

Victoria Police Manual

The Victoria Police Manual is issued under the authority of the Chief Commissioner of Police in s.60, Victoria Police Act 2013. Non-compliance with or a departure from the Victoria Police Manual may be subject to management or disciplinary action. Employees must use VPM Professional and ethical standards to inform the decisions they make to support compliance.

Drug programs and services

Context

The purpose of this instrument is to describe Victoria Police's interaction with illicit drug harm reduction programs and services and to inform members how to interact with these programs and services.

Drug harm reduction services are health and/or education focused. They include needle and syringe exchange services, medically supervised injecting centres, drug treatment services and drug education services. These services broadly aim to minimise the harm caused to the individual and to the wider community from illicit drug use.

Victoria Police supports drug harm reduction services as part of the organisation's commitment to a harm minimisation approach to illicit drugs. Victoria Police's approach to illicit drugs is described in the Drug Strategy 2020-2025 (the strategy). The strategy is based on the principles of prevent, disrupt, connect and care, and overall is designed to reduce drug-related harm.

Victoria Police's response to illicit drugs also includes disrupting and reducing the supply of illicit drugs through drug law enforcement. See **VPMG Drug investigations** for further information on managing major drug investigations.

Contents

Context	1
Contents	1
Definitions.....	1
Responsibilities and procedures.....	1
1. Harm reductions programs and initiatives.....	1
2. Needle and syringe programs.....	2
3. Medically Supervised Injecting Centre	3
4. Drug lectures.....	4
5. Community Liaison.....	4
Related documents.....	4
Further advice and information.....	5
Update history.....	5

Definitions

For the purpose of this policy, "vicinity" can be defined as "the area near or surrounding a particular place".

Responsibilities and procedures

1. Harm reductions programs and initiatives

Consistent with the principles of prevent, disrupt, connect and care as described within the Victoria Police Drug Strategy 2020 - 2025, Victoria Police interacts with several harm-reduction programs and initiatives.

- Needle and Syringe Programs (NSPs)
- Medically Supervised Injecting Centres
- Drug Education Services
- Community forums and treatment programs.

2. Needle and syringe programs

2.1 *What is a needle and syringe program?*

- NSPs are part of the Government's harm minimisation strategy and aim to minimise the spread of blood-borne viruses among people who inject drugs and into the wider community. The sharing of needles or other injecting equipment is one of the most common ways of transmitting blood-borne viruses.
- NSPs provide access to sterile needles and syringes and provide a disposal outlet.
- NSPs can be located at:
 - fixed location services identified with a standard symbol
 - pharmacies/hospitals/community health centres
 - mobile and outreach services (staff carry appropriate identification).
- The location of NSP's across Victoria are listed on the Department of Health – Needle and Syringe Program website.

2.2 *Liaison between Victoria Police and needle syringe programs*

Relevant work unit and local area commanders (LACs) must ensure liaison occurs with NSPs. This includes:

- active liaison with NSP managers and establishing effective working relations
- informing members of the location of the NSP so that they can adhere to these instructions
- LACs having regard for their responsibilities as detailed within **VPM Community policing**.

2.3 *Performing police duties at or near needle syringe programs*

Considering the harm minimisation approach of Victoria Police:

- the vicinity of an NSP should not be targeted solely for the purpose of enforcing drug use or possession laws unless there is an identified need to do so (i.e., to treat increase in crime type, reduce low level drug trafficking in vicinity)
- if it is necessary for police to perform duties in the vicinity of an NSP, a sub-officer should consider advising the NSP manager
- attending an NSP is insufficient grounds on its own to establish reasonable grounds to search a person under s.82, *Drugs, Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981*. Members may only conduct a search of a person visiting or leaving an NSP where there are reasons for the search other than the person's presence near the NSP
- it is not an offence to possess needles or syringes. Members may only seize this equipment where it forms part of an offence.

2.4 *Located needles and syringes*

If advice is required on how to safely dispose of located needles and syringes contact the Syringe Disposal Hotline (1800 552 355, 24 hours a day, seven days a week), the nearest NSP, or contact local government.

