashed’ to venues or being intoxicated on arrival may, for example, increase the risk of injury on roads or public transport, or the risk of dehydration if drug-affected while waiting in queues, particularly in hot weather.

Compared to pre-loading, the strategy of waiting and purchasing drugs inside an event is one that reduces the chance of the drug dogs picking up on residual drug odours, and increases people’s capacity to control the timing of drug consumption to suit the specific socio-spatial and temporal context of an event:

“I don’t carry a lot of weed around so that if there are dogs I’m less likely to be detected [...] What I tend to do is take as little as possible or nothing, and buy everything there.” (5)

“I wouldn’t take the risk [carrying], I’d just try to buy in there I guess, and hopefully someone else takes the risk” (19)

“I bought an ecstasy pill from him [someone selling in the festival] [...] I would have just probably had pot otherwise, but ecstasy was on offer, and given the circumstances I had that.” (7)

“I remember someone [inside the festival] offering them [MDMA caps] to me... But generally the drugs you buy in a venue off someone you don’t know are very ordinary quality, if you’re lucky.” (8)

As the quotes show, buying inside is a strategy that increases some bodily capacities while decreasing others, such as the capacity to use a preferred substance, or to anticipate its strength or quality and the embodied effects it will have:

“you don’t want to get in there and spend a lot of money and it’s crap, or it’s dangerous [...] I think it’s very important to know [your

drugs], especially with a lot of crap going around here at the moment” (19)

Purchasing from an unknown supplier, with whom there is unlikely to be any possibility of future contact, means that little-to-no quality feedback loop exists, thereby increasing the chances of the drugs being poor quality, or containing dangerous adulterants or fillers (Measham, 2018). Consumers are also unlikely to have tested event-bought substances before trying them for the first time in a potentially hot, noisy or crowded context, further raising the risks of poisoning, overdose, illness and fatality.

Probably the most dangerous assemblages that participants described, however, are those which can emerge when people carrying illicit substances find themselves suddenly or unexpectedly facing drug dog operations. In such circumstances, people carrying illicit drugs have to make a rushed decision in a public place, involving a range of different emotive, embodied, temporal and socio-spatial pressures:

“So we get there [...] and we see, you know, a line of police with dogs [...] and we weren't willing to, you know, sacrifice our time, our festival time [...] so we decided to, like, take the MDMA cap [...] the quickest way to deal with that, we thought, and to make our day still fun, was to swallow the thing. So that was a really rushed decision, and was, I guess, based on fear, fear of being caught.” (10)  
 “So the first experience I had [with drug dogs] was when I was probably about 20, and we were going to a warehouse party, and so my friends had all done the same thing as me, bought a bunch of pills. And when we lined up to get into the event we realised there were dogs and police walking around, and everyone pretty much did the same thing, ate everything at once [...] We realised if we got caught we'd be in trouble, and I'd had one pill before, and I reckoned I could handle two pills at once. I wouldn't have done that off my own accord, but it seemed like a good idea at the time [laughing], so we had them [...] I had talked to a lot of people when we got in there and they pretty much all said they did the same thing as us once they realised the police were there: took everything at once.” (5)

“I didn't have a lot of drugs on me but I ended up doing all of them at the start, and all my friends did as well, which I think is sort of the typical reaction. No one really throws them away; people either risk it [going past the dogs] or go hard [taking all their drugs].” (8)

“I have had friends that have taken majority of their stuff that they planned on bringing because they saw the dogs [...] and I was just stressing and stressing and stressing, thinking, ‘if this kicks in and if this is really bad for them what am I going to do?’ [...] it's scary, if you're one of the people that's looking out for them.” (3)

