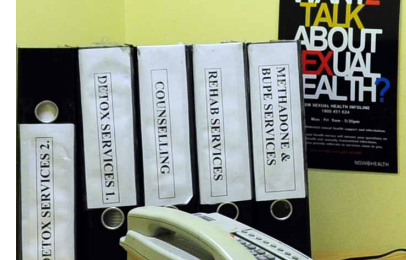


Fact Sheet



Updated September 2010

Sydney Medically Supervised Injecting Centre

A practical and compassionate response to the unfortunate reality of drug addiction

The Sydney Medically Supervised Injecting Centre (MSIC) recognises that drug addiction is a chronic, relapsing condition. MSIC does not support or promote drug use; rather it prevents death and injury from overdose and engages people with health services so they may have the opportunity for rehabilitation.

MSIC believes that the most practical and compassionate response to drug injecting is to minimise the harm associated with it until a person is ready to address their problem. It does this by supervising injecting episodes that would otherwise occur under more hazardous circumstances, such as in public or alone. It provides a safer environment in which immediate medical assistance is available if required.

MSIC comprises just one part of a comprehensive strategy to address the problem of drug use in our community.

MSIC was an initiative of the 1999 New South Wales Drug Summit and is administered by UnitingCare, a Christian non-government organisation that provides a large number of community services in New South Wales and the ACT.

MSIC is responsible to both the NSW Department of Health and the New South Wales Police Force.

There is clear consensus in the medical community about the public health benefits of MSIC.

Supporters include: the Australian Medical Association (AMA) NSW; the Royal Australasian College of Physicians; the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists; the Australasian College for Emergency Medicine; the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners; the Australasian Chapter of Addiction Medicine; and the Australasian Faculty of Public Health Medicine.

Aims

- To reduce death and injury from drug overdose
- To reduce the number of people injecting in public, and the amount of discarded injecting equipment
- To enhance access to health and social welfare services (such as addiction treatment) for injecting drug users
- To reduce the spread of blood-borne viruses such as hepatitis C and HIV

Outcomes

Eleven independent evaluation reports, produced by five different organisations, all confirm that MSIC is meeting its aims, has no adverse outcomes and is cost effective.¹⁻¹¹

'I will always wonder, if MSIC had been open in 1997, whether or not I would still have my son, Damien, by my side. There are two approaches to the tragedy of drug addiction: morality, myth and magic; or compassion, pragmatism and evidence. I subscribe to the latter.'

Tony Trimmingham, founder of Family Drug Support and author of *Not my family, never my child*, whose son, Damien, died of a heroin overdose, aged 23



'MSIC helps to put the problem of injecting drug abuse where it belongs – in the health system and not in the criminal courts. It does so while

... saving lives, preventing the spread of disease and reducing the nuisance value of public drug injection. I strongly support the creation of more centres and the continuing operation of this one.'

Nicholas Cowdery AM QC, NSW Director of Public Prosecutions

The MSIC is an initiative of UnitingCare NSW.ACT



SYDNEY MEDICALLY SUPERVISED INJECTING CENTRE |



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'There is no doubt that many lives have been saved and serious brain injuries have been prevented.'

Dr Marianne Jauncey, Medical Director, MSIC

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MSIC has successfully managed more than 3,500 drug overdoses without a single fatality.¹²

The number of publicly discarded needles and syringes has approximately halved in Kings Cross since MSIC opened.^{5,14-15}

There has been an 80% reduction in ambulance call-outs to Kings Cross since MSIC was established,^{5,16} with the area immediately surrounding MSIC showing the greatest reduction.^{5,11,16}

The majority of local injecting drug users have registered with MSIC.¹⁷

MSIC has made more than 8,500 referrals to health and social welfare services. Of these, about half were referrals to addiction treatment – many for people who had never been in treatment before.

Evidence published in the international medical literature shows that supervised injecting centres offer public health benefits and do not lead to adverse community outcomes.¹⁶⁻³⁵

Cost effectiveness

MSIC has been independently evaluated and found to be a cost-effective initiative.^{1,9}

MSIC is entirely funded by the confiscated proceeds of crime account, which is managed by NSW Treasury.

A 2008 independent economic analysis found that only 0.8 of a life would need to be saved each year in order for MSIC to be cost neutral.⁹

The analysis found that: 'even conservative estimates of the number of deaths MSIC may prevent each year results in massive positive outcomes in economic terms'.³

Staff

MSIC employs professional staff – both registered nurses and counsellors. A minimum of three nurses and three counsellors is available at any one time. A referral coordinator facilitates referrals to a range of medical and social welfare services, including addiction treatment facilities.

Recognition

MSIC won the Excellence in Treatment and Support Award at the 2009 National Drug and Alcohol Awards.

