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INJECTING CENTRE TO STAY: PHAA WELCOMES DECISION

The Public Health Association of Australia (PHAA) has welcomed the NSW Government's decision to make the medically supervised injecting centre at Kings Cross a permanent fixture. The centre's trial status is set to be lifted after almost 10 years of life-saving work and proven community benefits.

"The establishment of the centre by former Premier Bob Carr back in 2001 following the NSW Drug Summit was a ground-breaking and forward-thinking public health policy decision. In the years that have followed more than 3,500 overdoses have been managed at the centre without a single fatality – a wonderful outcome for both those individuals and their families who may otherwise have lost their loved ones. The Centre has also referred thousands of people to drug treatment and contributed to a reduction in drug-related problems for the Kings Cross community," said Michael Moore, PHAA Chief Executive Officer.

"The Kings Cross medically supervised injecting centre caters for around 200 injections a day by intravenous drug users – these would otherwise take place on the streets – placing users at risk of overdose and creating obvious problems for the community and businesses in the area. Assessments of the centre's operation have consistently demonstrated that despite some initial reservations, the Kings Cross community has seen demonstrable benefits from the establishment of the centre in terms of amenity and public order, which are over and above the health benefits experienced by users.

"PHAA supports the harm reduction approach to policy in relation to reducing the harms from illicit drug use. Harm reduction measures, such as the establishment of the medically supervised injecting centre, coupled with complementary demand reduction and supply reduction measures, make up a comprehensive approach to addressing drug-related problems in the Australian community.

"Ultimately, if people are to overcome drug problems, it is vital that they are kept alive long enough to do so. It is impossible to rehabilitate someone who has already died from a drug overdose, and the Kings Cross medically supervised injecting centre has saved the lives of many sons, daughters, brothers, sisters and parents who would otherwise not be with us today," said Mr Moore.

For further information/comment:

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