Consuming drugs quickly in response to seeing the dogs is a strategy that has been reported many times before and has been associated with at least two overdose fatalities in Australia (ABC News, 2013a; Coroners Court WA, 2013, 2013b). It is clear from the narratives above, however, that despite the increased risks of overdose and illness, these decisions are not themselves irrational, but rather involve a deeply embodied form of rationality where those intending to use drugs weigh up a range of competing risks (time, loss of fun, waste of money, getting searched, being charged, illness, overdose), whilst also negotiating embodied fear responses (such as adrenaline) within a highly pressured socio-spatio-temporal context. And where people are waiting in lengthy queues after hurriedly consuming drugs, physical effects like nausea and vomiting are more likely to emerge:

“It was only the second time I had had ecstasy and it made me extremely nauseous. I was very worried. There were other people [in the queue] that were vomiting. You could see everybody had had the same reaction [to the dogs] as us, especially the younger ones. What can you do? Just swallow it” (5)

Nausea or vomiting are not ideal experiences at the best of times,

let alone while waiting in a queue to enter a party or festival, and where there is likely no water or privacy available. These impacts are not simply a result of the drugs themselves, but the unique affordances made possible by the socio-spatio-temporal pressures of drug dog assemblages. Such assemblages also reverberate upon bodily capacities well beyond the specific space and time of the dog operation, reducing, for example, the capacity to stay awake and enjoy the day as planned without additional unintended substance taking:

“I saw that there was heaps of them [dogs and police] at the gates of the festival [...] then I was, like, kind of, freaking out [...] and I just took the MDMA at once [...] it was a third of a gram of MDMA [approximately 3 caps], which I intended on spacing out over the day, so it was highly inconvenient because I ended up getting completely wasted in the first, like, hour and a half [...] and running around the festival being, like, high as a kite at, like, 11:00 in the morning. Which then was inconvenient at about 3 pm when I was extremely tired [...] but like, wanted to see all the bands that were playing at the end of the day, and I took a tab of acid from a friend of mine, if only to keep me awake and keep going for the rest of the festival.” (12)

As this and the earlier narratives show, people taking drugs into events tend to care for one another and make conscious and complex decisions about their drug use in an attempt to maximise the benefits while reducing harms. These rationalities, though, are contextual and embodied: emerging in and through connections with other bodies and the assemblages and affects they create. Drug dog assemblages put specific kinds of pressures on this embodied rationality, increasing fear responses, and shifting the types of risks that need to be negotiated and prioritised. While some people respond to these pressures by quickly dumping their drugs rather than consuming them, it is clear this strategy carries with it not only the downside of likely wasting the drugs, but also a high risk of being spotted by police, who can then confiscate the drugs to use as evidence:

“And I saw this dog, like, ten metres away, and it was, kind of, just walking towards me [...] so dropped the container of joints on the ground, which was annoying, because it was, like, quite a lot of weed.” (12)

“When I got to the entrance I was like, ‘Actually there's a lot more [dogs] here than I thought’, so I'd like seen them and then turned around to go back and was just going to dump my stuff in the car [...] But they had like police out at the entrance as well, and as soon as they saw me turn around, they turned up and [...] said, ‘We've got reason to believe you've got illicit drugs on you.’” (4)

To avoid both wasting the drugs and leaving evidence, the strategy of consuming all of one's drugs when faced with a drug dog operation then becomes quite an understandable and rational one.

It is clear then that the majority of adaptations that emerge in response to the presence – or potential presence – of drug dog operations, carry with them significant increased risks of health-related harm for those who consume drugs, as well as having broader impacts on the emotional and experiential wellbeing of drug users and those around them. These impacts are mediated in and through specific socio-spatio-temporal contexts or assemblages. In the following section, I will explore the other kinds of emotional and embodied impacts that drug dog assemblages seem to be having, particularly for those who end up being taken aside and searched by police following a dog indication.

