

MEDIA RELEASE
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Public health no-brainer: provision of sterile syringes a necessity



The Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA) supports the call from the Burnet Institute to increase access to sterile injecting equipment in light of the disproportionate level of injecting drug use, overdoses and discarded injecting paraphernalia within the City of Yarra.

Areas in North Richmond have, for some time, been frequented by injecting drug users creating a number of divisive issues for the local community with regard to dealing with these challenges.

Mr Sam Biondo, EO of VAADA, says 'the findings in the Burnet report confirm what was assumed by many in the alcohol and other drug treatment sector; that injecting drug use is more prevalent in areas of the City of Yarra and that many of those engaged in this behaviour are at increased risk of harm through lack of 24 hour access to sterile injecting equipment'.

There is a strong research consensus that the provision of sterile injecting equipment:

- Reduces the prevalence of blood borne viruses, such as Hepatitis C and AIDS;
- Reduces the healthcare costs to the community; and
- Reduces the prevalence of discarded injecting paraphernalia in public places therefore minimising the risk to the public.

Mr Biondo continues, 'the Burnet Report has identified a confluence of factors from a range of data sources pointing towards the need for increased (24 hour) access to sterile injecting equipment in North Richmond. While health budgets are tightening due to government austerity measures, it makes sense to implement strategies which are proven to save money and increase wellbeing in the community'.

'The provision of 24 hour access to sterile injecting equipment is long overdue for the City of Yarra in particular, but other parts of the State as well'.

VAADA is the peak body that represents over 100 Alcohol and other Drug services across Victoria. On a daily basis these services are dealing with the effects of harmful alcohol and other drug consumption.

For more information or to arrange an interview please contact Sam Biondo on 0414 974 121 for comment or if unavailable, David Taylor on 0413 914 206.