

2017/2018.

Annual Report

YARRA DRUG AND
HEALTH FORUM



CHAIRS REPORT | Peter Wearne Chair YDHF

It is with great pleasure and significant pride that I present to you the Yarra Drug and Health Forum (YDHF) Annual Report for the Financial Year 2017/2018. YDHF has operated in the City of Yarra since 1996 as a community-based response to alcohol and drug issues. YDHF continues to be held in high regard due to its willingness and effectiveness in advocating for evidence based responses to alcohol and drug issues at the local and State levels.

There is no doubt that the highlight of the past year was the announcement on October 31st 2017 by the State government that a Supervised Injecting Facility (SIF) will be opened in mid-2018 at North Richmond Community Health Centre. The new facility is now referred to as a Medically Supervised Injecting Room (MSIR). Many of you will be aware that YDHF led the ongoing campaign for such a facility in North Richmond over several decades.

Our campaign for a SIF virtually commenced when YDHF was established in 1996. During that time we never lost sight of the need for such a facility to prevent deaths from overdose and improve the lives of those that live, work or are connected to the City of Yarra. The campaign conducted by YDHF to establish a SIF brought together numerous stakeholders, too many to mention in this report however several are listed as stakeholders at the end of this report. Special mention must be made however of the trust that City of Yarra placed in YDHF to pursue the SIF goal. On behalf of the YDHF Executive Committee I'd like to sincerely congratulate everyone involved in making the SIF a reality.

Well Done!



EXECUTIVE OFFICER'S REPORT | **Greg Denham EO YDHF**

Without dwelling on the point, as mentioned by the Chair, it was with a great deal of satisfaction that as the result of the culmination of many years of campaigning by YDHF that a Supervised Injecting Facility was established in North Richmond mid-2018. Throughout the ongoing campaign YDHF continued to highlight the impact of injecting drug use both in terms of the personal cost and the impact on the community. The new facility will undoubtedly save lives and minimise the demands placed on emergency services responding to drug issues in North Richmond.

However, whilst this was a huge achievement, now is not the time to sit back and 'rest on our laurels'. The job is not complete. There is still much work to be done in terms of drug policy reform in Victoria. There are still far too many drug related deaths in this state and illicit drugs are impacting adversely on nearly all walks of life. The traditional approaches to drug policy with its focus on punishment, stigma and discrimination have failed to stop people using drugs and in many respects lead to further harmful consequences for communities. YDHF will now pursue policy initiatives that focus on reducing harms, ensuring that saving lives and improving health outcomes for people who use drugs are at the forefront of our advocacy efforts. The recent trialling of pill testing in Canberra, the calls to legalize cannabis and discussions about a trial to prescribe heroin are all approaches that YDHF supports and are important steps forward after decades of inaction.

Finally, and on a personal note I would sincerely like to thank the Chair of the YDHF Mr Peter Wearne and the Executive Committee listed below for their ongoing and unwavering support that has been demonstrated consistently over the past twelve months.

ALCOHOL, DRUGS AND RELATED ISSUES CAN HAVE A SIGNIFICANT IMPACT ON MANY PEOPLE THAT LIVE, WORK OR ARE CONNECTED TO THE CITY OF YARRA. IN ORDER TO ADDRESS THE MULTITUDE OF COMPLEX ISSUES THAT RESULT IN THE MISUSE OF BOTH LICIT AND ILLICIT SUBSTANCES, THE YARRA DRUG AND HEALTH FORUM WORKS CLOSELY WITH LOCAL AND STATE BASED AGENCIES TO REDUCE THESE HARMS. IT'S QUITE REMARKABLE THAT FOR OVER TWENTY YEARS THE FORUM HAS CONSISTENTLY BEEN ACKNOWLEDGED AS THE LEAD AGENCY IN YARRA AND BEYOND IN TERMS OF PROVIDING LEADERSHIP AND GUIDANCE IN A CHALLENGING POLICY ENVIRONMENT. THE FORUM HAS ACHIEVED SUCCESSFUL OUTCOMES THROUGH ITS EXTENSIVE OUTPUT DELIVERED WITHIN THE FOLLOWING OBJECTIVE

