



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**9 February 2017**

### **Supervised injecting facility will save lives in high overdose hotspots**

In light of the alarming increase in heroin related mortality and non fatal overdose, there is a dire need to introduce supervised injecting facilities in areas experiencing high levels of illicit substance related overdose.

Other regions have piloted supervised injecting centres. We know it works. We need to implement these facilities as quickly as possible, not as a pilot, but rather an entrenched part of our response to reduce substance related harms.

The level of fatal heroin overdoses occurring within a small region in North Richmond and Abbotsford requires a new and innovative response to curb the harms.

Ms Anne-Maree Kaser, CEO of Windana states: 'There are cohorts of Victorians which are at high risk of fatal overdose. Many of these people converge on a small number of areas, including North Richmond to procure and consume illicit substances. This occurs, despite intense police activity and CCTV.'

Ms Kaser continues: 'It is plainly evident that these measures are not working and are in fact driving drug using populations into secluded areas within these high risk areas, where there is a greater risk of fatal overdose due to the clandestine nature of their consumption necessitated by the need to avoid policing authorities.'

The high density of risky illicit substance use within a small area demonstrates the need for a place based solution.

'North Richmond, St Kilda and areas in the West of Melbourne would benefit greatly from a supervised injecting facility. With 48 of Victoria's leading health and alcohol and other drug agencies concurring with the global evidence in consensus on the benefits of supervised injecting, now is the time to build on the good work undertaken in areas of Europe, Canada, and in Sydney to reduce the trauma on families and communities and implement supervised injecting facilities in areas already experiencing high substance related harms.

As well as preventing fatal overdose, these facilities will provide a means for many service averse cohorts to engage with the necessary health and welfare services to address an array of complex needs.

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Ms Kaser concludes, 'Illicit substance use has been part of many of these communities for decades. Harmful illicit substance use will continue irrespective of whether we implement supervised injecting centres. We can't entirely stop illicit substance use, but we can greatly reduce the harms.'

**About Windana:**

Windana is a leading Melbourne-based drug and alcohol treatment centre specialising in holistic, client-focused recovery services programs. Clients choose from residential and a range of supportive community-based recovery and rehabilitation programs. We help people rebuild their lives in a safe, caring environments and support our clients wherever they are in the recovery process.

Founded in 1984, Windana offers medically supported withdrawal programs in addition to its pioneering evidence-based, non-medical treatment programs. For Windana, effective recovery is about offering choices for people to take their lives in new, positive directions.

**For further information:**

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