
City of Port Phillip



Report to the Drug Policy Expert Committee on Community Consultation regarding the provision of injecting facilities within the City of Port Phillip.

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Overview of the Report

This report outlines the key stages and outcomes of community consultation within the City of Port Phillip regarding the provision of injecting facilities. It does this by providing:

- A brief history of harm reduction policy development within the city of Port Phillip.
- A brief history of the broader illicit drug policy development process by the Victorian Government.
- An outline of the process of community consultation undertaken so far by the City of Port Phillip.
- Relevant methodology information on the data collection processes used.
- An analysis of the quantitative data gathered from the City of Port Phillip Household Survey.
- A thematic analysis of the qualitative data gained from the various community consultations.
- An outline of some of the key concerns regarding:
 - Service Objectives/Design Issues
 - Injecting Facility Location Issues
 - Services Surrounding injecting facilities
 - Community Safety Issues
 - Cultural Integration
- An overview of the Port Phillip Council's position on injecting facilities

The City of Port Phillip, harm reduction and the process of consultation so far.

This report analyses and documents one stage of consultation in a continuum of the City of Port Phillip's broader goal of effectively coordinating the many issues related to drug use that occur in the municipality. The City of Port Phillip has been committed to providing a safer city for its citizens for many years and, in relation to illicit drug use, this has included engaging with the philosophy of harm minimisation and in particular harm reduction. The commitment by the Council to this philosophy was grounded in the experiences and practice wisdom gained from The St Kilda Project. This project ran for 4 years, involved some 30 agencies across the municipality and aimed to explore and promote the concept of harm reduction as a response to the alcohol and drug issues experienced in, and by the local community. The project and subsequently the Council has explored what this concept might mean for different citizen groups such as residents, traders, visitors, workers, community service providers, industry groups, law enforcement officers and drug users themselves, whom the Council recognises generally are also members of at least one other citizen group.

In March 1996 the Premier's Drug Advisory Council released the report 'Drugs and our Community'. This report affirmed the shift which had occurred in recent years regarding illicit drug policy in Victoria to include, as part of a coordinated response to the problems created by the use of illicit drugs, harm reduction strategies. In the intervening years since the release of this report the state government, local government, Victoria Police, community service providers and the general community have been involved in an evolving discussion on the appropriateness or otherwise of different responses to the 'drug problem'. The provision of injecting facilities has been one of the many responses which has formed part of this discussion.

In December 1998 the metropolitan Mayors of Melbourne released the 'Inaugural Metropolitan Mayors' Statement on Drugs'. This statement clearly articulates the need for a coordinated and diverse response to the drug related issues experienced within local communities and defines several key principles which, it is suggested, need to underpin the development of future drug policy, these include:

- that drug use be viewed as a health and social issue,
- that there is a commitment to harm reduction.

At this time within the City of Port Phillip the Community and Health Development Team were developing the health promotion plan for the city - 'Creating a Healthy and Safe Port Phillip'. In developing the city's health plan, the team explicitly included responses to the impact on the community of illicit drug use, including a commitment to harm reduction strategies and investigating how these might be implemented within the municipality. This, in

line with the 'Inaugural Metropolitan Mayors Statement on Drugs', situates a response to drug related harm firmly within a health framework

The City of Port Phillip endorsed the 'Creating a Healthy and Safer Port Phillip's Health Promotion Plan and as an ongoing commitment to the issue of illicit drug use specifically included the following actions within their Corporate Plan for 1999/2000:

KRA 1: Building Stronger Communities

Objective 3: Ensure a safe and healthy environment

Strategy 3.2: Develop effective solutions to reduce harm associated with illegal drug use.

Actions 3.2.1: Implement commitment in the joint Mayors' Statement on Drugs in respect of:

- strengthening coordination and information sharing between municipalities on strategies to reduce drug related harm
- encouraging community discussion on the legal status of drugs
- facilitate further examination into alternatives to reduce drug related harm such as safe injecting rooms
- advocate for greater emphasis on education, prevention programs, treatment facilities and options and support for families

Action 3.2.2: Undertake research on community perceptions of the impact of drugs within the community and attitudes to harm reduction initiatives

As a result of these goals and directions being set in early 1999, the City of Port Phillip has been engaged in a number of projects related to understanding the community's perception of drug related issues in the municipality and how it might best respond, both in policy and in practice. These include:

October 1999 - Agency Forum on Drugs:

An agency forum was held involving all relevant local health and social service provider agencies to discuss the issue of illicit drug use; how the City of Port Phillip and agencies within it might improve their response, including the provision of some 'sort' of injecting facilities. The four topic areas discussed specifically were: supervised injecting facilities; overdose management and experiences; support needs of users, families and friends; law reform. The reference group established to coordinate this forum worked on the process of further consultation.