YDHF OBJECTIVES

1. COMMUNITY EDUCATION AND ENGAGEMENT

- To raise awareness and increase community self-efficacy and empowerment to develop local solutions to address alcohol and drug and related social, welfare and health issues in the City of Yarra
- To encourage and facilitate community-wide engagement so that a common understanding of local alcohol, drug and related concerns can be reached and agreed action taken

2. COLLABORATION AND PARTNERSHIPS

- To plan, promote and enhance coordination and collaborative local service provision partnerships and inter-sectoral responses to alcohol and drug and related social, welfare and health issues
- To provide advice and guidance to facilitate opportunities for partnerships between government and non-government agencies to better respond to alcohol and drug issues and encourage information sharing between organisations

3. ADVOCACY

- To advocate for the development of strong agency relationships, evidence informed policy and innovative practices and service provision to meet identified needs and existing or potential service gaps
- To develop more nuanced and client-focused programs and facilitate ease of access to assistance and ensure inclusion for people with a diversity of needs

4. SERVICE DELIVERY AND IMPROVEMENTS

- To identify service gaps and facilitate a process to improve service delivery through informing planning and evaluation processes
- To disseminate evidence of what works with an emphasis on evaluation and improve service delivery



YDHF WORKER OF THE YEAR 2017

The Yarra Drug and Health Forum Worker of the Year Award is announced annually and is presented to a worker who has been involved in the direct delivery of alcohol, drugs or related services in the City of Yarra. The award recognises the 'unsung heroes' who have demonstrated commitment, compassion and excellence in the direct delivery of services for their agency/organisation. The 2017 recipient for the YDHF Worker of the Year Award was Adam Willson from Fitzroy Legal Service. Congratulations go to Adam for his dedication, hard work and professionalism in the provision of legal advice for many disadvantaged and marginalised people in the City of Yarra.

EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

The YDHF Executive Committee meets monthly and is made up of representatives from a broad range of agencies located in the City of Yarra. The Forum would like to sincerely thank the Executive Committee for their guidance, leadership and advice over the past 12 months:

Mr Peter Wearne | Director of Services, Youth Support and Advocacy Service

Mr Aram Hosie | Executive Public Affairs cohealth

Mr Kevan Myers | Team Leader NEXUS Dual Diagnosis Advisory Service, St Vincent's Hospital

Ms Jennifer Black/Rachael Hopkins | Principal Solicitor Fitzroy Legal Service

Mr Hieng Lim | Senior Program Manager, Crime Prevention and Community Justice Program Neighbourhood Justice Centre

Ms Sandra Fox | Manager NSP Services North Richmond Community Health Centre

Mr Nick Wallis | Project Officer DanceWize Harm Reduction Victoria

YDHF COMMUNITY FORUMS

During 2017/2018 YDHF conducted several community forums and engaged key speakers who addressed broader policy issues related to alcohol, drugs and other social, welfare and health issues.

Yarra Drug and Health Forum AGM

NOVEMBER 8TH 2017

Oration by Ms Judy Ryan, Secretary, Residents for Victoria Street Drug Solutions:
'Community Based Advocacy and Action Toward Establishing a Supervised Injecting Facility: The Lessons Learnt from the First 12 months'



Report on the Parliamentary Enquiry into Drug Law Reform

MAY 30TH 2018

Mr Geoff Howard MP | Chair and Member of the Legislative Council for Buninyong
Ms Fiona Patten | MLC Member of the Legislative Council for Northern Metropolitan
Ms Nina Springle | Member of the Legislative Council for South Eastern Metropolitan Region
Mr Martin Dixon | State Member of Parliament for Nepean

Welfare Based Mandatory Treatment For Young People - What Are the Issues?