### Embodied trauma

When a person moves through a drug dog operation, they enter into relation with an assemblage of affective forces that transform their bodily capacities. These assemblages carry with them a range of intense potentialities – for dog identification, police questioning and searching, criminal charges, public humiliation, a loss of time or drugs,

getting separated from friends, or missing out on an event - which can elicit a range of visceral emotions and bodily affects, including fear, even when a person is not carrying drugs:

“Even though I’m not doing anything wrong, it automatically brings about a sense of anxiety within myself thinking, ‘Oh, are they going to stop near me?’, kind of thing [...] just increases anxiety within myself.” (9)

“We met some people inside who had nothing on them, and they were really nervous, so I guess it’s just the authority, and like you know when you go through airport security, and you’ve got nothing on you, and you still kind of -, I guess it’s kind of like that.” (19)

Following a positive dog identification, the suspect is generally taken aside by police, asked to remove their shoes and any headwear or accessories, show the contents of their pockets, and allow police to feel the outside of their clothing for drugs. Where a dog has identified a vehicle at a road-stop, this process generally also includes a vehicle search where its contents – often festival camping gear and luggage – are removed, unpacked and searched. Talking about their experiences of being identified by a dog and taken aside by police, participants described a range of visceral bodily stress responses:

“I was like shocked [...] like typical stress symptoms. You start getting clammy hands and stuff like that. My heart was racing.” (3)  
 “I just felt really like scared straight away, like I started, like my hands were shaking a little bit, and I had a sort of sinking feeling in my stomach of dread, and yeah anxious and nervous.” (15)  
 “My adrenaline was through the roof [...] your heart misses a beat [...] the adrenaline starts pumping, it’s fight or flight, it really is.” (6)

Nervousness or anxiety, manifested visibly on the body, can increase the likelihood police will search someone, and, at the same time, can reduce that person’s capacity to engage calmly with them:

“You’re that flustered [...] you don’t have time to think about what to say to them, or what your rights are [...] because like you’re just all worked up.” (4)  
 “Your heart it’s like just pumping and you can’t [...] thinking about how you’re going to act and how you’re going to talk, and you’re just like really jittery.” (20)  
 “I was super tense, right, but also, kind of, amped up [...] mind racing [...] I felt, like, super tight and anxious [...] my hands were shaking and stuff [...] even though I knew that I didn’t have anything [...] I was still, like, super, kind of, like, flustered and my hands were shaking and my heart was racing and I was sweating and everything, which they [the police] obviously identified, and they were, like, ‘You seem really nervous. Why are you nervous?’” (12)

These search assemblages, and the bodily responses they illicit, were experienced by some participants as noticeably reducing their capacity for rationality and action: producing a sense of the self as unusually vulnerable, raw and passive:

“You think you’re going to handle all these situations really coolly, but when you’re under these stressful situations [...] everything flies out the window [...] you’re really at your rawest stage [...] you’re at your most vulnerable.” (6)  
 “There are so many things I would like to have said or kind of stood up for myself in a way, but I just wasn’t in the headspace to do that [...] after it finished I was just like ‘uh, I wish I had said this, or I wish I’d asked for this’, but I just kind of let them do what they wanted, and didn’t ask for my rights, like even filming [...] like I thought I’d have the courage to do something like that but I just didn’t, because I felt uncomfortable, and three officers, that’s a lot of them there to intimidate me” (21)

The embodied affects associated with this sense of disempowerment are likely to be exacerbated by the public nature of the search

processes. Knowing that others might be watching can lead to embarrassment and humiliation, and for those who feel themselves to be visibly read as part of an already stigmatised minority group, the sense of being publicly watched or judged can have particularly strong implications:

“It was embarrassing, it was really embarrassing, it’s something that no one wants to do. You don’t want to be watched by a stranger doing that kind of stuff or someone telling you to do that kind of stuff, like it’s really awkward and uncomfortable.” (3)  
 “So, with my background [...] my particular ethnic minority [...] how a male can be viewed in that context where a cop is asking you questions, and I believe making particular kinds of assumptions [...] that really gets to me.” (10)

It is not surprising then, that the experience of being stopped, questioned and searched also generated substantial annoyance and anger, directed mainly toward the police:

“I was just annoyed, because I knew there was nothing in the car [...] [and] I was pretty annoyed that they just leave all your stuff on the side and go ‘You alright to pack it up, yeah’, and just walk off, and you’re like, [that’s] pretty shit.” (14)  
 “I was pissed off for a day to be honest [...] ruined my festival, like broke it up [...] annoyed that they wasted my time, and I felt like I’d been punished, because it’s like a punishment going through the process.” (1)

The anger depicted here is not only connected to the time and energy taken up by the search, but also to the disrespectful way people feel they have been treated by police, and the imbalance in power relations that the assemblage has produced.

A feeling of disempowerment was a theme which emerged particularly strongly when participants talked about their experiences of being strip-searched as part of drug dog operations. Such searches – which involve some suspects being to a more secluded spot nearby and told to remove items of clothing, including underwear – were described by participants as terrifying, embarrassing, invasive and dehumanising:

“I start taking off all my clothes, and they’re trying to talk to me and I’m just like, ‘I just want this to be over’, and then we get through and I drop my underpants and everything is done, and then they’re like, ‘Cool, so, you know, you’re free to go’ [...] and I said, [sarcastically] ‘Well, God, this isn’t the most, like, embarrassing and invasive process in my life!’” (2)  
 “A housemate of mine was searched a couple of weeks ago [...] she didn’t have anything [drugs] on her [...] but, yeah, she got like full pat-down search and had to take off her bra [...] she described it as really, really terrifying, and she was shaking and sweating and stuff.” (13)  
 “They provided a reasonable amount of privacy but it wasn’t in a whole separate room or anything [...] just took off clothes one by one and he sort of felt each bit of clothing and gave me some bits back so I wasn’t just standing there starkers [fully naked], but it was still quite embarrassing [...] being ordered to strip, it felt a bit dehumanising [...] it sort of, it had in my head like a scene from that SBS show, Oz, about the prison [...] yeah, it put images in my mind of being a prisoner.” (8)

The strip-search is an assemblage that affects and transforms the body in very visceral ways: catalysing a range of affective becomings – becoming-suspect, becoming-criminal, becoming-animal, and becoming-prisoner – that socially and materially reduce capacities for action.

For one participant, who was not carrying drugs, the experience of being strip-searched by police was particularly traumatic and debilitating, as it triggered significant distress associated with her previous experiences of sexual, physical and emotional abuse:

“A female police officer came over and put her hands on me, and I found that very distressing, because coming from domestic violence, someone putting their hands on my body without permission is very distressing [...] then she said ‘I have the right to strip search you’ [...] and I was in the corner [...] my back against the wall, and I was just shaking [starts crying], because I thought strip search meant cavity searched [clearly very upset], and I [was] saying ‘You don’t have the right to touch my body! I don’t give you permission to touch my body!’ [...] [clearly still upset] like, I don’t do bad things, I look after people, and then suddenly I’m being threatened with a legalised rape, and I thought she was going to pin me down and put her hands inside my body [crying again].” (22)

The trauma produced and reproduced through the experience of being strip searched as part of a drug dog assemblage, can dramatically affect not only someone’s enjoyment of a festival or event, but also their bodily capacities going forward:

“I stayed in the festival until about like ten o’clock at night, and tried to enjoy myself, but I just found myself sitting there feeling really hollow and staring into space [crying], and then the next day I started having panic attacks [upset – long pause] [...] I had a really severe response to it, like I haven’t really engaged with my PhD since [...] I just found myself stuck [...] and I just kept thinking about it and reliving it over and over, and trying to function and trying to do my thesis and just making a fucking mess of everything [...] I found myself unable to write the letter to my graduate research school to say ‘I’m not coping, and I need some time off’ [...] the consequences are just far reaching, and I just slumped into a depression and I’ve just been trying really hard to get my well-being together, and [...] I hadn’t binge eaten in a really long time, like I was doing really, really well, but then after the police thing, it started again [...] I can just see how an experience like this, having your self-determination removed, whether you have drugs on you or not, I could just see how it could tip people over the edge in the following months either into severe depression or even suicide.” (22)

Given that over one thousand people were strip searched by police after dog indications in 2017 in NSW alone (Parliament of NSW, 2018a, 2018b), the extent of emotional, psychological and embodied trauma that can be generated from these searches is concerning.

