



Public Health Association
AUSTRALIA

**Public Health Association of Australia
submission on Victorian Inquiry into the
Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances
Amendment (Pilot Medically Supervised
Injecting Centre) Bill 2017**

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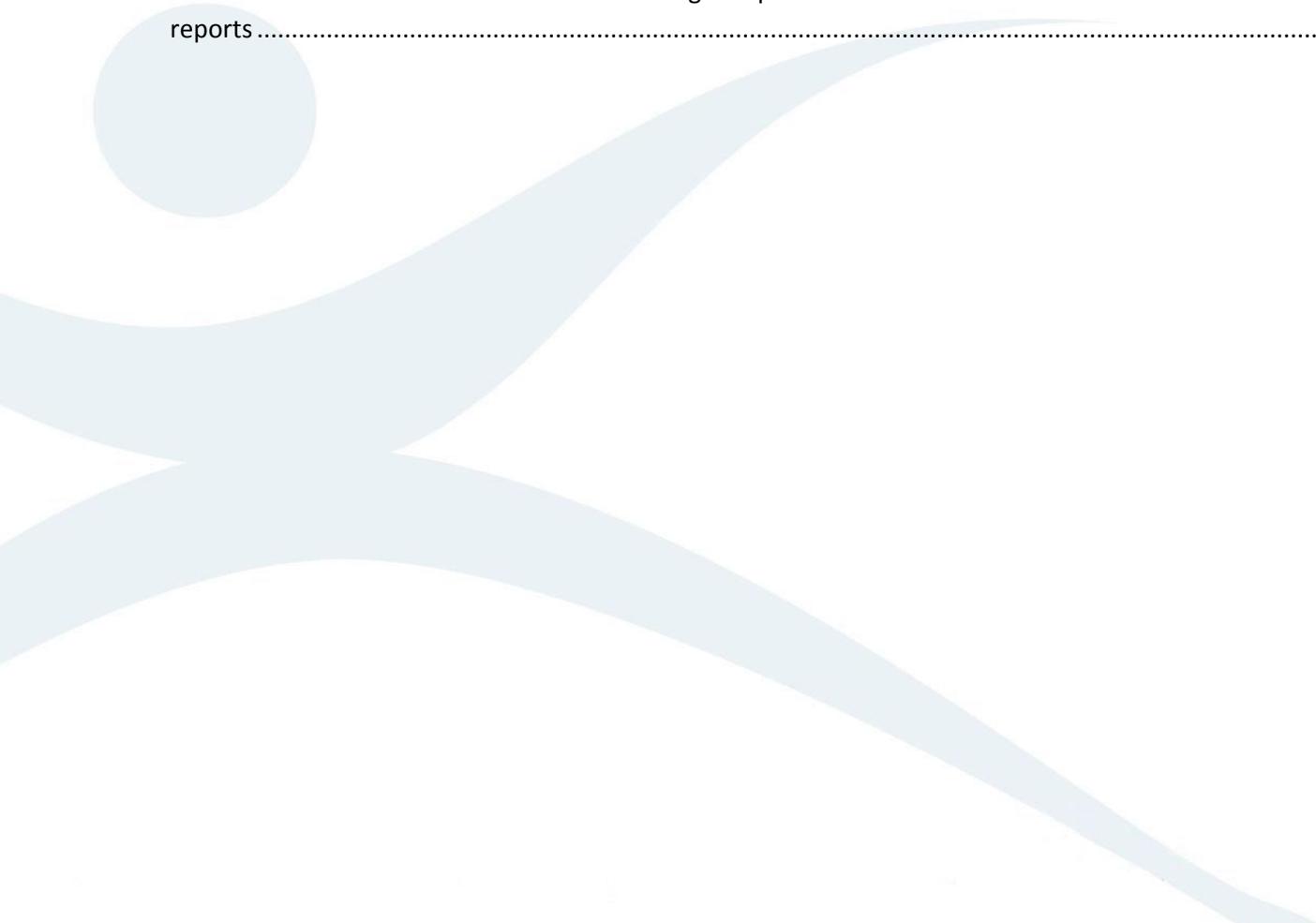
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Introduction

The Public Health Association of Australia

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) is recognised as the principal non-government organisation for public health in Australia working to promote the health and well-being of all Australians. It is the pre-eminent voice for the public's health in Australia. The PHAA works to ensure that the public's health is improved through sustained and determined efforts of the Board, the National Office, the State and Territory Branches, the Special Interest Groups and members.

The efforts of the PHAA are enhanced by our vision for a healthy Australia and by engaging with like-minded stakeholders in order to build coalitions of interest that influence public opinion, the media, political parties and governments.

Health is a human right, a vital resource for everyday life, and key factor in sustainability. Health equity and inequity do not exist in isolation from the conditions that underpin people's health. The health status of all people is impacted by the social, cultural, political, environmental and economic determinants of health. Specific focus on these determinants is necessary to reduce the unfair and unjust effects of conditions of living that cause poor health and disease. These determinants underpin the strategic direction of the Association.

All members of the Association are committed to better health outcomes based on these principles.

Vision for a healthy population

A healthy region, a healthy nation, healthy people: living in an equitable society underpinned by a well-functioning ecosystem and a healthy environment, improving and promoting health for all.

Mission for the Public Health Association of Australia

As the leading national peak body for public health representation and advocacy, to drive better health outcomes through increased knowledge, better access and equity, evidence informed policy and effective population-based practice in public health.

Preamble

PHAA welcomes the opportunity to provide input to the Legal and Social Issues Committee's Inquiry into Medically Supervised Injecting Centres in Victoria. The reduction of social and health inequities should be an over-arching goal of national policy and recognised as a key measure of our progress as a society. The Australian Government, in collaboration with the States/Territories, should outline a comprehensive national cross-government framework on reducing health inequities. All public health activities and related government policy should be directed towards reducing social and health inequity nationally and, where possible, internationally.

PHAA Response to the Medically Supervised Injecting Centres Inquiry Terms of Reference

Recommendations in Coroner Hawkin's Finding – Inquest into the Death of Ms A and other relevant reports

The PHAA is strongly supportive of the recommendations in Coroner Hawkin's report that:

- A safe injecting facility trial be established in North Richmond;
- The availability of naloxone be expanded for people who are in a position to intervene and reverse opioid drug overdoses in the City of Yarra; and
- Opportunities be identified to improve injecting drug users' access to and engagement with DHHS-funded services supporting their health and wellbeing

Policies relating to illicit drug use should be assessed according to the extent to which they minimise the health, social and economic harms arising from their use. Programs that have proven to be effective in reducing drug related harm to both the individual and the community should be supported and appropriately resourced to meet the complex needs of this population. The recommendations in Coroner Hawkin's report are consistent with this and a holistic approach including connection with services for addressing the social determinants of health such as housing.

The supervised injecting facility in Sydney has been successfully implemented with flow-on benefits to the surrounding community. The report identifies a willing operator (North Richmond Community Health) for a similar scheme in Melbourne, with existing connections to the community, and an appropriate location.

The PHAA appreciates the opportunity to make this submission to express its support.

Please do not hesitate to contact me should you require additional information or have any queries in relation to this submission.



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Rebecca Lee
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