

Media Release

RACP submission calls for Melbourne medically supervised injecting centre

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A Parliamentary Inquiry [submission](#) from The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP) has urged the Victorian Government to reconsider its opposition to a proposed medically supervised injecting centre in Richmond.

The RACP made a submission to the [Victorian Parliament Inquiry into the Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Amendment Bill 2017 \(Pilot Medically Supervised Injecting Centre\)](#) outlining the evidence that medically supervised injecting facilities:

- prevent fatal overdoses
- prevent permanent brain damage through immediate interventions for non-fatal overdoses
- reduce risky injecting practices thereby minimising the risk of infections and disease transmission
- support the health of clients in the long term by linking them to appropriate treatment services
- positively impact on the broader local community as residents no longer witness drug use in the streets or risk stepping over needles.

The proposed [private member's bill](#) is currently before the parliament, it recommends an 18-month trial of a facility in Victoria.

RACP President, Dr Catherine Yelland said that supporting this bill and establishing a pilot medically supervised injecting centre in Richmond, a known hotspot for drug use, was a crucial step in the fight to save lives.

“In 2015 alone there were 172 deaths from drug overdoses in Victoria. Alarming 75 per cent of these were drug users for ten years or more.

“As medical specialists, we are well aware that many vulnerable individuals fall through the cracks and beyond the reach of traditional outreach services.

“In its first 10 years the medically supervised injecting centre in Kings Cross, Sydney, successfully managed 4,376 drug overdoses without a single fatality and to this day and continues to be at the forefront of saving lives and reducing harm in the community,” said Dr Yelland.

Dr Yelland added that contrary to some reports and commentary, the evidence shows that medically supervised injecting centres do not attract drugs users to the areas in which they operate and that local communities had typically supported them.

Evaluations of similar facilities in Sydney, Canada and Europe, showed financial benefits exceeded costs. Additionally, these facilities reduce the load on over-worked emergency services, like police and hospitals.

“By having medical staff on hand, it allows for early intervention in an overdose situation which significantly reduces the risk of death or injury,” said Dr Yelland.

“These facilities have also been shown to succeed in reaching out to vulnerable and marginalised individuals who may not otherwise access health and welfare services.

“Supporting this bill is in-line with the Victorian Government’s own move to [extend outreach services to communities in need](#) and we strongly urge the Victorian Government to reconsider its position on the issue.”

Read more about the Kings Cross Facility in the RACP [Medically Supervised Injecting Centre Position Statement](#) (2012).

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About The Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP): The RACP trains, educates and advocates on behalf of more than 15,000 physicians and 7,500 trainee physicians across Australia and New Zealand.

The College represents a broad range of medical specialties including general medicine, paediatrics and child health, cardiology, respiratory medicine, neurology, oncology, public health medicine, occupational and environmental medicine, palliative medicine, sexual health medicine, rehabilitation medicine, geriatric medicine and addiction medicine. Beyond the drive for medical excellence, the RACP is committed to developing health and social policies which bring vital improvements to the wellbeing of patients.

The College offers 60 training pathways. These lead to the award of one of seven qualifications that align with 45 specialist titles recognised by the Medical Board of Australia or allow for registration in nine vocational scopes with the Medical Council of New Zealand.