Community

Australians in general are supportive of harm-reduction measures.³⁶⁻³⁷ Regular random surveys of the local community, conducted by an independent evaluation team, have found consistent and increasing support for MSIC among the majority of local businesses and residents.^{1,3,11,13-15} According to a 2010 KPMG report, 70% of local businesses and 78% of local residents support MSIC.¹¹



'MSIC treats people as people – it serves to remind us that health services should not judge the people they see, but instead

reach out to help. The nurses and counsellors at MSIC provide a quality of service and commitment to the wellbeing of others less fortunate, that is exceptional. These staff deserve our praise; and the clients, our compassion and support at a most vulnerable time in their lives. At MSIC these marginalised members of our community are met with dignity and respect – an experience that can facilitate the confronting of entrenched drug use. I am proud to be associated with MSIC.'

Sister Noelene White, Pastoral Care, Good Shepherd Sisters

'In my back yard please! I am very grateful that this facility will continue to operate just down the road from where I live. I am filled with admiration for the staff of MSIC and thank them for their continuing effort in working with the people in our community and keeping our area free of the constant ambulance sirens heard in the past. The service has saved many people's lives and has benefited our community enormously. It must continue to operate.'

Margaret Harvie, local resident



'Simply, MSIC saves lives.'
Client



Fast Facts

MSIC obtains its entire budget from the confiscated proceeds of crime.

MSIC does not receive any money from the health budget; therefore, no funds are diverted from addiction treatment programs.

MSIC does not supply any drugs or support drug dealing.

Selling, buying or sharing drugs at MSIC is prohibited. Anyone engaging in any of these activities is removed from the premises.

The local police support MSIC's work, and MSIC supports police efforts to reduce drug supply in Kings Cross.

MSIC does not attract drug users or drug suppliers to the Kings Cross area from elsewhere. ^{6-8,10}

There has been no impact on crime in Kings Cross as a result of MSIC's operations. ^{6-8,10} This was confirmed in a 2010 report by the NSW Bureau of Crime Statistics and Research. ¹⁰

MSIC does everything possible to help people in their fight against drug addiction.

MSIC offers assistance to everyone who uses the service.

MSIC has contact with many people who would not otherwise access health services and it can therefore offer intervention earlier than would otherwise have been possible. Nearly 75% of the people registered with MSIC had not accessed any other local health service before and 40% had never previously accessed any treatment for addiction. ⁴

MSIC has one of the highest rates of referral of any supervised injecting centre in the world.

Approximately half of the 8,500 referrals made by MSIC have been for addiction treatment; the remainder being for other issues such as mental health, homelessness or acute medical problems.

The more often a person visits MSIC, the more likely they are to accept a referral. While referrals are offered to everyone, the rate of acceptance is highest among the more frequent users of the service, with 80% of them ultimately accepting a referral.

Fast figures

Years of successful operation: nearly 10

Hours open a week: approximately 80

Approximate number of visits: 600,000

Number of injections a day: approximately 200

Number of drug overdoses successfully managed: more than 3,500

Number of fatalities: 0

Number of referrals to health and social welfare agencies: more than 8,500

Number of supervised injecting centres in the world: currently 90



'As a long-term resident and local businessman, I remember the needles in the gutter and the constant ambulances

before MSIC opened. MSIC helps to contain the injecting of drugs in Kings Cross in a medically supervised environment, where users are offered assistance in placement to addiction rehabilitation programs. MSIC provides a vital and humane service to some of the most vulnerable and unfortunate in our society.'

Adrian Bartels, local business owner and chairman of the Potts Point and Kings Cross District Partnership

'It is unfortunate that innovative interventions like MSIC tend to become critical symbols for polarised groups. The resulting controversy risks obscuring the fact that harm-reduction interventions as a whole are a key component of any comprehensive response to the AIDS epidemic and that Australia is widely perceived as a compassionate and progressive leader in this field. It is my hope ... that MSIC will continue to provide critical services to injecting drug users in Sydney.'

Michel Kazatchkine, Executive Director, The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria

'I congratulate the New South Wales Government for taking an evidence-informed decision to protect people who use drugs.'

Michel Sidibé, Executive Director, Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS, UNAIDS

Supervised injecting centres worldwide

The first official supervised injecting centre began in Switzerland in the 1980s and now there are approximately 90 operating around the world – in Canada, Germany, Spain, the Netherlands, Norway, Luxembourg, Switzerland and Australia. They aim to reduce the public health problems and public amenity problems associated with public drug use and are generally established in areas of concentrated and highly visible street injecting. While there are some differences between them, depending on the local context, and the skills and qualifications of the staff may vary, supervised injecting centres all have common goals: to improve the health and social welfare of their clients, to reduce deaths from overdose and to reduce public drug use.

Origins of MSIC

The first recommendation to the New South Wales Government to establish a supervised injecting centre came out of the 1996 Wood Royal Commission into the New South Wales Police Service.³⁸ Justice Wood stated: 'the health and public safety benefits [of establishing an injecting centre in a high-risk area] outweigh the policy considerations against condoning otherwise unlawful behaviour'.

