

# REDWATER NEWS

May 2009

The Redfern and Waterloo Community Newsletter

## ***Exchanging Views on Harm Reduction***

The term Harm Reduction (HR) often refers to policies, programmes and projects which aim to reduce the health, social and economic harms associated with Substance Misuse (IE: drugs and alcohol abuse)

***It is argued that it is a range of cost-effective approaches which bring benefits to the individual, community and society.*** Often, however, these services are surrounded in controversy with equal weighting argument for and against the use of such projects. In this issue we explore the divided views of the community.

### **Some examples of types of harm reduction strategies :-**

People who inject drugs are vulnerable to contracting blood borne infections such as HIV and hepatitis B and C. Providing sterile needles and syringes helps reduce the risk of infections. People dependent on illicit opiate drugs (such as heroin) are at particular risk from impure drugs, overdose, and having to engage in acquisitive crime in order to purchase their drugs. The medical provision of substitute drugs such as methadone and buprenorphine can reduce these risks.

People who become drunk in bars and pubs may cause harm to themselves or others. Training bar staff in responsible serving may help reduce the risk of intoxication and give staff the skills to prevent incidents. People who drink and then drive motor vehicles may hurt themselves or others. Drink driving laws, the provision of public transport, and designated driver programmes reduce risks of injury and fatality by separating drinking from driving.

People who smoke tobacco are likely to suffer serious illness and premature death. Helping them to switch to less harmful nicotine delivery systems - such as non-smokable tobacco - vastly reduces their risks.

### **Looking at Needle Exchange Programme (NEP)**

The main function of a NEP is to make new sterile needles and syringes accessible and to provide drug users with access to other injection equipment (like

sterile water, alcohol swabs, filters) for the safe injection/inhalation of drugs. ***The thinking is that providing clean sterile needles reduces unsafe injection practices like needle sharing, reduces transmission of HIV/AIDS and Hepatitis, increases safe disposal of used syringes, so that the syringes are not in the community and helps the injecting drug user in obtaining drug information, treatment, detoxification, social services, and health care.***

NEPs normally provide sterile water, alcohol swabs and sterile filters in order to reduce the health risks to the injector like abscesses and infections, which can be costly to heal if the individual ends up in the emergency department with an illness that could have been prevented by having access to clean sterile equipment. By providing the needed equipment for safe injection, injectors have contact with health service staff which can contribute to a stabilization or improvement in their general health and social functioning. Locally and internationally there are debates on the success rates of such programmes. **Those against it say :-**

- \* That the programmes represents a weakening of the "War on Drugs" making criminals into victims
- \* That the programs encourages drug use rather than reducing and the location of services attract criminal activity to an area; and thus increasing fear of crime and that the permanent location of such services may lower surrounding property values;
- \* There will be an increase in discarded injecting equipment around the service; and/or that it can strengthen networks of drug dealers and injectors and undermining treatment
- \* It may cause division and NIMBY syndrome within communities – not in my back yard .

Inside we look at other arguments for and against HR Strategies . Please let us know your views.

# Good news snippets

(To be followed up in the next edition)

- During Volunteer Week, starting May 11<sup>th</sup>, over 70 local volunteers will be recognised for their outstanding contribution to the local community.
- Thanks to Housing NSW and others funders the Factory Community Centre has had a welcome make over with upgraded IT systems, new kitchen and improved disabled access. Come along and check it out.
- Landscape project at the Solander High Rise is allowing 20 local young people to be part of changing the local community and improving recreation space. The participants will receive accredited training through TAFE in landscaping and other educational areas, whilst the community gets a improved community space. Photos of the completed project will be in the next edition.
- Thanks to the Waterloo Green Plan there has been 50% reduction in complaints to the police in that area. However the efforts have not diminished and we continue to work together to tackle local people concerns.
- Dobell Precinct in Pitt Street is to receive a makeover by local community through a forthcoming community art project.
- Housing NSW is about to carry out extensive work in relation to maintenance and communal areas due to recently receiving additional stimulus money from the Federal Government.
- Redfern Neighbourhood Advisory Board has received funds to host a community outdoor celebration event and Waterloo NAB have received funding to organise their annual summer in the green event in December. Details will be realised once the organising committees have been established. Thank you to Housing NSW.



