

Medically

Supervised

Injecting

Centres

Position Statement

The UnitingCare ReGen (ReGen) Position Statement provides evidence-based recommendations for the establishment of a Medically Supervised Injecting Centre in Melbourne, Victoria.

Introduction

Medically Supervised Injecting Centres (MSICs) are legally sanctioned health and social welfare facilities that enable the hygienic injection of pre-obtained drugs under professional supervision in a safe and non-judgemental environment (Salmon et al. 2009; Dolan et al., 2000). MSICs have been demonstrated to reduce the mortality and morbidity associated with drug overdose. They also act as an access point to drug treatment and other healthcare and social welfare assistance (KPMG 2010; Semaan et al. 2011). In addition they play an important role in improving public amenity by reducing nuisance associated with public drug injecting, intoxication and discarded injecting equipment (KPMG 2010).

ReGen believes that:

- Medically Supervised Injecting Centres, when they are part of a wider continuum of interventions (including other prevention and treatment services) aimed at people involved in high-risk drug use, have demonstrated beneficial effects and contribute to a reduction of harm to individuals and the wider community.
- Medically Supervised Injecting Centres are consistent with the Harm Minimisation approach (incorporating supply control, demand control and harm reduction components) that informs Australian and Victorian government policies to address the negative impact of legal and illicit drugs on our society.
- Community and political opposition to Medically Supervised Injecting Centres typically ignores the evidence of their effectiveness. Further delay in the establishment of a MSIC in Melbourne places more lives at risk and limits the capacity of alcohol and other drug treatment providers to engage people who are at high risk of harm.

Rationale

The overall rationale for supervised injecting centres is to reach and address the problems of specific, high-risk populations of drug users, especially people who inject and those who consume in public (often due to having no housing or safe spaces of their own). These groups have important healthcare needs that are often not met by other services, and pose problems for local communities that have not been solved through other responses by drug services, social services or law enforcement.

ReGen recommends that:

- The Victorian Government commit to funding the establishment of a Medically Supervised Injecting Centre in Melbourne and engage with consumers, service providers, community leaders and businesses to develop and implement a communications strategy to build community support for the initiative.

ReGen resolves to:

- Continue to advocate for the establishment of a MSIC in Melbourne and challenge public opposition that is not evidence-based;
- Contribute to planning discussions to ensure the viability and efficacy of a MSIC in Melbourne;
- Continue to implement evidence based harm reduction measures within the agency's range of programs;
- Provide services to our clients that best meet their immediate and longer term needs within the current scope of legislation, policy and best practice; &
- Disseminate this position statement among our communication networks and appropriate forums.

Further Reading

[UnitingCare ReGen – Medically Supervised Injecting Centres Supporting Evidence](http://www.regen.org.au) available at www.regen.org.au

References

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Disclaimer

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Authorised by the Board of ReGen

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UnitingCare ReGen
Formerly UnitingCare Moreland Hall



About ReGen

Our purpose is to promote health and reduce alcohol and other drug related harm.

ReGen is the lead Alcohol and Other Drugs (AOD) treatment and education agency of UnitingCare Victoria and Tasmania. ReGen is a not-for-profit agency, which has over 45 years' experience delivering a comprehensive range of AOD treatment and education services to the community.

These services include Counselling and Support, Assessment and Intake, Community Outpatient, Home-based and Residential Withdrawal for adults and youth, Supported Accommodation, Drug Diversion programs, Youth and Family Services, an Intensive Playgroup, Alcohol Community Rehabilitation Program and AOD services at Port Phillip Prison. ReGen also delivers Education and Training programs nationally.

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