



REGO NUMBER A0091177Z

ABN 15 751 675 254

STANDING COMMITTEE ON LEGAL AND SOCIAL ISSUES

58th Parliament Inquiry into the Drugs, Poisons and
Controlled Substances Amendment

(Pilot Medically Supervised Injecting Centre)

Bill 2017

SUBMISSION

VICTORIA ST BUSINESS ASSOCIATION INCORPORATED
INC. REGO NUMBER :A0091177Z ABN: 15 751 675 254

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INTRODUCTION

The purpose of this submission is to provide the Victoria Street Business Association's (VSBA) perspectives on the pilot medically supervised injecting centre.

The VSBA puts forward our recommendations on the basis of feedback from business members, their associates and feedback from members of the Vietnamese community, their family, here in Richmond and elsewhere.

We understand there have been international studies and the result of these studies are publicly available. We also understand the Kings Cross pilot has yielded positive results including death prevention. We also understand that in each study, the specifics contribute a great deal to the results including location, other actions by other organisations and departments.

We are also aware that the police presence and arrests of heroin users may not lead to sentences, and that those arrests and police presence may not be the most effective use of their resources.

We believe in the human rights issue and as refugees who were given a chance to resettle in Australia following the end of the Vietnam War, we fully support each individual member in our society is entitled to receive the support and assistance available in our democracy society.

ABOUT VICTORIA ST BUSINESS ASSOCIATION

VSBA is a business organisation registered under the Consumer Affairs Victoria. It started in the 1990s with the primary purpose to advocate and champion the voice and needs of business employers. Over the years, the organisation branched out to community activities, cultural festivals and events, working in partnership with the local council, business organisations and mainstream providers to deliver some of the major events in Melbourne. The organisation hosts the popular Victoria St TET (Lunar) festival in late January every year.

We also collaborate with other community groups such as the Vietnamese Community in Australia/Vic Chapter Inc (VCA Vic) on projects such as the Commemorative Park initiative in Sunshine, designed to pay tribute to our 521 fallen Diggers, allies and Vietnamese veterans during the Vietnam War.

VSBS'S PLEAS FOR ASSISTANCE

Formerly known as Richmond Asian Business Association until 2 years ago, the executive has been tirelessly advocating for assistance on the drug use in Richmond casting back to about 7 years ago. We met with the Member for Richmond, members of the Victoria Police, other service providers and listened to the views and opinions of traders, their staff, their family members and patrons.

For many years, we have advocated for a for specific solutions including CCTV cameras, extra monitoring of police in uniform and non-uniform, extra lighting, street beautification and other avenues that support users, increase safety and reduce interruptions in business activity.

We believe for political reasons or other matters such as legislative demarcation, that such requests have not been approved and trailed.

As business operators, we are concerned for the safety of patrons, our staff and their family members. Many business operators are managed by family or extended family members.

In addition, the nature of the business activity here are also diverse, ranging from consultancy, professional services, retail, to hospitality. The business community has contributed significantly to the economic prosperity and cultural vibrancy of Yarra, and we are uncertain if any study of the adverse impact to this segment of the community has been considered, nor any meaningful consultation undertaken.

We remain keenly interested in what the Maribyrnong Council did when they were faced with a similar situation in the 1990s and early 2000s, and would like further information on why Richmond is considered the most relevant location for this trial, when other local government areas also experience terrible overdose challenges.

We are supportive of harm minimisation approaches and believe everyone deserves the assistance and support they deserve.

RECOMMENDATIONS

Against the above background, we make the following recommendations:

1. Consider the CCTV camera solution as a first step, with other supporting solutions to create a safe, clean and well monitored environment for all patrons, visitors and people who work and live here.
2. Provide a working group with a clear term of reference, expertise and resources to oversee this approach including an evaluation report.
3. Engage in ongoing discussions with appropriate levels of government, health professionals, researchers, the business sector and the community to identify a holistic and appropriate solution in the longer term.

We understand that there are many and different actions that are being undertaken at local government and grassroots levels to assist the people affected. We are appreciative of such initiatives and look forward to doing our part.

We remain confident that there are other solutions that can be explored with the full support of different sections of the community, and that the politics should be eliminated.

As a contributing sector in the Yarra community, we want to continue working with the relevant authorities to ensure the vulnerable people can receive the best support possible.