3. Medically Supervised Injecting Centre

3.1 Overview

- A Medically Supervised Injecting Centre (MSIC) is a government-licensed facility which provides a supervised area for intravenous drug users where overdoses can be prevented and treated.
- The key purpose of a MSIC is to reduce the harm associated with the intravenous use of illicit drugs.

3.2 *Liaison between Victoria Police and a Medically Supervised Injecting Centre*

Relevant work unit managers and LACs must ensure liaison occurs with the MSIC. This includes:

- active liaison with MSIC managers and the establishment of effective working relationships
- informing members of the location of the MSIC so that they can adhere to these instructions
- LACs having regard for their responsibilities as detailed within **VPM Community policing**.

3.3 *Performing duties in the vicinity of a Medically Supervised Injecting Centre*

Members must consider the harm minimisation approach of Victoria Police and ensure:

- the vicinity of the MSIC is not targeted solely for the purpose of enforcing drug use or possession laws unless there is an identified need to do so (i.e., to treat increase in crime type, reduce low level drug trafficking in vicinity)
- if it is necessary for police to perform duties in the vicinity of the MSIC, a sub-officer should consider advising the MSIC manager
- searches are only conducted on a person visiting or leaving the MSIC where the member has reasonable grounds other than the person's presence near the MSIC
- any drugs found in the possession of a searched person are seized
- a Notice of Abandonment is sought where a member seizes drugs and exercises their discretion not to charge the person. In these circumstances' members must include a notation on PALM stating "discretion not to charge MSIC"
- a field contact is submitted on LEDR MKII in relation to all persons checked in the vicinity of the MSIC, regardless of whether they are searched
- intelligence relating to activities within, or in the vicinity of, the MSIC is submitted via an Information Report. This includes, but is not limited to:
 - the seizure of any drug following the search of a person where the member exercises their discretion to not charge
 - clearly drug affected persons leaving the MSIC
 - children (or any person with the appearance of being under 18) leaving the MSIC

- information from the MSIC on potential trafficking or supply of drugs by any person within, or in the vicinity of, the MSIC.

4. Drug lectures

- Where any request is received for an employee to present on drug or alcohol matters to a community group, school or other outside organisation, obtain relevant details about the request and report them to the work unit manager or LAC.
- The work unit manager or LAC will determine a suitable employee.
- The Drug and Alcohol Strategy Unit (DASU) is available to assist employees who require advice or resources on approved drug and alcohol presentations.

5. Community Liaison

- Employees are encouraged to develop and maintain appropriate liaison with a wide range of community groups, working parties and agencies.
- Employees are encouraged to consider Local Drug Action Teams (LDATs) who assist in the reduction of harms from alcohol and other drugs through the localised development of evidence-informed initiatives. These are run by the Alcohol and Drug Foundation (ADF).
- The Cultural, Community and Diversity Resource Hub (CCD Resource Hub) provides further information in community engagement.
- Community groups may make requests for police to support activities such as a:
 - drug education program
 - treatment program
 - drug action plan
 - drug funding application.
- Where requests are made for police involvement, employees should consider the nature of the request including the type of community group making the request, why police are being contacted and what is being requested.
- Employees must not endorse these programs without considering the conflict of interest principles and may only endorse services which have been authorised by the Chief Commissioner of Police. Activities must be consistent with the specific requirements as set out within **VPM Conflict of interest**.
- When the expressed or implied views of such groups conflict with Victoria Police policy or the law, members are to advise that the group's position is in conflict and that the group cannot be supported.

Related documents

Drugs Poisons and Controlled Substances Act 1981

Drugs Poisons and Controlled Substances Regulations 2017

Victoria Police Act 2013

Crimes Act 1958

Summary Offences Act 1966

Community Safety Statement

Victoria Police Drug Strategy 2020/2025

VPM Conflict of interest

VPM Community policing

<https://community.adf.org.au/ldat-program/>

<https://victoriapolice.sharepoint.com/sites/departement-capability/SitePages/CommunityEngagement.aspx>

Further advice and information

For further advice and assistance regarding this policy, contact DASU, Coordination Division, Capability Department.

Update history

DATE UPDATED	SUMMARY OF CHANGE	FORCE FILE NUMBER
22/08/2022	VPM Review and update of content including alignment with the Victoria Police Drug Strategy 2020-2025.	FF 130725