



# **Yarra Drug and Health Forum**

‘Case study of the community campaign to introduce supervised injecting facilities in the City of Yarra.’

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**EO YDHF**

# Yarra Drug and Health Forum:

- formed in 1996 following a public meeting held to discuss the recommendations of the Premier's Drug Advisory Council and seen as a community response to drug and alcohol issues in the City of Yarra – 'hot spot'
- representatives from local drug and alcohol service providers, health and welfare agencies, the City of Yarra, police, government departments, NGOs and the broader community
- monthly meetings, quarterly forums, regular newsletter updates, facilitating the writing of reports and letters to relevant agencies concerning drug issues, media engagement and other advocacy strategies

# **Yarra Drug and Health Forum:**

- forum has been responsive to local drug and alcohol issues as they have arisen and has therefore undertaken many different activities in order to meet current expressed needs
- the forum currently disseminates education and advocacy material to a range of local, state and national agencies through a fortnightly news update that is sent out to through over 650 email addresses
- Executive Officer represents the forum at regular meetings of various organisations based in the City of Yarra and other local government areas (e.g. Melbourne)

## Supervised Injecting Facility:

**The Yarra Drug and Health Forum has actively pursued the establishment of a Supervised Injecting Facility in Melbourne over recent years because an identified need for such a facility.**

## SIFs Background:

- **Victoria first engaged in public debate about SIFs in 1998, during a time when the daily ‘heroin toll’ was listed alongside the road toll in one of the state’s most prominent newspapers.**
- **Despite much political support for the establishment of a SIF in Melbourne at the time, proposed legislation to enable a SIF to be established was defeated in 2000.**

## SIFs Background:

- **Despite legal reviews suggesting that the establishment of SIFs *do not* contravene international obligations under various UN Conventions on drugs and there are over sixty cities world-wide that have one or more Drug Consumption Rooms with many operating successfully for over twenty years there are only two in English speaking countries, MSIC (Sydney) and Insite (Vancouver).**

## Evidence in Support of a SIF:

- **Evaluations of SIFs world-wide show that there is no increase in drug dealing, drug-related crime and rates of new injecting drug when a SIF is established in a community.**
- **The National Drug Household Survey 2010 reported that the majority of Australians support the introduction of SIFs.**

## Evidence in Support of a SIF:

- **MSIC Sydney has improved public amenity (cleaner streets and laneways) by reducing discarding of needles and syringes in public places.**
- **MSIC Sydney has played an important role to play in providing access to treatment for illicit drug users as well as access to other important health and social welfare programs that support both them and their children.**



## Evidence in Support of a SIF:

- One of the clear benefits of a SIF is the ability to provide and observe the use of sterile injecting equipment which helps prevent the spread of blood borne viruses (diseases) such as HIV into the community.
- In Sydney a survey of local businesses people indicated that the majority (nearly 70%) supported the MSIC and *there is now business support* for a SIF in Melbourne

## Evidence in Support of a SIF:

- **Another benefit of a SIF is the opportunity it offers to monitor the person who is using the facility and to reduce the risk of overdose and other adverse events.**
- **Ambulance services in NSW have reported reduced calls (and less siren noise) to attend overdoses in the vicinity of the MSIC thereby saving ambulance time and resources**

## Evidence in Support of a SIF:

**The establishment of a SIF in Victoria is supported by:**

**AMA, Australian Drug Foundation, Anex, VAADA, UnitingCare Moreland Hall, City of Yarra and Australian Nursing Federation (Vic), religious leaders and numerous other agencies and individuals.**

# Evidence Supporting a SIF in Melbourne:

- **Parts of Melbourne (particularly North Richmond and Abbotsford) continue to experience the kinds of conditions that have led to the establishment of SIFs in other locations.**