November 1999 - 'The Impact of Illegal Drugs: How we understand this as a community' Public Forums:

The Community and Health Development Team from the City of Port Phillip and the reference group provided two public information forums, one in Port Melbourne and one in St Kilda. A panel of speakers spoke on topics including support needs for families, law reform and human rights, followed by open discussion.

December 1999 - City of Port Phillip Household Survey:

For the first time the City of Port Phillip included in their annual Community Satisfaction Survey a 'Drug, Health and Well Being Issues' section. This section asked respondents a number of questions regarding personal experiences of drug use, if the respondents were directly affected, respondents views on the types of support services provided; and understanding of harm reduction as opposed to other responses to illicit drug use.

December 1999 - International Models and the Victorian Context:

The Community and Health Development Team and the reference group provided an agency forum presenting international examples of supervised injecting facilities; the Victorian context; and findings from user surveys on such facilities. This was presented by Craig Fry, research Fellow, Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre.

January 2000 - Understanding the support needs of families:

This project is setting up a peer support network for families and friends affected by illicit drug use.

February - March 2000:

A call for submissions from the public via advertisements in the Port Phillip Leader and Emerald Hill Times newspapers, and the City of Port Phillip Website. Letters were also distributed to over one hundred individuals working in the health and welfare, education and law enforcement sectors.

March 2000 - Public Forum on injecting facilities:

A public forum on injecting facilities was held providing feedback to the citizens of the City of Port Phillip on the consultation process to date and an initial analysis of information gathered. Dr David Pennington spoke to the work of the Drug Policy Expert Committee and answered questions from the audience regarding the process and possible models.

March 2000 - Trader Focus Groups:

Two targeted focus groups were conducted with traders from the Fitzroy and Acland Street areas to elicit their concerns and issues regarding injecting facilities. Four hundred letters were subsequently delivered by hand to Traders inviting them to a public forum.

March 2000 - Traders Forum on injecting facilities:

A public forum was held for traders in the City of Port Phillip providing feedback on the Trader Focus Groups. Robert Richter QC spoke to the work of the Drug Policy Expert Committee and answered questions from the audience regarding the process of consultation and possible models.

Other Activities

As well as these specific consultation projects members of the Community and Health Development Team have been available for a number of speaking engagements where they have provided up-to-date information on the issue.

Current State Policy Directions and Action

In 1999 the then State Labor opposition campaigned for the introduction of five trial injecting facilities in Melbourne as part of their successful election platform. In November 1999 the Victorian government established the Drug Policy Expert Committee (DPEC), led by Dr David Pennington, to advise it on implementing a policy that seeks to reduce the harms caused by drugs in our community, particularly illicit drugs. The first stage of DPEC's work is to report on 'Introducing local drug plans in areas of high drug usage, and implementing a formally evaluated trial of injecting facilities'.

The following documents the views and opinions arising from the various activities undertaken to date in the City of Port Phillip. This report analysis feedback gathered from

information forums and community consultations, as well as information directly called for via written submission or email. The report discusses key themes that have emerged during the process of consultation and where possible, it gives preference to individual's direct words rather than synthesised analysis.

Methodologies used for data gathering so far.

Feedback information, observational data and survey results were gathered from the following forums and sources:

- ❑ Agency Forum on Drugs: (70 Participants)
- ❑ 'The Impact of Illegal Drugs: How we understand this as a community' Public Forums: (165 participants)
- ❑ City of Port Phillip Household Survey: (301 residents, 100 businesses)
- ❑ International Models and the Victorian Context: (50 participants)
- ❑ Public Forum on injecting facilities: (41 participants)
- ❑ Trader Focus Groups: (17 participants)
- ❑ Traders Forum on injecting facilities: (9 participants)
- ❑ City of Port Phillip Web Page (12 submissions)
- ❑ Written Submissions (3 submissions)

Several standard methods of qualitative and quantitative data collection have been used to gather this information. The City of Port Phillip Household Survey was conducted by Newton, Wayman, Chong and Associates using a set survey questionnaire. The survey was conducted via random telephone interviews and used a statistically reliable sample of 301 residents and 100 businesses.