## MUDGIN – GAL ABORIGINAL CORPORATION

231 ABERCROMBIE STREET, CHIPPENDALE NSW

HEY SISTER, HEY AUNT  
ARE YOU FEELING DOWN? NEED SOMEONE TO  
TALK TO?

**MUDGIN-GAL IS AN ABORIGINAL SERVICE  
THAT IS COMPLETELY STAFFED AND RUN BY  
ABORIGINAL WOMEN**

WE ARE HERE FOR YOU  
WE OFFER CONFIDENTIALITY ON MATTERS  
THAT ARE SENSITIVE

**OUR SERVICE IS ABOUT PROVIDING SUPPORT TO  
ABORIGINAL WOMEN, THIS COULD BE REFERRAL,  
ADVOCATING ON THEIR BEHALF, PROVIDING PHONE  
NUMBERS OR JUST HAVING A CHAT**

Here are some things we can assist with:

- Daily Drop-in Service (kitchen laundry & bathroom facilities)
- Domestic/Family violence Legal referral
- Centrelink information and support
- Access/Family support
- Housing information & support
- Healthy Family Circle Mentoring Programme
- Blackout Violence Campaign
- **Any other areas that is of concern**

**DROP IN OR GIVE US A CALL ON 9319 2613**

Mudgin-Gal has endorsement as a deductible gift recipient – all donations are tax deductible

## Women are Winners Group

**A 5 week group for women who are  
experiencing or have experienced  
Domestic Violence.**

**Groups are run every school term  
and bookings are essential**

At  
Barnardos Yurungai Child & Family Services  
174 Redfern Street  
Redfern

**For further information or to make a booking  
Please Ph: 9698 9577**

**Childcare is not available on the premises,  
but may be arranged**



**Produced by and for  
Redfern and Waterloo  
tenants**

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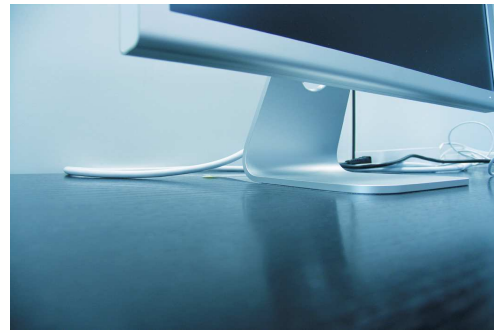
*To all the Precinct  
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**Extended electronic  
version is available  
on line,  
Email us at**

**info@the-factory.org.au  
(suitable for those with  
sight impairment)**



**HNSW offers Service  
Delivery Solutions  
for the C21st**

In April Housing NSW launched its Service Delivery Solutions presentation at the harbourside Sirius building in Millers Point. Finally after years of dithering the Department is embracing internet based

technology that will ultimately make dealing with simple housing matters much easier for computer literate residents.

Herein lies the basic problem with the system however as many residents are not comfortable with technology or cannot afford computers. This problem will change over time but for the next few years HNSW will need to encourage and support residents with learning and access to computers. This could be done by organising courses and cheap computers through adult education courses, community centres, libraries and council outreach services, charities and other community services. Once people become comfortable with this system we will inevitably see job losses in local HNSW offices. As more people contact the department via the web, the need for CSOs and office staff will diminish. This will lead to less and less face to face contact with staff and further isolation for many clients. This may not be obvious at first but as more transactions become internet based local offices will become non viable and redundant.

This will make it even harder for residents to get direct input into problems more complex than a broken tap. The directing of more and more services through the Contact Centre number will remove residents even further from the decision making processes that affect their lives. This will be particularly true of complaints relating to anti social behaviour and poor service delivery.

