

The Kirby Institute

For infection and immunity in society
Faculty of Medicine, UNSW Sydney
Wallace Wurth Building, Sydney NSW 2052 Australia

T+61 2 9385 0900 F+61 2 9385 0920

www.kirby.unsw.edu.au



UNSW
SYDNEY



23 April 2017

The Secretary
Legal and Social Issues Committee
Parliament House, Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Dear Secretary

Re: Inquiry into the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Pilot Medically Supervised Injecting Centre) Bill 2017

I write on behalf of myself and Dr Ingrid van Beek who has recently joined my group at the Kirby Institute at UNSW Sydney as a Conjoint Professor. As you may be aware, Dr van Beek was the inaugural Medical Director of the Sydney Medically Supervised Injecting Centre (MSIC).

In collaboration with the National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC) at UNSW Sydney, the Kirby Institute (then known as the National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research) undertook the initial process evaluation of the Sydney MSIC, documenting the rapid rate of client registration and its successful operation [1]. Between 2004 and 2008 the Kirby Institute conducted the Phase II evaluation of the MSIC, producing a substantial body of evidence evaluating the facility and its public health outcomes [2-11]. Included in this evidence was the first report anywhere in the world of the impact of a *supervised injection facility* (SIF) on ambulance attendance at opioid-related overdoses. Our finding that ambulance attendances declined significantly in the vicinity of the MSIC compared to the rest of NSW, with this effect greatest during operating hours and in the immediate area, indicating that SIFs are effective in areas of high-risk concentrated drug use [2]. The prompt and effective treatment of opioid overdoses at the MSIC is also likely to have reduced both the morbidity and mortality otherwise associated with these events.

Work conducted by the Kirby Institute has also documented consistently high levels of public and community support for the MSIC. Our initial study found that the level of support for establishment of a MSIC in Kings Cross increased among residents between 2000 and 2002, from 68 to 78% [9]. A follow-up paper published in 2007 found that approximately 90% of both business and community samples reported at least one advantage of the MSIC, including the control of HIV and hepatitis C and reduced overdose risk for people who inject drugs [10]. In 2011 the Centre for Social Research in Health (then the National Centre in HIV Social Research), also at UNSW Sydney, examined the impact of the MSIC on the social aspects of clients' lives particularly as related to stigma and shame. This analysis examined the client comment books and showed that the "accidental intimacy" developed between clients and MSIC staff generated new possibilities of experience that had potential to counter stigma through experiences of a sense of belonging, citizenship and acceptance [12].

A 2014 systematic review of the impact of SIFs globally included many of the studies conducted by NDARC and the Kirby Institute in relation to the Sydney MSIC. The review found that these facilities were efficacious in attracting the most marginalised people who inject drugs, promoting safer injection conditions, enhancing access to primary health care, and reducing the frequency of overdose [13]. Conversely, SIFs were *not* found to increase drug injecting, drug trafficking or crime in the surrounding environments and were associated with reduced levels of public drug injecting and discarded syringes.

Professor van Beek and I are currently travelling but would be happy to provide oral evidence in our respective areas of expertise if required.

Yours faithfully,



Lisa Maher AM FASSA PhD
Professor, Program Head and NHMRC Senior Research Fellow,
Viral Hepatitis Epidemiology and Prevention Program

cc: Scientia Professor David Cooper AO, Director
Conjoint Professor Ingrid van Beek AM

Appendix A: List of relevant publications

- [1] Mattick RP, J.Kimber, J.Kaldor, M. MacDonald, D. Weatherburn & H. Lapsley. *Six-month process evaluation report on the Medically Supervised Injecting Centre*. Technical Report No.124, National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre. University of New South Wales, 2001.
- [2] Salmon A, van Beek I, Amin J, Kaldor J, Maher L. The impact of a supervised injecting facility on ambulance call-outs in Sydney, Australia. *Addiction* 2010;105(4):676-683.
- [3] Salmon A, Dwyer R, Jauncey M, van Beek I, Topp L, Maher L. Injecting-related injury and disease among clients of a supervised injecting facility. *Drug and Alcohol Dependence* 2009;101(1-2):132-136.
- [4] Salmon AM, van Beek I, Amin J, Grulich AE, Maher L. High HIV testing and low HIV prevalence among injecting drug users attending the Sydney Medically Supervised Injecting Centre. *Australian and New Zealand Journal of Public Health* 2009;33(3):280-283.
- [5] Salmon AM, Kaldor J, Maher L. *Sydney Medically Supervised Injecting Centre Client Cohort Study - Summary Report*. Sydney: National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research, University of New South Wales, 2008.
- [6] Maher L, Salmon A. Supervised injecting facilities: How much evidence is enough? *Drug and Alcohol Review* 2007;26(4):351-353.
- [7] National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research. *Sydney Medically Supervised Injecting Centre Evaluation Report 4: Evaluation of service operation and overdose-related events*. Sydney: National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research, University of New South Wales 2007.
- [8] National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research. *Sydney Medically Supervised Injecting Centre Interim Evaluation Report 3: Evaluation of client referral and health issues*. Sydney: National Centre in HIV Epidemiology and Clinical Research, University of New South Wales, 2007.
- [9] Thein H-H, Kimber J, Maher L, MacDonald M, Kaldor JM. Public opinion towards supervised injecting centres and the Sydney Medically Supervised Injecting Centre. *International Journal of Drug Policy* 2005;16:275-280.
- [10] Salmon A, Thein H-H, Kimber J, Kaldor J, Maher L. Five years on: What are the community perceptions of drug-related public amenity following the establishment of the Sydney Medically Supervised Injecting Centre? *International Journal of Drug Policy* 2007;18(1):46-53.
- [11] van Beek, I., Kimber, J., Dakin, A., Gilmour, S. The Sydney Medically Supervised Injecting Centre: reducing the harm associated with heroin overdose. *Critical Public Health* 2004 14(4): 391-406.
- [12] Rance J., Fraser, S. Accidental intimacy: Transformative emotion and the Sydney Medically Supervised Injecting Centre. *Contemporary Drug Problems*. 2011;38:121-45.