In the late 1990s the number of people dying from drug overdoses was high and increasing. In 1999 more than three people a day were dying from opiates in Australia.³⁹ Kings Cross had the highest concentration of drug overdose deaths in the country. In response, the New South Wales Drug Summit recommended the

trial of a medically supervised injecting centre, providing it had 'support at the community and local government level' and that it was 'monitored and rigorously evaluated by an independent institution from the outset'.⁴⁰

Future of MSIC

In May 2001 MSIC was granted a licence to open on a trial basis by the amendment of the Drug Misuse and Trafficking Act 1985 (via Schedule 1 of the Drug Summit Legislative Response Act 1999).⁴¹ The trial was subsequently extended on three occasions and was due to be voted on in Parliament again in October 2011. In September 2010 New South Wales Premier Kristina Keneally announced plans to introduce legislation to remove the centre's trial status and allow MSIC to operate on a permanent basis. This legislation will enable MSIC to become an integrated part of the state's health services, providing certainty for the local community and MSIC staff.

Service delivery and staffing will not change. The licence conditions will stay the same, including the stipulation that MSIC remain the only injecting centre in New South Wales. MSIC will continue to report to the New South Wales Police Commissioner and the Director-General of NSW Health. Monitoring will continue, with a statutory review to be conducted after five years.

'I am told MSIC is still not a permanent fixture and, despite running for 10 years, is still on trial ... the evidence heard during this inquest [into the fatal overdose of man in Kings Cross] is a powerful argument in favour of MSIC being given permanency.'

Malcolm MacPherson, Deputy State Coroner, NSW Coroner's Court (Jan 2010)



'I long for the day when we help those who are suffering, rather than blame and punish them. MSIC has proven many times its worth in terms of lives saved; families spared the heartache of a needless death. More importantly, MSIC stands as a reminder that people who suffer addiction are part of our community; they are our brothers and sisters and they deserve dignity and a helping hand to better days. How long does doing good have to remain "a trial" for New South Wales?'

Graham Long, Pastor, Wayside Chapel, Kings Cross



'We ask that all parliamentarians review the overwhelming evidence from medical experts, researchers in the field of addiction treatment and specialists in the areas of addiction and HIV/AIDS. The facts are clear – this centre saves lives, puts a vulnerable population in contact with health services, reduces public injecting and the number of discarded needles in the streets, is cost effective and operates without any adverse outcomes. A vote on the future of this centre should be based on the medical evidence.'

Dr Marianne Jauncey, Medical Director, MSIC and Reverend Harry Herbert, Executive Director, UnitingCare NSW.AC

Supporters

MSIC is grateful to the many reputable organisations that support its work. They include:

ACON	N.S.W. Nurses' Association
Alcohol and other Drugs Council of Australia (ADCA)	National Centre for Education on Training and Addiction (NCETA)
Ambulance Service of New South Wales	National Centre in HIV Epidemiology & Clinical Research (NCHECR)
Australasian Chapter of Addiction Medicine (AChAM)	National Centre in HIV Social Research (NCHSR)
Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM)	National Drug and Alcohol Research Centre (NDARC)
Australasian Faculty of Public Health Medicine (AFPHM)	National Drug Research Institute (NDRI)
Australasian Professional Society on Alcohol and other Drugs (APSAD)	Network of Alcohol and Other Drug Agencies (NADA)
Australasian Society of HIV Medicine (ASHM)	New South Wales Police Force
Australian Drug Foundation (ADF)	NSW Health
Australian Federation of AIDS Organisations (AFAO)	NSW Users' and AIDS Association (NUAA)
Australian Medical Association NSW	Positive Life NSW
Australian Parliamentary Group for Drug Law Reform	Public Health Association Australia (NSW branch)
Baptist Inner City Ministries	Royal Australasian College of Physicians
City of Sydney Council	Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists
Come In Youth Resource Centre	Royal Australian College of General Practitioners
Director of Public Prosecutions (NSW) Nicholas Cowdery AM QC	Sydney School of Public Health, University of Sydney
Drug and Alcohol Nurses Australasia (DANA)	Sisters of Charity Health Service
Family Drug Support	Social Workers in AIDS (SWAIDS)
General Practice NSW	St Canice Catholic Church, Elizabeth Bay
Hepatitis NSW	St John's Anglican Church, Darlinghurst
Inner City Legal Centre	St Vincent's Hospital Alcohol and Drug Services
Inner City Youth at Risk Project	Ted Noffs Foundation
International AIDS Society	The Global Fund to Fight AIDS, Tuberculosis and Malaria
International Harm Reduction Association	UNAIDS
Metropolitan Community Church	Wayside Chapel
Mission Australia	Young Lawyers, The Law Society of New South Wales
New South Wales Bar Association, Criminal Law Committee Chair	

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