



NEW SOUTH WALES NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION
AUSTRALIAN NURSING AND MIDWIFERY FEDERATION NEW SOUTH WALES BRANCH



POSITION STATEMENT ON HARM REDUCTION

Re-Endorsed by Annual Conference 2019

NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association
50 O'Dea Avenue Waterloo NSW 2017

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Position Statement on Harm Reduction

IT IS THE POSITION OF THE NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES' ASSOCIATION THAT:

The NSW Nurses and Midwives' Association (NSWNMA) is an advocate for interventions that promote harm minimisation in relation to substance use. The NSWNMA supports the exploration and investigation of alternative models for control of drug use. The NSWNMA acknowledges that adequate resources for drug and alcohol treatment, management and preventative education is required, with a commitment of recurrent funding to ensure treatment options and ongoing support is readily available and able to be maintained.

Harm Reduction International defines harm reduction as the...

*'policies, programmes and practices that aim to reduce the harms associated with the use of psychoactive drugs in people unable or unwilling to stop. The defining features are the focus on the prevention of harm, rather than on the prevention of drug use itself, and the focus on people who continue to use drugs.'*¹

It is well known that a blanket ban on illicit drugs and the application of criminal law to control substance use in Australia is an approach that is failing. According to the National Drug Strategy Household survey, in 2016, around 3.1 million Australians reported using an illicit drug. There is a need to explore alternative models that can assist in the control of drug use and reduce the occurrence of adverse events relating to illicit drug use.²

THE NSW NURSES AND MIDWIVES ASSOCIATION ADOPTS THE POSITION THAT:

The NSWNMA has long been a leader in its advocacy for harm minimisation to protect the public and has demonstrated a harm minimisation approach by supporting:

- The Injecting Room, Sydney Medically Supervised Injecting Centre
- NSW Drug Law Reform on Cannabis use
- Needle and syringe programs
- Opiate Antagonist Treatment for people using opioids
- Retention of measures to reduce alcohol related violence in the Sydney CBD and Newcastle



Pill testing is a harm reduction approach that provides substance users with information that they might otherwise not have been able to access and allows substance users the opportunity to make informed decisions regarding their substance use. It enables health clinicians to have contact with a population that can be difficult to access because of the large number who only use for recreational purposes and are often not experiencing acute drug problems or ongoing dependence. The NSWNMA supports regulated pill testing.

The NSWNMA supports regulation of harm reduction approaches to substance use as a strategy to reduce harm and increase the safety for substance users by minimising the risk of overdoses and deaths due to substance use.

REFERENCES

1. Harm Reduction International, A position statement from Harm Reduction International, <https://www.hri.global/what-is-harm-reduction>
2. National Drug Strategy Household Survey 2016, <https://campaigns.health.gov.au/drughelp/drug-trends-and-statistics>

RESOURCES

1. Drug Policy Alliance, <https://www.drugpolicy.org/issues/harm-reduction>
2. Harm reduction Australia, What is harm reduction? <https://www.harmreductionaustralia.org.au/what-is-harm-reduction/>
3. Overview of International Literature, Supervised injecting Facilities & Drug Consumption Rooms issue 1: August 2017, <https://uniting.org/who-we-help/for-adults/sydney-medically-supervised-injecting-centre/resources>