Negative encounters with police as part of drug dog operations also have significant implications for future police-community relations, increasing fear of police, and making it less likely people will be willing to assist or seek assistance from them:

“Not long after that [the strip search], I was walking in the mall, I saw like police officers with a black uniform, and it was before I’d consciously assessed it was police officers, I had like jumped at their presence, and I’d never been afraid of police in my whole life.” (22) “It’s definitely changed [my view of police] [...] they don’t make me feel safe, they don’t make me feel like I can go up to them if I’ve got a problem or to ask a question or something, it’s more a, ‘I’m there to intimidate you [...] I want you to fear me’, sort of thing [...] I just feel like that relationship is just completely gone, do you know what I mean? Like it’s just, now that I’ve had that interaction, I just feel like I wouldn’t be able to go up to them at all, no matter what the circumstances, and I think that’s probably how it’s affected me the most.” (21)

“It’s definitely scarred my perceptions of police [...] it just seems like more of a revenue gathering thing than a keeping people safe thing [...] it doesn’t seem to be about the safety of people involved, it just seems to be you know, a control thing.” (18)

“They have absolutely no idea what goes on at the festivals... completely out of touch with reality, and wasting a lot of time, money, and just being aggro [aggressive] about something that is

actually incredibly beautiful.” (1)

“they think that they’re stopping people from taking drugs [...] that’s where it just seems so stupid [...] [and] people will say the officers are just doing their job, like the police are there to enforce the law [...] Hitler’s Gestapo was probably doing the same thing [just doing their job] [...] it just seems really dishonest, and makes me frustrated at the broader population that is supporting this tyranny, like it makes you disenfranchised with the police and disenfranchised with the people backing the police.” (20)

Given the vast numbers of people, particularly young people, who are encountering police drug dog operations each year, the potential long-term negative impacts for police-community relations are significant. There is, however, at least one potential positive to emerge from this breakdown in police-community trust: encounters with drug dogs have been motivating some people to find out more about their legal rights:

“I still can make a good situation out of a bad one [...] and actually after the festival I did a lot of reading as well about sniffer dogs and got really, really educated about it [...] at the time like I had no idea and then after doing all that reading I went wow I actually had a right, I had rights there and yeah I wasn’t sure exactly what I could say or do or anything like that, and yeah I got really educated, did a lot of reading.” (3)

This kind of becoming-empowered is not the sort of outcome that police and governments are likely aiming for when deploying drug dogs. Nor is it an impact that would be uncovered by simply measuring the effects of drug dog operations on drug use levels or behaviours. Asking broader questions about the embodied, emotional and social impacts of the drug dog operations is necessary, therefore, to start to develop a much more detailed picture of the complex ways these operations are working to transform bodily capacities.

## Conclusions

This research has supported previous studies in showing that deploying drug detection dogs at festivals and events, or in everyday leisure and transport contexts, is not working to deter people from taking illicit drugs and is instead encouraging a range of adaptations that increase, rather than decrease, drug-related harms. By taking an assemblage-based approach, this research has also been able to provide deeper insights into how different kinds of drug dog adaptations emerge and the ways they transform risks and harms in different contexts. Participants’ descriptions of how they change their drug carrying, purchasing and use behaviours in relation to the dogs, provide a sense of the complex social, spatial and temporal forces at work in shaping these adaptations. It is clear from these examples that agency and ‘rationality’ are deeply embodied and contextual. People planning to consume illicit drugs do make a range of ‘rational’ decisions in response to the presence, or potential presence, of drug dogs, but these rationalities are always already mediated by desire, sociality, temporality and spatiality, and do not translate readily, if ever, into the decision to refrain from taking drugs.