JUNE 25TH 2018

Ms Jennifer Bowles | Magistrate Children's Court Melbourne
Mr Andrew Bruun | Chief Executive Officer, Youth Support and Advocacy Service
Damian | A young man who has the lived experience
Ms Meghan Fitzgerald Lawyer | Fitzroy Legal Service



Policy and Practice Challenges for the AOD Sector and Other Stakeholders: Real Time Prescription Monitoring

AUGUST 23RD 2017

Dr Malcolm Dobbin | Regulation, Health Protection and Emergency Management Division DHHS
Mr Dave Taylor | Policy and Media Officer | Victorian Alcohol & Drug Association (VAADA)
Dr Paul McCartney | General Practitioner | cohealth
Mr Stan Goma | General Manager | The Pharmacy Guild of Australia
Ms Sarah Lord | Program Manager The PAMS Service Harm Reduction Victoria

MONTHLY MEETINGS

The Yarra Drug and Health Forum met 11 times on the first Monday of each month in the Richmond Town Hall in 2017-2018. The meetings were open to anyone who lives, works or is connected to the City of Yarra. The average attendance at the meetings was 28. Organisations represented at the monthly meetings and those engaged with YDHF during the year are listed below. Topics covered by guest speakers during the year include:

Ms Nevena Spirovska | Welfare -The campaign against welfare drug testing' July 2017

Ms Amanda Stone | Mayor City of Yarra | 'Update on Policy developments at the City of Yarra' September 2017

Ms Rose Babic and Mr Lindsay Shaw | 'Victorian Responsible Gambling Foundation' October 2017

Ms Nina Springle and Ms Colleen Hartland | Upper House Members for the Greens | 'Pill Testing Legislation' February 2018

Hon Richard Wynne MP | Member for Richmond and **Rick Nugent** | Victoria Police Assistant Commissioner | 'Update on Progress Toward a SIF in North Richmond' March 2018

Professor Jayashri Kulkarni | Monash University | 'Borderline Personality Disorder' May 2018

Ms Katharine Biffin | Program Manager Melbourne Drug Court | June 2018

MEDIA ENGAGEMENT

Over the past 12 months YDHF has enhanced its profile and reputation as a key agency for information and advice on alcohol and drug issues through extensive media engagement. The EO appeared on Channel 7 and SBS regarding the announcement of the establishment of a MSIR. The EO also spoke on 3CR, ABC Radio, 3AW and 3RRR on the same issue. In addition to commenting on the MSIR, the EO has been active on various medias regarding the need for drug policy reform including participating in a debate on cannabis legalization on SKY News.

When a person goes into a safe injecting facility, they are not only in a safe environment if they overdose but they also have the opportunity to build a relationship and get to know the staff [...]. So it is not just about safe injecting practices but also about the referral process.



STAKEHOLDERS

Over the past 12 months the YDHF has directly engaged **with** the following **agencies and other** stakeholders:

3CR | ACSO COATS | Australian Drug Foundation | Burnet Institute | CISP
City of Melbourne | City of Yarra | cohealth | DanceWize | Darebin Community Health
Department of Health and Human Services | DPV Health | ECCV Drug Taskforce
Eros Foundation | Fitzroy Legal Service | Good Shepherd Youth & Family Services
Harm Reduction Australia | Harm Reduction Victoria | Hepatitis Victoria | ISCHS
Jesuit Social Services | Justice Health | Launch Housing | Melbourne Polytechnic
Mind Australia | Monash University | Monash University Students
Neighbourhood Justice Centre | Nexus Dual Diagnosis Service
North Richmond Community Health | NWMPHN | Odyssey House | Penington Institute
Prague House | Primary Health Networks | Quinn House | ReGen
Residents for Victoria Street Drug Solutions | RMIT | Salvation Army | St Vincent's Hospital
STAR | Students for Sensible Drug Policy | Turning Point Alcohol & Drug Centre
University of Melbourne | VAADA | VAC | VACRO | Victorian AIDS Council | VicHealth
Victoria Police | Victoria Street Traders Association | VITS | VRGF | WellFair
Women & Mentoring Project | Yarra Community Housing
Youth Projects Youth Support & Advocacy Service (YSAS)

YDHF WOULD LIKE TO SINCERELY THANK EVERYONE THAT
PARTICIPATED IN YDHF EVENTS AND OTHER ACTIVITIES
OVER THE PAST 12 MONTHS.



YDHF WOULD LIKE TO ACKNOWLEDGE THE SUPPORT OF THE VICTORIAN
GOVERNMENT, COHEALTH AND CITY OF YARRA FOR THIS PROJECT.