Observational data was gathered from the four public forums. This observational data included:

- Demographics
- Groupings
- Ethnic Representation
- Interaction/Communication
- Types of questions/statements/comments

- Mood of Meeting

Demographic and qualitative feedback information was gathered from the forums via feedback sheets. Feedback forms were redeveloped several times during the period of consultation to reflect the progress in dialogue regarding the understanding of injecting facilities.

Qualitative free-form submissions have been received via the City of Port Phillip web page and unstructured written submissions have been received by the City of Port Phillip.

While the City of Port Phillip Household Survey data was generally of a quantitative nature, all other data is of a qualitative nature and offers a rich, multi-dimensional response to the issue.

The City of Port Phillip Household Survey - What the Numbers say...

This information is supplied by Newton, Wayman, Chong and Associates as part of their report to the City of Port Phillip

Drugs and Support

Two thirds of the community (68%) had not - nor had any of their relatives or friends personally been affected by illegal drugs (either as a user, or as someone close to a user).

Of those who had been affected (N= 115, or 28%):

- ◆ 20% had friends who were
- ◆ 8% had relatives who were
- ◆ 6% were personally effected.

Single residents were more likely to have friends or relatives who had been affected by drugs.

Respondents were asked whether the people they knew who had been affected by illegal drugs were able to get the support they needed (if in fact they sought support). The results were:

- ◆ Yes, fully (30%)
- ◆ Yes, partially (25%)

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- ◆ No (18%)
 - ◆ Support not sought (11%)
 - ◆ Don't know (16%).

All respondents were asked whether they felt there was a need for more support to be available for people affected by illegal drugs, the results were:

Definitely (61%)

Somewhat (17%)

Not at all (10%)

Don't know (12%).

Heroin Issue

Respondents were advised of three methods of dealing with illegal drugs (as detailed below) and asked what methods of dealing with the heroin issue they were aware of:

"There are three strategies commonly discussed as methods of dealing with the illegal drugs issue. The first is Demand reduction, and this is based on education and prevention. The second is Supply control, and relates to legalisation and regulation. The third relates to harm reduction, and involves help " people to use drugs as safely as possible and includes measures aim to prevent or reduce, specific problems associated with drug use by recognising, but not condoning, illicit use or harmful levels of licit drug use."

Not surprising, considering the recent media attention, top of mind awareness was highest for 'supervised injecting rooms'. The results were:

- ◆ Supervised injecting room (67%)
- ◆ Methadone program (33%)
- ◆ De-tox and rehab programs (30%)
- ◆ Needle exchange (28%)
- ◆ Law enforcement (25%)

- ◆ Heroin trials (20%)
- ◆ Other alternative pharmacotherapies (16%)
- ◆ Diversionary cautioning (14%)
- ◆ Education/public awareness/teach in schools (8%)
- ◆ Other (8%)
- ◆ Don't know (16%).

Respondents were then prompted regarding methods for dealing with the heroin issue. Overall, awareness is shown below:

- ◆ Supervised injecting rooms (92%)
- ◆ De-tox and rehab programs (87%)
- ◆ Methadone program (through pharmacies) (87%)
- ◆ Needle exchange (87%)
- ◆ Law enforcement (83%)
- ◆ Heroin trials (76%)
- ◆ Other alternative pharmacotherapies (60%)
- ◆ Diversionary cautioning (56%)
- ◆ Other (8%).

Residents tended to have higher awareness than businesses.

