



Hon Lawrence Springborg MP
Minister for Health

30 AUG 2012

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Mr Neil Laurie
Clerk of the Parliament
Queensland Parliamentary Service
George Street
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Dear Mr Laurie

I write in response to your letter regarding petition number 1846-12, tabled in Parliament on 31 July 2012, in relation to the need for medically-supervised injecting facilities in Queensland.

Queensland Health is committed to the *National Drug Strategy* and has responded with the development of the *2011-2012 Queensland Drug Action Plan*. Harm reduction measures within Queensland include the provision of:

- the Queensland Needle and Syringe Program (QNSP), with 157 active primary and secondary sites providing injecting equipment, referral into treatment and health advice for clients; and
- the Queensland Opioid Treatment Program (QOTP), providing pharmacotherapy for clients who are opioid dependent.

Within Australia, the Kings Cross medically-supervised injecting facility has been available in New South Wales for the last decade. Evaluation of this centre and others across the world has indicated that they reduce overdose rates, infections from intravenous drug use, including HIV, and decrease the level of unsafe disposal of injecting equipment.

However, medically-supervised injection facilities appear to be most beneficial in areas where there is substantial public injecting, particularly by clients who are homeless or have inconsistent housing arrangements and where there are high levels of unsafe disposal of injecting equipment on to the streets. Within Queensland, it is not clear that there are areas which would meet these criteria and therefore support such a facility. Queensland, in general, does not have the volume of intravenous injectors as seen in some other states of Australia, nor does it appear to have areas of high public injecting as seen in Kings Cross.

Queensland Health will continue to provide harm reduction measures appropriate to the needs of the community. The QNSP provides clean needles and syringes as well as disposal bins for clients; works in conjunction with the Pharmacy Guild to provide disposal bins in pharmacies; and provides harm reduction based resources for clients including the Vein Care package, advice on how to manage overdose and information about emerging drugs of concern. QOTP is provided by a mixture of private and public clinics and works from a public health model aiming to get opioid dependent people into treatment as quickly as possible.

I trust that this information will be of assistance.

Yours sincerely

A large, stylized handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Lawrence Springborg', is written over the typed name and title.

LAWRENCE SPRINGBORG MP
Minister for Health