



Office of Hon. Sophia Moermond MLC

MEMBER FOR THE SOUTH WEST REGION

Your ref: A1038569, Petition No. 096

Hon Peter Foster MLC
Chair

Standing Committee on Environment and Public Affairs
Legislative Council Committee Office 18-32 Parliament Place West Perth WA 6005
Email: env@parliament.wa.gov.au

Dear Mr Foster,

Thank you for the opportunity to provide a contribution.

I acknowledge that this petition is fairly niche, and hence has not received a large volume of signatures. This shows both a societal bias against those who are suffering with addiction and a lack of understanding of the factors that contribute to addiction. These people are part of our society too and require understanding and support services that cater to their specific needs.

One of the main reasons to support this particular cohort is to prevent further suffering, to prevent ongoing intergenerational trauma and dysfunction. Intervention services can help those affected by addiction to get their lives back on track.

This population, especially women and girls, are vulnerable to exploitation due to their addiction. This is particularly valid when considering the role this plays in sex trafficking with addictions purposely created to control sexually exploited women.

The stigma associated with drug addiction is one of the reasons that inhibits the seeking of help and support. This together with the lack of resources (money, transport, possible coercive control) means services need to be specific and easily accessible.

Most people who are dealing with an addiction often present with complex co-morbidities and social issues; PTSD, HIV/AIDS, hepatitis C, other communicable diseases, malnutrition, mental health issues, homelessness, poverty, criminal records, and unemployment.

It is easy to blame people for their situation, and whilst I acknowledge that personal responsibility is a factor that plays a role, it is important to not simply victim blame those who are struggling with addiction.

There are reports from other countries but also from within Australia that show people and neighbourhoods can be well served by providing a supervised injection room. These safe spaces help prevent deaths due to overdose, allow for interventions to help people break the cycle, and reduce the risk of communicable diseases. Whilst the focus should always be on overcoming addiction, reintegration into society, and overall healing; these strategies also reduce pressure on ambulance services and hospital emergency rooms.

One of the observations made in the Victorian report on the benefit of medically supervised injection rooms is that those who are addicted to heroin may be vulnerable to using fentanyl, it is cheaper and provides a strong high, but causes so much more damage. It was also noted that there was a



reduction in public injecting, less used needles left lying around, and a reduction in overdose victims found in public areas.

Since this petition was initiated, a new development has occurred which appears to deal with public resistance to injection rooms by providing a mobile clinic in a van. I realise this falls outside of the scope of the petition, but this innovative strategy would overcome some of the objections and limitations that are associated with medically supervised injection rooms, whilst still providing the noted benefits. This would also create improved accessibility for those without resources to travel.

Thank you for your consideration.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "S. Moermond". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Sophia Moermond MLC

Member for the South West