Respondents were asked the extent to which they supported or opposed various methods of dealing with the heroin issue. The table below shows the findings:

	Strongly Support/ Support %	Strongly Oppose/ Oppose %
De-tox and rehab programs	95	2
Needle exchange	88	8
Diversionary cautioning	84	10
Law enforcement	81	10
Alternative pharmacotherapies	79	8
Methadone program	68	17

Supervised injecting rooms	64	24
Heroin trials	63	23

Sub-group differences included:

- ◆ South Melbourne residents were more likely to oppose supervised injecting rooms
- ◆ St Kilda Central residents were more likely to support heroin trials
- ◆ Mature/older families were more likely to support methadone programs
- ◆ Young couples are more likely to support law enforcement.

Policy application preferences within the City of Port Phillip

Respondents were asked to allocate 100 points across three methods of dealing with the drugs issue in line with their preferences regarding council policy. The average results were:

- ◆ Demand reduction (education and prevention) - 45 points
- ◆ Harm reduction (helping people who use drugs minimise the harmful consequences to themselves and the community) - 29 points
- ◆ Supply control (legislation and regulation) - 26 points.

Analysis of the survey data...

This survey data provides much to think about mainly due to the anomalies it presents. Although it is possible to suggest that respondents are least in favour of harm reduction strategies (such as injecting rooms and heroin trials), as methods of dealing with the heroin issue, it is important to note all methods suggested received over 60% of the respondents support. Needle exchanges received 95% support. This clearly indicates that there are high levels of support for certain types of harm reduction strategies and cautious support for others.

These anomalies may be explained by a lack of understanding about the application of different harm reduction strategies available and/or a lack of understanding about the nature of drug addiction. Respondents may be making a clear distinction between different applications of the harm reduction philosophy. Either way, should there be a decision to go ahead with an injecting facility pilot, this evidence suggests the need for a clear and well informed implementation policy, with a strong community education component about this

particular application of the harm reduction philosophy. A community education program will be key in gaining the sort of levels of support that the needle exchange program currently receives.

The Seven Key Themes - What individual are saying....

Why thematic?

Qualitative research methods are used to gain a deeper understanding of an issue by allowing a diversity of responses to emerge. This method of data collection often provides a medium for expanding the accepted knowledge base on an issue because it invites people to input into the debate in whatever form they see fit, rather than being made to conform their responses to a set questionnaire. As such there is usually a diverse range of responses, from a number of contributors and environments, which are difficult and often misleading to analyse using the same techniques appropriate for quantitative research. Thematic interpretation seeks to draw key themes that are emerging from peoples input and establish the relationships between them. These relationships often provide the key to understanding the underlying support or resistance for an issue.

Loosely there are seven key themes emerging from the data collected during this consultation process:

- ❑ Tolerance/goodwill regarding the issue of drug use;
- ❑ Fears about what might happen;
- ❑ Need for an overall approach;
- ❑ More information is required;
- ❑ How this will change the amenity of the area;
- ❑ We want to feel heard now and later;
- ❑ How will it be evaluated.

Each of these themes will be discussed in more detail with the views from the citizens of Port Phillip being present through a sample set of direct quotes. Both positive and negative views are drawn under the same theme and in some instances the same quote may be used for different themes. A sample of direct quotes is included for each theme which illustrates the range of views provided.

1. Tolerance/goodwill regarding the issue of drug use

The strongest theme coming through from people's responses is one that could generally be summed up as goodwill or tolerance toward the issue. Peoples responses are generally more positive than just tolerance. There is general recognition that the drug problem impacts on us all in one way or another and therefore we want to move towards positive solutions that have an affect; that we need to 'do' something other than what we have been doing. This is also reflective of the view that illicit drug use is seen primarily as a health issue for users. Most input (via forum feedback sheets or web submissions) was of a brief nature, however the George Cinemas submission has been included in its entirety as an attachment because it clearly articulates why, as a trader they support the trial of an injecting facility.

