

PRESS RELEASE

5/5/2023

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Government embeds lifesaving support

The Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA) welcomes the passage of the *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment (Medically Supervised Injecting Centre) Bill 2023* which was passed in the Legislative Council on Thursday night.

The Medically Supervised Injecting Room (MSIR) has successfully reduced what was soaring intravenous drug related harm occurring within Yarra.

The Government should be commended on committing to this service.

The benefits attributed to the MSIR are legion with it preventing at least 63 fatal overdoses and responding to over 6000 overdoses. There have been thousands of referrals to health and social services, including 800 to opioid pharmacotherapy and roughly 300 for hepatitis C treatment.

Mr Sam Biondo, EO of VAADA says, 'we commend the government on this endeavour which will lock in the life saving work of the MSIR. We note that heroin and opioid related harms are highly prevalent across the state and that more work needs to be done. The referrals and treatment support of the MSIR show that saving lives is just one of its benefits. It also changes lives.'

Mr Biondo continues, 'amidst escalating heroin related harm in the CBD and other areas of Melbourne, there is still much to do to. Overdose data trends beginning the first half of 2022, indicate that when all data is assessed that 2022 could have the highest number of fatal overdoses in years. We look forward to Mr Ken Lay's report and the establishment of a MSIR in the CBD.'

We look forward to working with government and community in continuing to support this life saving service.

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

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Media stories on alcohol and other drugs may be traumatic for some people. Support is available and we ask that media agencies consider publishing the details below:

If this story has raised issues about your own or others drug and alcohol use, please contact the national hotline for confidential counselling and referral on 1800 250 015

VAADA is the peak body that represents over 80 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.