

Statement on Yarra Council Advocacy Position on North Richmond MSIR

Yarra Drug and Health Forum is disappointed in the decision by Yarra Council to reverse its longstanding support for a Medically Supervised Injecting Facility in North Richmond, the heart of the street drug trade and within a community health setting.

Yarra Council alongside Yarra Drug and Health Forum advocated for more than 2 decades for a MSIR in this very precinct - the site of too many overdose deaths.

The state government decision to co-locate it with a community health centre is sound from a public health perspective. Drug use and addiction is a health issue. It often co-exists with other complex health issues in clients who do not always use the public hospital system. As an integrated health response, this location makes sense. Its success in connecting clients with other health services as well as housing, employment and legal support is well documented. As is its preventing an estimated 11,000 overdoses since opening.

Everyone has the right to accessible, effective healthcare. Health services need to be located where they will be used by those who need it. The long running debate about the location of the MSIR ignores the rights of its clients who have had no voice in this discussion and who are among the most stigmatised groups in society. Stigma itself is an enormous barrier to seeking help and this debate harms those at its centre.

The location of any MSIR is a decision of the state government who has stated the North Richmond MSIR will not be moving. Yarra Council could instead join Yarra Drug and Health Forum and the community driven efforts to address the real and acknowledged impacts of a long-standing drug trade in North Richmond as well as continuing to advocate with the community and service providers for more supervised injecting centres across the state. They are without doubt needed.

The Forum once again invites Yarra Council to partner to engage the whole community, hear their perspectives and to work collaboratively on solutions that work for and not against the interests of people living, working and using services in North Richmond.