

August 3rd 2011 – Melbourne Times Weekly

The Fitzroy-Collingwood ALP branch unanimously voted in June to support the controversial cause.

Yarra Council said an injecting room would help address health and legal issues associated with drug use.

Branch spokesman Geoff Poynter said the 100-member branch wanted the party's state council to adopt its motion, and end its opposition to an injecting facility.

He said it could be an effective way to deal with the area's drug trade.

"I work as a volunteer at the Neighbourhood Justice Centre, and I do see people who are addicts given an opportunity to work with counsellors and try and tackle their problem, and that can have quite a positive outcome," Mr Poynter said.

"It seems to me that a safe injecting room would offer that kind of support."

Branch members met Richmond MLA Richard Wynne to discuss the matter last week.

Mr Wynne's spokesman Chris Owner said: "At last year's election Labor did not support supervised injecting facilities and our position hasn't changed."

However, branch members are expected to meet with opposition health spokesman Gavin Jennings in their quest to change the policy.

The ALP previously supported the creation of an injecting room when, in 2000, then-premier Steve Bracks introduced a bill into parliament to legalise trials in Yarra, Melbourne, Port Phillip, Greater Dandenong and Maribyrnong.

The bill was defeated, and the ALP dropped its support before the 2002 election.

At November's election, the ALP ruled out support for an injecting room, but stated: "Labor will always be tough on drugs and trafficking but will treat addiction as a health issue and support people that need and want assistance to break their addiction."

Yarra Council voted in May to support the introduction of an injecting room, but such a move would require the state government's support.

Premier Ted Baillieu has previously stated his government will not support an injecting room in the state.