

# Prisons, Needle and Syringe Programs and Occupational Health & Safety

Presentation by Anex to the National Conference on Australian Prison Issues

# Who is Anex

- Anex is a non profit organisation committed to reducing the harms caused by drugs, based on the best available evidence
- Anex does not condone drug use but rather, seeks to protect people while at their most vulnerable

# What We Do

- Anex advocates for evidence based practice to reduce the harms associated with drug use – particularly NSPs
- Provides sector support and workforce development through training and meetings
- Research and policy development
- Projects funded by various agencies to better understand the harms caused by drugs and how to prevent them.

# Australian NSPs

- Australia has over 3000 NSPs operating via a number of models
- Primary NSPs, Secondary NSPs, Vending Machines, Mobile Outreach and Pharmacies.
- Aim to provide sterile injecting equipment to reduce the spread of BBV such as HCV and HIV.

# Why NSPs work

- Recent Return on Investment report showed that more than 32,000 HIV and 100,000 HCV infections prevented in the last nine years
- Only 0.1% of injectors are HIV positive, but 14% would be if not for NSPs
- There is a \$4 return for every \$1 invested.

## Taken from Victoria Police Community Information Bulletin:

- NSPs do not represent a no-go zone for police, nor are they to be seen by police as an easy option for arresting offenders.
- NSPs and police need to co-exist in order for the community to reap the real benefits of harm reduction.
- A little bit of appreciation and understanding on both sides is essential to maintain positive relations.
- NSP managers and local police managers should be on good speaking terms, and regular liaison should occur.

Ref: <[www.police.vic.gov.au/retrievemedias.asp?Media\\_ID=35807](http://www.police.vic.gov.au/retrievemedias.asp?Media_ID=35807)>

# Anex and Prisons

- Anex seeks to advocate for the provision of the same health care services that are available for the general community to prisoners
- Injecting drug use in prisons continues to occur
- The 2001 NSW Inmate Health Survey showed that among inmates with a history of injecting in prison, a third of the respondents stated that the needle had been used by **five or more people before them.**

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## Prison needle program may reduce virus spread

Australian Broadcasting Corporation

Broadcast: 02/10/2009

**Reporter: Steve Cannane**



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**The Australian drugs conference in Melbourne has today called for a trial of needle and syringe programs in Australian prisons. One in three Australian inmates has hepatitis C, and it is thought that a needle and syringe program could reduce the incidence of blood-borne viruses in jail.**

## Supply reduction: implementation in prison

- Widespread
- Expensive
- Limited evaluation

## Demand reduction: implementation in prison

- Reasonable
- Inexpensive
- Favourable evaluation

## Harm reduction: implementation in prison

- Limited / least likely
- Inexpensive
- Favourable evaluation

## *2004 National Prison Entrants' Blood Borne Virus Survey*

### HIV

- . 3 male inmates tests positive for HIV infection

### Hepatitis C

- . 34% prevalence among all inmates participating in the survey.
- . 56% prevalence among respondents reporting injecting drug use
- . 41% prevalence among respondents reporting previous incarceration
- . 16% prevalence among respondents entering prison for the first time

## United Nations

### *Basic Principles for the Treatment of Prisoners*

5. Except for those limitations that are demonstrably necessitated by the fact of incarceration, all prisoners shall retain the human rights and fundamental freedoms set out in the Universal Declaration of Human Rights, and, where the State concerned is a party, the International Covenant on Economic, Social and Cultural Rights, and the International Covenant on Civil and Political Rights and the Optional Protocol thereto, as well as such other rights as are set out in other United Nations covenants.

9. Prisoners shall have access to the health services available in the country without discrimination on the grounds of their legal situation.

# Revised Standard Guidelines for Corrections in Australia 2004

These guidelines have been developed in accordance with the principle that prisoners are:

- treated with respect as human beings and not to be subject to harsh or degrading treatment, physical or psychological abuse.
- owed a duty of care by the Administering Department.

## *Safe Environments and the Effective Management of Risk*

1.25 Prisons should identify, minimise and manage risk.

1.27 Prison should provide for the personal safety of staff and prisoners by ensuring a prison environment that protects the physical, psychological and emotional well-being of individuals.

1.28 Prisons should develop and implement a prisoner safety regime which:

...

- identifies prisoners who present a risk to prison staff or other prisoners; and
- places prisoners in situations which minimise their opportunities to be harmed or harm others.

1.31 All necessary measures should be taken to ensure that no prisoner injuries or unnatural deaths occur.

1.34 Prisons should provide a management system that meets the different and particular needs of all prisoners including "at-risk" prisoners."

## Circumstances in which NSI occurred

	N (%)
Searching an inmate	1 (7)
Searching a cell	5 (29)
Searching another area	5 (29)
All searching	11 (65)
Routine duties other than searching	6 (35)

Larney, S. *Injecting drug use in prisons: Occupational needlestick injuries and evidence of multiple users and blood borne viral infections in prison syringes*. Paper presented at the Australasian Professional Society on Alcohol and other Drugs Conference, Cairns, 2006.

"An employer shall take all reasonable practicable steps to protect the health, safety and welfare at work of the employer's employees."

There have been no cases of syringes being used as a weapon in a prison setting in countries outside Australia which have introduced prison regulated and controlled NSPs.





"The blanket prohibition has made syringes a scarce, high-value commodity in prison ... Needles are routinely shared, sometimes between as many as 100 inmates. When blunt, it is not unheard of for them to be sharpened on prison walls" – Paul Smith (2007)  
*Australian Doctor: Prison Health Special Report*