

BCH POSITION STATEMENTS

Date: June 2016



Needle & Syringe Exchange Program (NSP)

BCH Role

Needle and Syringe Programs (NSP's) form part of the Australian National Drug Strategy: the aim of NSPs is to reduce the spread of blood borne viral infections among injecting drug users, and thereby the general community. It is based on the philosophy of harm minimisation.

Ballarat Community Health (BCH) operates a Needle and Syringe Program from three sites in Ballarat (Sebastopol, Wendouree and Lucas) as well as a limited outreach service. The BCH NSPs provide sterile injecting equipment and disposal options to reduce risks associated with inappropriately disposed injecting equipment.

Health promotion is integral part of the NSP and includes strategies aimed at improving the health of injecting drug users and reducing risk behaviours associated with injecting drugs. It may include referral to health services and information and education aimed at reducing blood borne virus transmission, overdose prevention and other injecting drug related harms.

Key Messages

- The first NSP in Australia was in 1986.
- NSPs are supported by all major political parties in Australia. The Australian Medical Association (AMA) and the World Health Organisation (WHO) strongly support NSPs. All state and territory police departments also support NSPs.
- NSPs have been extensively researched for their effectiveness and have been shown to be one of the most cost-effective interventions when compared with other public health interventions.
- Economic estimates have shown that for every \$1 dollar spent on Needle and Syringe Programs (NSPs) saves the community \$27. Between 1986 and 2000 it is estimated that NSP's prevented 25,000 HIV infections, 21,000 Hepatitis C infections and saved between \$2.4 and \$7.7 billion
- BCH's NSPs also seek to reduce other injecting related injury and diseases and provide important link to drug treatment referral and access, where appropriate.

In response to common community concerns about NSP

- Drug use has been proven to decrease among injecting drug users who attend NSPs
- The vast majority of needles and syringes are disposed of safely and appropriately
- NSPs decrease the number of improperly discarded syringes
- There is no recorded case in Australia of HIV transmission from a needle stick injury in a community setting

Ballarat Community Health provides Alcohol and Other Drug Treatment Services as well as health promotion and education programs for clients in this area. Staff also provide secondary consultation to other health professionals.

For more information contact Ballarat Community Health:

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