

- Needle & Syringe Programs (NSPs) have been part of both Federal and State government strategies on preventing blood-borne viruses and on illicit drug use for more than 20 years. The program has always had bi-partisan support. It not only saves lives but it saves money.
- NSPs are sometimes located in community settings because they and people who inject drugs (PWID) are part of the community.
- It is important that NSPs are not difficult to find and that they are located where PWID are able to access them.
- Much research has been undertaken on NSP location and has shown that fear of the so called 'honeypot' effect has no basis in fact. PWID do not tend to congregate around NSPs and all NSPs go to great lengths to ensure people do not inject nearby.
- Research has shown that providing sterile equipment does not encourage new users and nor does it increase the drug use of those who already use.
- It is part of every NSP's role to provide safe disposal options for used injecting equipment.
- All NSPs provide referral information and are ready to assist any client with attending detox or beginning pharmacotherapy treatment when they decide the time is right.

### **NSP IN NSW**

In NSW NSPs are generally run by Area Health Services, but there are a few that are run by NGOs. NUAAs is one such NSP.

We run needle clean up walks every morning and consistently and continually work with clients to ensure that we know of any hotspots and that people are aware of the need to dispose of equipment safely.

Most people who inject drugs dispose of their equipment safely. Nevertheless we know that no matter how many thousands are returned safely to us each week, the one that is left on the pavement is the one that locals will remember so we work hard to ensure none are left around.

### **HARM REDUCTION**

NSPs in NSW are considered to be part of the harm reduction response to blood-borne viruses such as HIV & hepatitis C.

Harm reduction is one aspect of the government policy of Harm Minimisation.

Harm reduction is a pragmatic & humane response that seeks to reduce any harms associated with injecting drug use without necessarily seeking to stop the use of drugs. Instead PWID are given the opportunity to use sterile injecting equipment and to learn about safer injection, preventing the transmission of blood-borne viruses, avoiding overdose and so on.

One aim is to keep PWID as safe as possible so that when or if they choose to stop using they are as healthy as possible.

Demand & supply reduction are other aspects of harm minimisation and are pursued in a variety of ways.

### **NSPs SAVE LIVES & MONEY**

A rigorous report into NSP in Australia has shown that, by preventing thousands of HIV & Hep C infections, the program saved 7.7 billion dollars for an outlay of 150 million. This is for cases prevented 1991 to 2000 and includes only savings to the direct treatment costs, not productivity gains that would also have been made.