'We recognise that the sale and use of heroin is a serious problem. It has a massive social and economic impact on the community, particularly in St Kilda. We recognise that major new initiatives are needed.' (Fitzroy Street Traders Association)

'The George Cinemas wholeheartedly support the introduction of a safe injecting room in the local area'
(George Cinemas)

'It is not commonly understood these issues are health issues. We need more widespread education campaigns' (Forum Feedback)

'I am concerned about the current problem and am very supportive of positive ways of helping, ie safe injecting, rehab facilities, needle exchange programs' (Forum Feedback)

'Couldn't/shouldn't live in St K without feeling desperately sorry for the addicted, shooting up in dirty lanes, collapsing, vomiting etc. I've given 1st aid & called medicos on more than one occasion. However, tolerance runs thin when affected by the associated crime (eg aggravated burglary in our case) and the total antisocial behaviour of some addicts. Addicts aren't the only victims.' (Web Submission)

'I believe we as a community need to offer a solution for this terrible occurrence of street deaths' (Forum Feedback)

'At Inner South Community Health Service we adhere strongly to a harm reduction framework and see illicit drug use as a health issue. We have experienced many community members views on the most useful approach to illicit drug use. Most have indicated a belief that prohibition is not useful and has failed. SIF are viewed as worth trialing in combination with other strategies' (Forum Feedback)

'Drug use should be treated as a health issue, seen in context of underlying social and economic issues and not as a law enforcement issue.' (Forum Feedback)

2. Fears about what might happen

Given the lack of information, people are examining this issue in a bit of a vacuum. As such many of their comments tend to describe fears about injecting rooms not making the situation better, but in fact making it worse. In public forums this included the much used and possibly abused term 'the honey pot effect'. However following on from the first theme there is also the fear that, as a community, we won't have the commitment to do what is required. For example a number of people have commented on the need for heroin trials or legalised heroin distribution. Certainly a sense that it would be inappropriate for St Kilda to be a sole pilot project is very strong in the data.

'My worry would be that injecting rooms would attract dealers to the vicinity and that the Police would treat the area as a 'no-go' zone as they could be accused of harassment.' (Web Submission)

'I am frightened that these rooms might not stop people dying. I really hope they do and I'm not afraid of these trials beginning' (Forum Feedback)

'An injecting room, certainly will not reduce the addiction and in some cases may increase it, hence with an increase of heroin users in the area the amount of crime, particularly theft, may increase' (Web Submission)

'We categorically reject the establishment of the injecting facilities being located in St Kilda only (and not the other proposed areas).' (Fitzroy Street Traders Association)

'[that there will be] no commitment to a total approach because of expense' (Forum Feedback)

'So long as the local community is kept well informed of future meetings on this issue and given every opportunity to express their views then all fears should be addressed.' (Forum Feedback)

'[that] high risk groups (under 18's) most likely not included in safe injecting facilities - continue to grow as high risk group - chaotic users' (Forum Feedback)

'Drug users will be vilified by well meaning yet narrow minded people at injecting facilities, thus dissuading the user from attending again' (Forum Feedback)

'There need to be four or five injecting facilities throughout Victoria, to make them accessible' (Forum Feedback)

'Obviously after injecting their ability to drive will be affected to a significant degree. This may pose an increased threat to the safety of motorists in the vicinity of an injecting facility.' (Web Submission)

'Crime rates resulting from heroin use? Good enough to say look after these people but we (the community) need to be educated and

wooded around to help as we are threatened by crime and scared by this'. (Forum Feedback)

'Only fear is that measures to help will not go far enough' (Forum Feedback)

3. Need for an overall approach

Following on from the first and second themes people are strongly suggesting that injecting facilities must be firmly embedded within a broader response to drug issues. There is a need for an overall approach to the problems associated with drug use. This clearly includes better access to integrated treatment and support programs. People are strongly suggesting that an injecting facility should not exist in isolation from the rest of our society's existing services response to drug users. As well as this people are suggesting that we need to broaden existing services to include:

- providing support networks for families and friends
- trying to draw general practitioners into the assessment and treatment of illicit drug users
- the role of the other drugs that are impacting our society, like alcohol and pill use.

