

**Christianne Andonovski**

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**From:** Steve West <wordpress@wp.greens.org.au>  
**Sent:** Thursday, 16 February 2017 1:24 PM  
**To:** LRRCS  
**Subject:** I support the Victorian Government's Harm Minimisation policy

RE: INQUIRY INTO DRUG LAW REFORM

I support the Victorian Government's Harm Minimisation policy

I have been employed in the public health system as a registered psychiatric nurse since 1981 and have, for over 10 years up to this time, been working in the field of dual diagnosis; that involves the presence of both a mental illness and substance use problem in individual consumers. I have always supported the public health / harm reduction approach adopted by all state, territory and federal governments over the last 5 decades. This is a sensible approach in health policy where intervention strategies to reduce the impact of harmful drug and alcohol use are part of the approach involving supply reduction (the aspect most associated with police and border control of drug supply) and demand reduction through good public education and various approaches to treating substance dependence. And harm reduction, as the third plank in the policy settings of governments across Australia. A great example of the state government's harm reduction approach is in the area of opioid replacement treatment via doctor prescribed Methadone. Methadone can be offered to patients who wish to break free from using street based heroin and its associated harms like acquiring blood borne diseases (HIV and Hepatitis C). This is a pathway to stopping heroin addiction and for heroin users to become stable in work and lifestyle choices. Methadone is funded as part of public health services. The government's harm reduction approach can be seen in other policy settings too. Stringent restrictions in the use of tobacco products in public places and a heavy emphasis on cutting the use of tobacco in the community at large, through pricing policy. The long standing law related to bicycle helmets and seat belt use is harm reduction from a public health perspective based on the wider social good, in contrast to the autonomy and rights arguments of those opposed to "nanny state" laws - their description of harm reduction policy. These libertarians base their arguments on the delusional ideas of Ayn Rand, a failed author.

I was employed some years ago as a nurse at the Kings Cross Medically Supervised Injecting Centre in Sydney - an outstanding model of harm reduction in action. Not a single overdose death has occurred while visitors to the centre have injected their drugs on site - in over 15 years.

Pill testing is a further harm reduction approach that in other jurisdictions around the world can be shown to stop drug deaths from occurring by demonstrating to a potential user that the drug they thought they had brought to the music festival event, was, after testing in the mobile testing station, not anything like the drug they believed they had in their pocket. Potential drug users will choose not to take the tablet or powder once they have knowledge of the dangers of the chemical mix identified. Making pill testing part of social and music events that drug users attend would be an extension of all the various harm reduction strategies which the Victorian Government already uses - as part of good public policy. As Mr Spock said to Captain Kirk - "It is only logical Captain". (These views are my private opinions, and do not necessarily reflect the position of my employer - a public health service in Melbourne)

-- Steve West  


I'm happy for my submission and details to be made public.