



## ANMF (Vic Branch) Policy

### Medically supervised injecting facilities

#### Preamble

Health practitioner supervised injecting facilities are specifically designed environments where people can use drugs in a place where they have immediate access to medical staff and other health professionals; including doctors and registered nurses for supervision and support (health practitioner supervised injecting facilities are also known as *supervised injecting facilities, drug consumption rooms, injecting rooms, or safe injecting facilities.*)

There is currently only one supervised injecting facility in Australia, which is located in Kings Cross in Sydney, NSW. The establishment of Medically Supervised Injecting Centres, based on successes both in Kings Cross, Sydney, and overseas demonstrated to save lives; significantly reduce ambulance attendances improving response time for all; free up police resources; halve the number of discarded needles in our streets and parks; break the cycle of offending by getting hardened drugs users into drug treatment; save millions of dollars in ambulance call outs and hospital emergency costs.<sup>i</sup>

The evidence from this facility has shown that the supervised injecting facility has led to the following health outcomes for high risk users to:

- Reduce health problems arising from drug use inclusive of managing overdoses;
  - reducing risk of blood-borne viruses
  - better management of health issues associated with non-hygienic drug use such as abscesses and other infections
- Promote education including health promotion strategies such as;
  - encouraging access to psychological supports
  - blood testing and education on hygiene practices and ways to reduce risks
- Improve access to services inclusive of social, health and therapeutic services to a marginalised population.
- Reduce impact and trauma on the greater community who may witness public drug use and overdose, including on occasions tragic consequences.
- Reduce public nuisance associated with an open scene including crime reduction, loitering and discarded drug paraphernalia.
- Reduce health costs associated with drug use including;
  - a reduction of new HIV/Hepatitis infections
  - reduced burden on emergency services
  - reduced morbidity and mortality

An ancillary benefit of health practitioner supervised injecting facilities, is an ability to provide a monitor system of the 'real-time' drug market using data obtained from consumers. The data results provides immediate identification of the trends in drugs types, drug purity, resulting in the ability for society to respond to changing trends more rapidly.

**It is the policy of the Australian Nursing and Midwifery Federation (Victorian) Branch that health practitioner supervised injecting facilities or safe injecting facilities:**

1. Are supported where such facilities lessen the financial burdens of the state (and taxpayer) by decreasing public health costs for medical care and emergency responses, while lowering criminal prosecution and incarceration costs.
2. Are supported where they improve public health and reduce the risk of the spread of blood borne infectious and communicable diseases like HIV, AIDS, hepatitis and sexually transmitted disease.
3. Are staffed with medical practitioners and suitable numbers of registered and/or enrolled nurses who can competently and safely deal with facility users.
4. Are adequately funded by government to ensure the provision of emergency equipment and lifesaving medications, are available for use where accidental overdoses can be reversed by health practitioners.
5. Must supply a safe environment and sterile equipment to people who are planning to inject.
6. Must offer pathways into treatment and other health services for people who inject drugs.
7. Facilitate needle and syringe program as a harm minimisation strategy and education about safe sexual and injection behaviour.
8. Employ registered nurses in roles that enable harm reduction advice to marginalised user groups, facilitate solid educational programs and advice and enable nurse led referral that maximise user health outcomes and promote safety in the community by removing unsafe injecting practises from the street and public interaction.
9. Are provided with a recurrent funding stream to educate users about harm reduction strategies of illicit drug use.

---

<sup>i</sup> Australia Sex Party 2017 –Policy statement accessed 31/7/2017 available at <https://www.sexparty.org.au/health/>