

MEDIA RELEASE

Leading health and community groups and advocates unite to call for the trial of a medically supervised injecting centre in Victoria

EMBARGOED UNTIL 11AM, THURSDAY 7 SEPTEMBER

7 SEPTEMBER 2017 - Today, 43 leading health, community, specialist and AOD organisations, and prominent individuals who are signatories to a statement supporting the trial of a Medically Supervised Injecting Centre (MSIC) in Victoria, call on the Government to act on this initiative.

The release today of the Parliamentary Report into this issue provides an opportunity for government to accept the overwhelming evidence and support backed by a wide range of experts and prominent organisations, including three Victorian Coroners, as well as the local community and traders of Yarra, to implement an MSIC within the City of Yarra.

Mr Greg Denham, Executive Officer of the Yarra Drug and Health Forum, which for 20 years has been active in the Yarra Community says, “the evidence is clear that MSICs reduce fatal overdose, improve access to health services including alcohol and other drug (AOD) treatment, improve amenity through a reduction in street-based injecting and reduce costs to government.”

Mr Denham continues, “time and again research conducted among the roughly 100 MSICs globally has indicated that they do not increase street crime and do not engender increased substance use.”

“The time has come to accept the reality that in those parts of Yarra where street-based injecting and related harms are rife and plainly visible, these harms will persist and more families will lose loved ones, and the local community will continue to endure the daily trauma of witnessing and responding to preventable fatal overdose.”

It is time for the government to hear the call from the impacted communities and act on the evidence cited by the many experts which calls for this measure. Ongoing delay will result in preventable deaths.

Additional quotes:

Judy Ryan of Residents for Victoria Street Drug Solutions said, “The powerful voice of the people who Marched to Save Lives on Sunday 27 August clearly supports three Coroners’ recommendations for a MSIC in North Richmond. For our parliament not to support a trial MSIC would be unforgivable. It would be sanctioning the ongoing trauma of people’s kids seeing other people’s kids overdosed in our streets. We can do better than that in Victoria.”

Melanie Eagle, CEO of Hepatitis Victoria said, “Trialling an injecting facility would help some of Melbourne’s most vulnerable. It would introduce them to health and social services, including drug treatment, and health screening for a range of health issues including hepatitis C. It would help some get their lives back on track.”

Charles Henderson, Acting Executive Officer of Harm Reduction Victoria (HRVic) said, “As the peer-based Drug User Organisation for Victoria, HRVic’s primary role is to advance the health and human rights of people who use and inject drugs (PWUD/PWID) and to give drug users a voice in the debate about drug related issues which will directly impact on their lives. PWID in and around Richmond say the MSIC will provide greater connection to wider health services, support for other issues in their lives and an environment that is clean, safe and non-judgmental as key reasons for their support.”

Simon Ruth, CEO of the Victorian AIDS Council said, “Supervised Injecting Centres save lives, improve amenity and create a safer community. This is no longer debatable. To be playing politics with people’s lives, when those people are dying on our streets, is unconscionable. If the Victorian Government cares about saving lives then it must recognise the overwhelming evidence and expert support for the trial of an MSIC in Richmond.”

ENDS

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