'Funds [need to be] injected into withdrawal/detox programs at the same time as trial of safe injecting site - Not later. (Forum Feedback)

'The one aspect which we feel has not been addressed is the care of the children whose parents may use safe injecting rooms. Therefore, would it not be possible to have a room where the children are taken care of whilst the parent(s) inject? This would prevent the children actually witnessing the parent(s) administering drugs, although they would be aware that mum or dad was "coming in for their medicine".' (The Mirabel Foundation)

'[it is] very necessary to provide education for GP's on correct treatment methods and be informed enough to alert patients of dangers while detoxing' (Forum Feedback)

'If safe injection houses are set up how are we going to support them with detox centres.' Forum Feedback)

'Nature of addiction - including other treatment options, counselling, group work, etc.' (Forum Feedback)

'What strategies are being developed to target youth and youth at risk, locally?' (Forum Feedback)

'Non clinical. Provision of information and advocacy.' (Forum Feedback)

'Definitely concern with the need for an overall approach. SIF are only a small part of the interventions necessary.' (Forum Feedback)

'This medical and social problem has to be tackled by an overall approach. There is only a certain bucket of money - surely this should go to the establishment of further detox and rehab facilities for those addicts trying to break out. I was shocked at the forum to hear of the waiting periods for help.' (Web Submission)

'Inner South Community Health Service is supportive of the establishment[of a safe injecting facility] as part of broad and interlinked strategies' (Web Submission)

'Injecting facilities cannot be silos placed in a paddock without supporting infrastructure. There is a diverse array of service providers that should be linked to this facility. eg health services, counselling services, accommodation and housing, legal, detox and services if appropriate. A supporting cast of interventions may provide the support these people require.' (Web Submission)

'We support a medically supervised model which has adequate resources and other support measures such as police, counsellor etc. This would afford less risks to addicts whose addiction is primarily a medical/health issue.' (Fitzroy Street Traders Association)

'Injecting facilities need to be complemented with more accessible drug treatment programs, and diversionary programs for young people so that they do not go through the criminal justice system.' (Forum Feedback)

'I think, as a blood relation of a heroin addict, that support for families is essential.' (Forum Feedback)

'I would like to know how much consultation with addicts has taken place - what do they say is needed.' (Forum Feedback)

'How can the early intervention issues be integrated in the Alliance (Healthy and Safer Cities) work - relating to wellbeing, drugs, crime, health, etc.' (Forum Feedback)

4. More information is required

It is clear people are finding it frustrating and difficult to comment on the issue without some proposed models being clearly articulated. While there is a sense people would like to engage with some 'nitty' 'gritty' type discussion on particular points of a model. From an amenity point of view issues such as parking; location to schools and residential areas; or service users type issues such as maintaining anonymity; age of persons being able to access

the service; that there should be some kind of childcare arrangements were all raised. However issues such as should it be a clinical environment or not haven't made it into peoples comments. Further to this people are saying clearly, give us a few models to look at and critically appraise.

'How the anonymity of clients will remain if the shooting galleries are well known. How will you encourage druggies to use this facility'
(Forum Feedback)

'More information is required especially on models used overseas' (Forum Feedback)

'How can a shifting drug scene (policing moves it around) be served by a fixed position injecting room'
(Forum Feedback)

'Where do you intend to locate the St Kilda safe injection house?' (Forum Feedback)

'Legalisation of heroin and more information on what supervised injecting facilities will offer to users' (Forum Feedback)

'Timeframes and implementation users perspective's on safe injecting strategies workers concerns around implementation and actual changes to daily life of residents.' (Forum Feedback)

'Have presentation from the alternative and opposite viewpoints, this presentation tonight being one sided is difficult to evaluate and judge as to its facts, arguments and philosophy because there is no opposition viewpoint presented with it.' (Forum Feedback)

'This forum is the most I've ever heard. There should be more "realistic" reviews on television and other media. Give us the truth.'
(Forum Feedback)

'More information out to community on target group 'chaotic users' and aim to build relationships/rapport with those unlikely to previously access services provided.' (Forum Feedback)

'More information is required on the type of injecting facilities. Who would be eligible to use them. What sort of opening times would there be.' (Forum Feedback)

5. How this will change the amenity of the area:

People are concerned with how this will impact their local environment, their street, and their neighbourhood. Everything from increased parking and traffic issues to increasing crime. As well as the possibility of positive changes such as less needles on the streets, less people using on the streets and users being articulated into drug services via their contact with the injecting facility

'[there will be] less "drug litter" Provide safe, non-judgemental, respectful place to inject.' (Forum Feedback)

'If they take people away from the streets, good but lets not forget about the other problems associated with the usage of heroin.' (Forum Feedback)

'Our toilets are presently regarded by injecting drug users as "the" safe injecting room in the local area as the are safe, well lit, have fresh running water and offer privacy' (George Cinemas)

