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Dear MPs

I write on behalf of the research team whose study into the impact of the Sydney Medically Supervised Injecting Centre (MSIC) on ambulance call outs to overdoses in Kings Cross was brought into question by Drug Free Australia's Gary Christian in an email circulated to all state MPs in NSW and Victoria on 7 June 2017 (also hereunder).

We have attached our original paper published in *Addiction*, the highest ranked international peer-reviewed scientific journal in the drug and alcohol field, for your further information. This paper reports that there was a significantly greater decline in ambulance call outs in the vicinity of the MSIC after it opened (80%), when compared to the rest of NSW (61%).

Our analysis had to take into account the reduction in heroin availability around the same time, which may have operated to varying degrees around the state. We made the assumption that the reduction in supply would have a more similar effect for areas in close proximity to each other, so we compared this 80% decrease in the MSIC's immediate vicinity (postcode 2011) to that in its neighbouring suburbs (postcode 2010), as a "control". We found that the ambulance call outs to overdoses in the 2010 postcode only decreased 45% during the same period.

Figure 2 in the attached paper also shows that ambulance call outs most certainly did NOT increase in the neighbouring suburbs after the MSIC opened, as claimed by Mr Christian. We also found that the decrease in ambulance call outs to Kings Cross was greater during the MSIC's operating hours, indicating that the decline was most likely to be directly related to the operation of the MSIC and not policing strategies in the area, as also suggested by Mr Christian.

We would also like to draw your attention to another important study measuring the impact of a similar facility in Vancouver, Canada on overdose deaths, published in *The Lancet* medical journal (Marshall, D. et al, 2011). This facility, Insite, is probably the most similar internationally to the MSIC, and the study showed that the rate of overdose-related deaths in its immediate vicinity had decreased 35% compared to only 9% in the rest of Vancouver since it had opened, further supporting our findings of a benefit in overdose reduction.

Regular and comprehensive reports on the MSIC's activities show that it has responded to, and successfully treated, approximately 7,500 overdoses without a single fatality in its first 16 years of operation. A series of evaluations, commencing in 2001, and conducted by a variety of academic and commercial agencies, have demonstrated that the MSIC is saving lives in Sydney's Kings Cross, and at the same time as providing highly vulnerable people the opportunity to access effective drug treatment, and much needed support and care. There has never been any suggestion, let alone scientific evidence, that the MSIC's existence or activities have led to an increase in drug use.

We trust that this additional information will reassure you of the validity of the scientific evidence base demonstrating the MSIC's effectiveness, and the professionalism of our health system more generally.

Yours faithfully,



Lisa Maher AM FASSA PhD
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Viral Hepatitis Epidemiology and Prevention Program

on behalf of my co-investigators, Dr Allison Salmon, Professor Ingrid van Beek, Dr Janaki Amin,
Professor John Kaldor.