Many participants in this study gave examples of consuming drugs earlier, faster, or in higher quantities in response to drug dogs: actions which can dramatically alter the way that drugs affect the body, and tend to increase the likelihood of health harms including overdose. Spatio-temporal factors such as the time of day, the weather, temperature, access to water, structural barriers and queuing times, also influence the way those embodied drug transformations manifest in relation to harm, as do a range of interconnecting socio-spatial factors including the behaviours of peers, the public gaze, and the mood created by the activities of police and drug dogs. Decisions to transport drugs internally, or purchase them inside an event, can avoid the risks associated with rushed ingestion and facilitate more nuanced

considerations regarding the best times, places, speeds and socialities with which to experience drug effects. Yet they can also decrease bodily capacities, such as the ability to predict a drug's contents (when purchasing from an unknown supplier), or avoid infection or injury (when stashing internally). Transporting drugs in vaginal and anal cavities also seems to mediate shifts in embodied self-perception: transforming, in potentially both positive and negative ways, a person's sense of what it is their body can do.

Embodied affects such as these have been possible to document because of the kinds of questions this research has asked: questions which have gone beyond a focus on drug-related health harms to explore the impacts drug dogs might be having on social relations, trauma, bodily capacities and emotional wellbeing. Participant narratives show that drug dog operations are, for example, also implicated in the production of stigma, and that being identified by the dogs and stopped by police can have particularly negative implications for those who already feel socially marginalised. The examples provided also show that being stopped, questioned and searched by police as part of drug dog operations tends to produce significant distress, evident in the range of visceral embodied reactions described, including increased heart-rate, sweating, shaking and finding it hard to think clearly and respond to questions. Being strip-searched by police is associated with even greater levels of distress, particularly for people who have lived experiences of trauma or violence. The feelings of distress, disempowerment and de-humanisation participants associated with being searched, impact on their capacities in material ways, limiting what it is that their body can do. Such trauma has both short and longer term implications, transforming, for example, enjoyment of an event, capacities for social connection, experiences with drugs, self-image, and bodily capacities for action in other areas of life. Perhaps most importantly, encounters with drug dog operations seem to be impacting negatively on perceptions of police, particularly, but not only, where that encounter has included being stopped and searched. With large numbers of people being subjected to drug dog operations each year, most of whom are young and might be coming into contact with police for the first time, the implications for police-community relations and cooperation into the future are substantial.

Given that general drug detection dog operations are not working to deter drug use in leisure and public transport settings, and are instead producing a range of harms including increased risks of overdose, stigma, embodied trauma, and reduced relations with police, they should be immediately discontinued. To genuinely reduce harm in these contexts, interventions will need to take seriously the benefits afforded to people by illicit drugs, and recognise the embodied, contextual nature of rationality and agency and the complex ways that desire, embodiment, space, time and sociality interact to mediate outcomes. Deterrence-focused policing interventions, such as drug dog operations, which underestimate the pull of illicit drugs and rely on problematic assumptions regarding disembodied rationality and autonomous agency, are bound to fail. Police resources in festival and leisure contexts should be directed away from a focus on drug detection and deterrence, and toward enhancing or supporting patron safety: a shift which would likely not only reduce harm but also improve police-community relations. The important goal of preventing overdose fatalities in such settings will also be far better served by putting resources into evidence-based, non-judgmental and non-threatening harm reduction interventions – such as in-situ peer education (Gonçalves, Kolstee, Ryan, & Race, 2016; McDonald, Roche, Durbridge, & Skinner, 2003; Rule & Ellard, 2018) and pill-testing (Byrne, Gock, Cowling, & Faunce, 2018; Measham, 2018) – which work to enhance, rather than diminish, the capacities of those who use drugs to do so more safely.

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