

Mr Geoff Howard MP
Committee Chair
Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee
Inquiry into Drug Law Reform
Parliament House, Spring Street
EAST MELBOURNE VIC 3002

Email: lrrcsc@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Mr Howard,

Re: Inquiry into Drug Law Reform

The Australasian Profession Society on Alcohol and other Drugs (APSAD) would like to make a submission to the Law Reform, Road and Community Safety Committee's Inquiry into Drug Law Reform in support to pilot a medically supervised injecting centre in the suburb of Richmond in the City of Yarra.

APSAD is Australia's leading multidisciplinary organisation for professionals involved in the alcohol and other drug field and is dedicated to promoting improved standards in clinical practice for medical practitioners and other health professionals who deal with alcohol and other drug-related problems in the course of their work. We also provide a network of alcohol and other drug professionals in Australia, New Zealand and the Asia Pacific. The Society is involved in promoting population health, particularly as it relates to preventive interventions concerning alcohol, tobacco, pharmaceutical products and illicit drugs.

Through our internationally recognised scientific journal, the *Drug and Alcohol Review*, and our annual Scientific Conference, APSAD provides a forum for the latest research on the nature, prevention and treatment of physical, psychological and social problems related to the use of psychoactive substances.

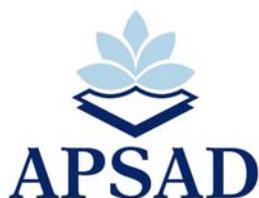
APSAD currently has over 300 members across Australia and around the world. We have particularly strong links with stakeholders in New Zealand and in the Asia Pacific region.

Our members represent a wide range of professional disciplines including administrators, educators, counsellors, general practitioners, nurses, physicians, psychologists, medical researchers, pharmacists, policy advisors, psychiatrists, social/behavioural researchers, and public health experts.

The practice of other Australian states and territories and overseas jurisdictions and their approach to drug law reform and how other positive reforms could be adopted into Victorian law

APSAD's support of a medically supervised injecting centre in Melbourne reflects our commitment to evidence-informed harm reduction policy and practice. Many of our members work with people who inject drugs, providing effective and critical services that prevent and manage drug overdoses. As such, we have an ongoing interest in the introduction of a medically supervised injecting centre in Melbourne.

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There are now approximately 100 supervised injecting centres worldwide and the international evidence is clear relating to the efficacy, effectiveness, and cost effectiveness of supervised injecting facilities. Evidence from several evaluations of the medically supervised injecting centre in Sydney shows that:

- several thousand overdoses have been managed successfully without a single death;
- there has been a dramatic reduction in the number of discarded needles and syringes in the Kings Cross area;
- the number of ambulance call-outs to the Kings Cross area has reduced, easing the demand for emergency services;
- more than 12,000 referrals have been made that connect people to health, drug treatment, and social welfare services;
- there is overwhelming community and business support for the centre.

In APSAD's view, any community that has a geographical concentration of people who inject drugs, particularly people who inject drugs in public places, should have a supervised injecting facility. This facility would benefit the health of both those who inject drugs and the broader community.

APSAD acknowledges that this matter has been controversial in Victoria in the past, however we urge the Inquiry into Drug Law Reform to consider the introduction of a supervised injecting facility as a public health intervention to improve the health and wellbeing of people who inject drugs and to improve the amenity of the area for residents, traders and members of the general public. We support a carefully implemented and evaluated trial to document and demonstrate the benefits involved and to provide a clear indication of the Parliament's willingness to take action in response to the high number of drug-related overdoses that occurred in inner-Melbourne in 2016.

APSAD fully supports the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Pilot Medically Supervised Injecting Centre) Bill 2017 currently before the Legal and Social Issues Committee that would provide the legislative basis for such a trial and urges all parties represented in the Parliament to support this bill and to implement the trial as soon as possible.

Yours faithfully,



Dr Lynda Berends
President

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