'The level of illicit drug use in our toilets is excessive and there is little we can do to stop without the support of local and state government' (George Cinemas)

'A safe injecting room is urgently needed in the local area, to prevent our toilets being used for this purpose in future.' (George Cinemas)

'Unless there is extensive and constant publicity we will be known as the drug area' (Forum Feedback)

'If safe injection houses are established in St Kilda, will Sacred Heart Mission and the Salvation Army still allow the needle exchange to still happen.' (Forum Feedback)

'I don't want them at all – let alone in St Kilda – particularly if the publicity about the demands of the users are correct. It is only going to legalise drug trafficking particularly close to the injecting houses.' (Web Submission)

'Improvement will take "public nuisance" factor away' (Forum Feedback)

'Anyone honest, including myself, would say NIMBY. No one wants an even greater congregation of addicts around.' (Web Submission)

'We are concerned that the small number of facilities currently proposed could result in a massive compounding of the drug problems within the vicinity of these areas. We believe that drug users and more particularly, drug dealers, will increasingly be attracted to these few facilities. This will result in a further loss of amenity and trade and a probable increase in crime and community trauma.' (Fitzroy Street Traders Association)

'Need injecting facilities, I live near Fitzroy Street and see a lot of street injecting, but what about the issue of dealing in an around the area.' (Forum feedback)

'Hopefully [this will change the amenity] for the better. We need to change people's opinions as to this area being a 'junkies" haven'(Forum Feedback)

6. We want to feel heard now and later:

There was a strong sense that people were worried that their concerns would not be heard. Interestingly this came through on issues regarding a model, people didn't want to have a model imposed on them, but rather wanted a number of models they could critically appraise.

People have been critical of the forums to date for only presenting information that is positive about injecting facilities - there were a number of requests for the other side of the story. This alludes to fact that people want to have their say about whether these facilities go ahead at all, not just what the model should look like. People also wanted to understand the information loops being used around this issue, particularly how they will get to have their say when these services are running, and how they are being evaluated.

*'We're not fooled, but it looks good.
"Fait accompli".'* (Forum Feedback)

'As a resident of the City of Port Phillip, I think it is important that Council provide more information about this issue. In particular, I would like to see an issue of Council's newsletter devoted to presenting the case for and against safe injecting rooms.' (Web Submission)

'Reporting back of statistics that show effects of SIF on fatal Opiate overdose. I feel this needs to be regular in order to address concerns and provide feedback on the success or lack of - of SIF' (Web Submission)

'[we need] many opportunities to feed our views in - website, through CoPP submission, letters to media, directly to the Drug Expert Policy Advisory Committee.' (Forum Feedback)

'Make information available to people regarding the outcome of trials on an ongoing bases.' (Forum Feedback)

'I was left with the distinct impression that the decision for Port Phillip has already been made and that the forums are 'information', 'education' or merely 'legitimation' vehicles. If this is so, it's disappointing for residents like me who attended prepared to look at the issue, believing we could have meaningful input.' (Web Submission)

7. How will it be evaluated:

Very strong questions about how will we know if this is a good strategy or not. How will we know it works? What criteria will we measure its success by? How do we feed into that list of criteria? How will you (the government, council and service provider) know what we think about it both during the pilot and at its completion? A commitment that it be scrapped if this evaluation suggests it isn't working.

'Model evolution and assessment/evaluation users viewpoints and target populations' (Forum Feedback)

'Understanding prior to implementation of how it will be evaluated - widely available information.' (Forum Feedback)

'I guess the results will, with time, speak for themselves but keep the community update on progresses, or regresses'

'Evaluation is a vital component to ensure cost effectiveness and outcomes are measured and known' (Forum Feedback)

'Objective evaluation will be difficult. Who will assess? The professionals associated with a trial have a highly vested interest – careers are at stake, a bucket of money will have been spent (therefore cant be seen to fail).' (Web Submission)

'The establishment of safer using facilities require clear and broad objectives including the reduction in heroin related overdose and death amongst street users, the reduction in public nuisance, as services for all aspects of their health and welfare needs. (Inner South Community Health Services)

'Reduction of drug-related deaths' (Public Forum)

