

# Let's start saving lives

We, the undersigned, support a trial of a Medically Supervised Injection Centre in Victoria.

WE ARE SURE this will save lives – let's remember: while there's life, there's hope.

We call upon the Members of the Victorian Parliament to support a rigorously evaluated trial in Richmond, the epicentre of Melbourne's crisis with heroin, other opioids, and other street drugs including methamphetamine.

There have not been any deaths from a drug overdose in any of the 90 Medically Supervised Injection Centres operating in the world. The first opened in 1986.

There were 172 heroin related overdose deaths in Victoria in 2016. Of these, 19 people died in North Richmond and a further 15 died after apparently obtaining heroin in the City of Yarra. Despite the best efforts of current services, people are still

dying preventable deaths.

Each of those drug overdose deaths was preventable. North Richmond needle exchange distributes 70,000 syringes each month. If those people had instead injected drugs in a supervised facility, possibly none would have died from a drug overdose.

A Medically Supervised Injection Centre was opened in Kings Cross, Sydney in 2001. After one million injections, there have been 6,500 drug overdoses but no one has died.

Trialling a facility would help some of Melbourne's most vulnerable. It would introduce them to health and social services, including drug treatment, and will help some get their lives back on track.

Today people inject drugs on streets, in car parks, doorways, lanes and toilets. Many are homeless, have

severe physical and mental health problems, are very isolated, while some are suicidal and estranged from their families.

Providing a Medically Supervised Injection Centre also helps residents and businesses in some of our more troubled neighbourhoods by improving amenity. It will also reduce pressure on police, ambulance services and emergency departments in hospitals.

Leading health and medical organisations, Yarra Council and most residents in the proposed trial area support a trial. According to the most recent National Drug Strategy Household Survey, a majority of Australians also favour this type of facility.

The Parliament of Victoria should not delay.

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CEO, Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association

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