



Hon Amber-Jade Sanderson MLA
Minister for Health; Mental Health

Our Ref: 76-26892

Hon Peter Foster MLC
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18-32 Parliament Place
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By email: env@parliament.wa.gov.au

Dear Mr Foster

Peter

Thank you for your letter of 15 September 2023 inviting comments in response to the Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs' preliminary inquiry into medically monitored injection rooms (MMIRs) (Petition No. 96).

When considered on a case-by-case basis, I appreciate the positive impact that MMIRs can have in the communities they are implemented, and I am pleased to read reports about the success of MMIRs currently operating in other jurisdictions.

However, I am conscious that the current literature notes that MMIRs are only considered warranted in areas where there are well-established, street-based drug using cultures.

In 2019, the Methamphetamine Taskforce (Taskforce) released its Final Report which included recommendations in response to concerns about methamphetamine use. In the report, the Taskforce determined that based on the evidence before them Western Australia had a 'home-based' injecting culture and does not have a significant localised injecting drug use population as experienced in other jurisdictions.

More recent Western Australian data supports the findings of the Taskforce that the drug using culture in Western Australia does not currently warrant a MMIR as a harm reduction priority:

- In 2022, 80 per cent of people who injected illicit drugs at least once a month in the preceding six months, reported last injecting in a private home.¹

¹ Sutherland, R., Uporova, J., King, C., Jones, F., Karlsson, A., Gibbs, D., Price, O., Bruno, R., Dietze, P., Lenton, S., Salom, C., Daly, C., Thomas, N., Juckel, J., Agramunt, S., Wilson, Y., Que Noy, W., Wilson, J., Degenhardt, L., Farrell, M. & Peacock, A. (2022). Australian Drug Trends 2022: Key Findings from the National Illicit Drug Reporting System (IDRS) Interviews. Sydney: National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW Sydney.

- In 2020, the majority (80%) of drug-induced deaths occurred at home.²

I agree with the Hon. Sophia Moermond that MMIRs afford opportunities to provide or facilitate engagement with essential healthcare and support services for people who inject drugs.

All alcohol and other drug services funded by the Mental Health Commission (the Commission) are available to people who inject drugs. The provision of harm reduction education is integrated into all alcohol and other drug treatment programs. Services include residential programs, telephone support and counselling, outpatient counselling and support for individuals, and their families and transitional support services for people exiting residential programs.

The State Government also funds and delivers a range of targeted harm reduction strategies to reduce drug related harms and deaths in the Western Australian community, including:

- Overdose Strategy Group: monitors drug overdose, related harms and deaths, via police, ambulance, hospital emergency departments, and needle and syringe exchange programs. The Overdose Strategy Group is comprised of academic and clinical alcohol and other drug experts and identifies and recommends harm reduction strategies and approaches to reduce overdose harms and deaths.
- Needle and Syringe Programs: provide safer injecting equipment and advice, access to health care and harm reduction information. Western Australia has a 97 per cent return rate of used syringes at needle and syringe exchange program sites, contributing to reduced blood borne virus amongst people who inject drugs.
- WA Naloxone Program: expands access to free, take-home naloxone (the lifesaving drug which reverses opioid overdose), provides education to recognise and respond to opioid overdose and how to administer naloxone.
- Peer Outreach and Education Programs: services that regularly engage with people who inject drugs, provide peer support and outreach to peoples' homes and to street-based populations, and provide access to free naloxone.
- Mental Health Commission Workforce Development: delivers training and education to frontline workers to increase knowledge and skills to reduce drug injecting and overdose related harms and deaths amongst their clients.

The Commission will continue to monitor the injecting drug landscape to be responsive to the developing needs of people who inject drugs and make recommendations for harm reduction strategies as appropriate.

Thank you for the opportunity to contribute to this important discussion.

Kind regards



HON AMBER-JADE SANDERSON MLA
MINISTER FOR HEALTH; MENTAL HEALTH

² Chrzanowska, A., Man, N., Sutherland, R., Degenhardt, L. & Peacock, A. (2022). Trends in overdose and other drug-induced deaths in Australia, 1997-2020. Sydney: National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre, UNSW Sydney.