'It is important that there is ongoing evaluation, at least every 12-18 months, so that any model developed may be improved and should include community consultation.' (Forum Feedback)

Overall Key Concerns

What are some of the key concerns regarding:

- Service Objectives/Design Issues
- Injecting Facility Location Issues
- Services Surrounding injecting facilities
- Community Safety Issues
- Cultural Integration

Service Objectives/Design Issues

There are several major key factors articulated in the data which relate to the service objectives and design:

- a) That age be no barrier to accessing the service, in fact several contributors suggest that the service should have specific strategies around targeting youth at risk.
- b) That clear legal frameworks are developed and legislated so that police officers, service providers and service users all know where they stand. For service providers this also includes issues such as possible liability for users actions after injecting and leaving the premises. e.g. driving a car.
- c) That the model chosen provide on-site medical supervision at all times but not in a 'clinical' environment.
- d) That the anonymity of service users be maintained - this may be possible if the new service is co-located with an existing generalist service provider.
- e) That serious thought is given to how best to provide for children of service users while they are accessing the centre.

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- f) The possibility of licensing existing community service providers to run an injecting facility on their premises. This might take the form of providers, like crisis accommodation providers providing several 2 hr time blocks a day for residents of their facilities. A health service provider may operate a IF between 9am and 5pm, a housing service may operate a IF in the afternoon. The different services and their operating times could be printed on the paper bags needle and syringe exchanges use to wrap their needles or given out on business card size information cards.
 - g) There was also the suggestion that some sort of mobile IF be set up and could easily move locations across the inner city.

Injecting Facility Location Issues

The location issues tend to fit with the existing guidelines outlined by the DPEC.

- a) That the service not be close to residential, commercial properties or be located near a school.
- b) That the service be located where people will use it. e.g. where people score.
- c) That one service in the City of Port Phillip isn't enough.

Services Surrounding injecting facilities

Those who supported the trial of an injecting facility suggested clearly that the service should provide a number of information, health, welfare and counselling services - but that access to the injecting facility is not reliant on accessing any other service.

Community Safety Issues

The main community safety issues raised related to issues like increased used syringes in the streets, increased dealing and increased crime - particularly assault. Contributors questioned how these issues could be dealt with effectively if police couldn't intervene or were not present close to the injecting facility

Cultural Integration

There was little comment about specific cultural, as in racial, integration issues. However people did comment on the need to be accessible to specific groups and to target groups at high risk. It is presumed this also relates to targeting high risk groups within specific racial or ethnic backgrounds.

The City of Port Phillip Council's position on injecting facilities.

At the City of Port Phillip Council meeting of 31st January 2000, the following motion was carried unanimously.

1. That Council invite the State Government to jointly establish a working party to guide the process of planning, development and implementation of Supervised injecting facilities within the policy framework set by the Victorian Government and Council.
2. Council proposes the membership of the working party outlined in 4.4 of the report and authorises the Manager, Neighbourhood and Amenity, to negotiate and agree with the State Government on representatives from the community organisations.
(4.4 suggests membership include Police, Dept. of Human Services, CoPP Councillor, Director of City Development, Manager of Social Development, Hanover Welfare Services, Inner South Community Health Service, Salvation Army, Sacred Heart Mission, Turning Point Alcohol and Drug Centre, VIVAIDS, Victorian Injecting Drug Users Group.)
3. Council requests that the joint working party report to Council on proposed facilities and their objectives, for Council endorsement and directions.
4. Council notes that when Supervised Injecting Facilities are up and running, Social Development (department of Council) will take over responsibility for ongoing liaison, support and monitoring.

Conclusion

It is clear that an issue such as the provision of injecting facilities is unlikely to ever receive full and clear community support. However the consultation process to-date indicates that citizens of Port Phillip do support harm reduction strategies being used as a response to the impact of illicit drug use. It is also clear that although there is significant goodwill regarding the issue of illicit drug use, there is also a lot of fear about the possible implications of setting up an injecting facility in the City of Port Phillip. Even given this fear people have still been willing to engage in this process and try to work out how these facilities might look, feel and fit into their community. People's input, for the most part, has been positively constructive in recognising that as a community we need to work on alternative strategies to those currently employed to deal with illicit drug use and its impact on their community.