

Media Release

The Hon Daniel Andrews MP
Premier



Tuesday, 31 October, 2017

MORE REHAB BEDS, BETTER TREATMENT AND SAFER STREETS

The Andrews Labor Government today unveiled a new plan to tackle skyrocketing ice and heroin deaths and help Victorians get the treatment they need to beat their addiction.

The Labor Government's \$87 million *Drug Rehabilitation Plan* builds on the work done through the *Ice Action Plan* to save lives, treat users, keep our streets safe, and to crack down on dealers.

With the number of Victorians losing their lives because of a heroin overdose now the highest it has been for nearly 20 years, the Government will take a safety-first, medical approach and undertake an initial two year trial of a medically supervised injecting room at the North Richmond Community Health Centre.

This includes an option to extend the trial for a further three years.

Legislation to do this will be introduced into Parliament today. The medically supervised injecting room will commence from June 2018 and will have the strictest oversight including:

- The Bill to specify for one licence to operate a medically supervised injecting room, with the address of the location written into the legislation. This ensures it can only operate at the North Richmond Community Health Centre for the duration of the trial
- Allowing only people aged over 18 years to use the facility, with a ban on children attending
- Ensuring that illegal drugs won't be provided or dealt at the facility
- Putting in place additional security measures, including 13 new CCTV cameras near the facility and in surrounding streets
- Ensuring Victoria Police works closely with the Department of Health and Human Services to support community safety while minimising drug harm.

The Government will also appoint an expert panel of health and community representatives to oversee and review the effectiveness of the medically supervised injecting room. The Panel will report back annually, with the first report provided by June 2019.

As part of this plan we will also expand treatment, boost training and invest in 100 more residential rehab beds – doubling the number of rehab beds in Victoria since we came to government.

These extra beds will mean 400 more Victorians each year will get the help they need to beat their addiction and create long-lasting change in their lives. The beds are expected to open by March 2018.

New residential rehabilitation facilities are also being established in key regional areas to stop the devastating effects of ice and other drugs in communities across the state.

A new rapid detox withdrawal model will be trialled for those individuals experiencing particularly complex addiction and conditions who present at hospital, to help take pressure off our emergency departments and get them the help they need sooner.

This will support an additional 100 people a year to engage in drug treatment.

The Government will crack down on the criminals who supply these devastating drugs by introducing tough laws to increase sentencing for commercial heroin traffickers.

Media Contact: Georgia Brumby 0428 698 185 | Georgia.brumby@minstaff.vic.gov.au

This is similar to new laws introduced by the Government for those who commercially traffic ice, which come into effect from 1 November 2017.

New sentencing reforms to target the role of organised crime in commercial drug trafficking will also be introduced, where the trafficking is done for the benefit of, or directed by, organised crime.

Dodgy private rehab providers who seek to exploit people experiencing addiction and provide unsafe and unregulated treatment will also be targeted, with the Health Complaints Commissioner given new powers to hold them to account and penalise those who do the wrong thing.

We will also begin consultation on options to provide compulsory treatment for people 18 years and over, who have complex needs such as addiction and mental illness and who pose a risk to others, as well as options for young offenders.

Quotes attributable to Premier Daniel Andrews

“The hundreds of Victorians losing their lives to drugs are more than just statistics – they are much loved sons, daughters, parents and friends.”

“There is no silver bullet here – but together, these measures will save lives and keep Victorians safe.”

Quote attributable to Minister for Mental Health Martin Foley

“We know the damage addiction causes for families across the state – that’s why we’re doubling the number of rehab beds so more Victorians can get the support they need to beat their addiction faster.”

Quote attributable to Minister for Police Lisa Neville

“These tough new penalties and offences will reduce supply and keep our communities safe by targeting organised crime and the dealers who put these devastating drugs on our streets.”

Quote attributable to Member for Richmond Richard Wynne

“Too many people are dying in Richmond and it has to end. This is bold, brave action that will give addicts a chance at survival and make our streets safer.”