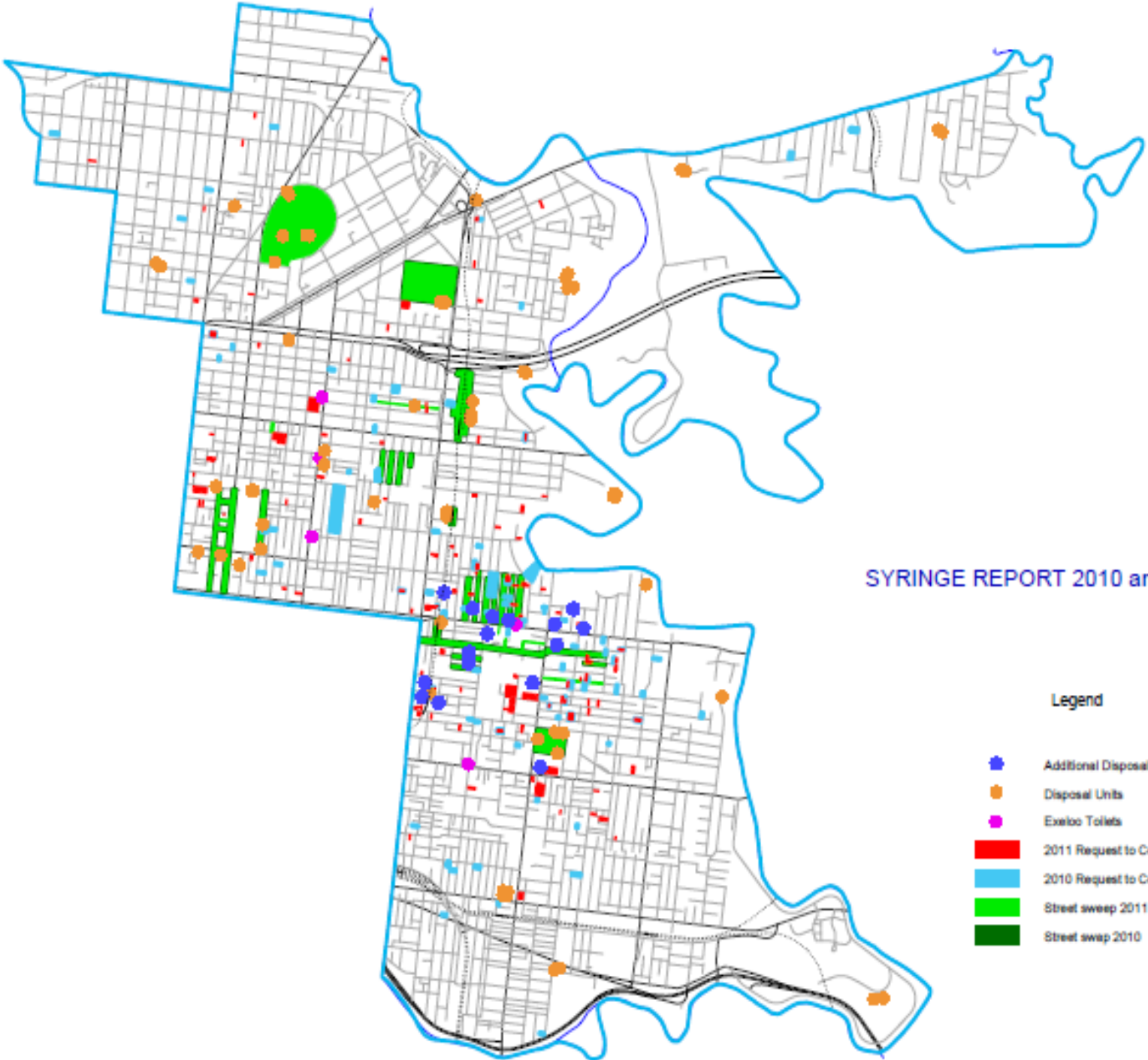
# SIF Position Paper:

**The YDHF established a SIF Working Group as a sub-group of the YDHF. This group works toward gathering evidence and developing advocacy strategies to raise awareness on the need for a SIF.**

**On the 22<sup>nd</sup> June 2010, the Yarra Drug & Health Forum launched the Position Paper 'The potential and viability of establishing a Supervised Injecting Facility (SIF) in Melbourne' which was prepared for us by the Burnet Institute.**

## ***The factors supporting the development of a SIFs in Yarra:***

- For the past 4 years Richmond continues to remain one of the biggest, if not the biggest, street drug market in Victoria**
- Dealing takes place all over North Richmond, particularly near Victoria Street, by local dealers and also those who live in outer suburbs. People come from all over Victoria to purchase heroin in Richmond**
- There is an incredibly high volume of inappropriately discarded equipment around Richmond**



# SYRINGE REPORT 2010 and 2011

## Legend

- Additional Disposal Units
- Disposal Units
- Exelco Toilets
- 2011 Request to Council
- 2010 Request to Council
- Street sweep 2011
- Street sweep 2010











## City of Yarra Support :

- ***In May 2011 CoY Council voted 6-1 in support of the establishment of a SLF.***
- ***Significant amount of media interest was generated – overwhelmingly supportive of the establishment of a SLF.***

## Evidence from MSIC:

- reduced public injecting
- overdose
- amenity
- cost effective
- no increased crime
- provide a bridge to treatment
- reduce demands on emergency services

***‘This is about human beings and we need to stop treating users like criminals and help them find a way to live in the best way possible.....I believe it would help users, who primarily feel so terrible about themselves, not be treated like lesser human beings than non-users.’***

*Moreland Hall client 2011*

## ***The factors supporting the development of a SIFs in Yarra:***

- Public injecting occurs close to the NRCH centre, in public car parks, in driveways, laneways, behind homes, in stairwells, in front yards, along the railway line, in cars, between cars.....
- NRCH sees approximately 2 overdoses a month. Clients who live in the housing estate report many more. Most of these are reported as non fatal.
- Violence, particularly amongst the injecting community, is an ongoing problem in Richmond.
- There are 15+ (known) 'hidden' zones in alley ways and confined public spaces near Victoria Street where people gather to inject together

## ***Others evidence supporting a SLF in Yarra:***

- The need for intensive policing operations such as ‘Operation Elizabeth’**
- Installation of police CCTV cameras in ‘walk ups’ in public housing areas**
- Proposal by Victoria Police to install CCTV cameras in Victoria Street**
- Residents’ complaints – Abbotsford, North Richmond, West Richmond**



# Discussion:

## ***Policy narrative:***

- ***‘welcome sign’?***
- ***‘raising the white flag’?***
- ***Harm Reduction - policy support?***
- ***We have the right balance?***
- ***Economic argument?***
- ***Sense of ‘urgency/emergency’?***
- ***‘Not in my backyard’?***
- ***Displacement effect?***