What oversight of maintenance delivery and contractor service will be possible when the whole of the state's housing problems will be going to the one service number? Who will be inspecting complaints of shoddy work when the numbers of CSOs are scaled back even further?

What we really need is more CSO contact with residents not less. We need more site inspections and finally residents need to be consulted on the quality of the work provided by contractors, especially security guards, cleaners, gardeners and handyman jobs like painting and repairs.

Many residents have been fighting for these measures for years and HNSW has a commitment to resident participation but this will be bypassed in the streamlined future of Contact Centre procedure. A site visit by a CSO can ascertain by an afternoon of doorknocking whether contractors are doing their jobs and we need to demand that this process is not lost in the new age of HNSW Service Delivery.

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# Alcohol Free Zones - A Residents Supporting Arguments



Alcohol Free Zones [AFZs] are not a blanket prohibition of the consumption of alcohol within a defined area. The following description of Alcohol Free Zones contained in a City of Sydney Council report describes the true purpose of Alcohol Free Zones - "...The zones give police the power ... to warn someone consuming alcohol and then confiscate the alcohol from people in public spaces to prevent an escalation of alcohol-related antisocial behaviour ... In this respect they set and reinforce boundaries for appropriate behaviour and in minimizing conflict between different groups in the community, such as commuters, residents, party-goers, people who are homeless and people who drink on the streets."

The purpose of an AFZ is not to address the cause of irresponsible consumption of alcohol – that is the role of social workers. ***That a community and the individual drinkers are experiencing the effects of the irresponsible consumption of alcohol may indicate a failure of the 'social workers' to fulfil their role.***

AFZs do not prohibit responsible consumption of alcohol in public places.

AFZs are a tool to allow the control and prevention of disruptive and /or antisocial behaviour arising from the irresponsible consumption of alcohol in public places.

AFZs are created in areas where the community has experienced persistent disruptive and/or antisocial behaviour arising from the irresponsible consumption of alcohol in public places that has prevented the community from leading their normal day to day lives.

AFZs are a response to the ever increasing alcohol fuelled violence inflicted on the community by those who choose to consume alcohol in an irresponsible manner.

AFZs are a community protection tool that enables the community to access and use community facilities such as footpaths, roadways and parks in safety.

AFZs purpose is to minimise conflict between different groups in the community.

AFZs are created on the request of the community only after extensive consultation with the community.

AFZs are declared for a fixed time and then lapse.

AFZs provide a breathing space whilst the 'social workers' do their job.



**Would you like to have your say in local issues?  
Do you have views you would like to share with local decision makers but not in position to attend community meetings?  
Can you spare an hour or two each month to share your wisdom and views?  
Then join our new Redfern and Waterloo Postal Panel**

## What is a Postal panel?

The Postal Panel is made up of a cross section of local people who agree and volunteer to complete three to four postal surveys per year. Panel members might also be invited to participate in other research from time-to-time such as local action and focus groups.

## Why have a Postal Panel?

Increasingly, Community and Government organisations need to consult local residents about the services they provide. Having a cross-section of the public already willing to respond to surveys is a cost-effective way of finding out what residents think about particular issues. The information provided by the Panel will then be used by local community workers and volunteer community representatives, Elected Members and, where appropriate, other organisations to inform decision-making. By seeking the views of residents in this way, organisations are better able to target resources, identify community priorities and develop services that meet the needs of local people.

**If you can help and would like to get involved Register your interest today by contacting the Housing Communities Programme, Factory Community Centre, 67 Raglan Street, Waterloo, NWS 2107 or call us on 02 0698 9569**





## One Resident Case Against Alcohol Free Zones

Many people believe that putting up an Alcohol Free Zone (AFZ) sign will end all their problems with anti-social behaviour but the reality is that high profile policing is what makes an area safe. In Waterloo it was not the metal signage but the constant targeted police swoops that finally moved the street drinkers from the corner of Raglan and Cope Streets.

There is also a misconception that only irresponsible drinking is affected by AFZs but this is incorrect. An AFZ is a blanket prohibition of alcohol consumption in the prescribed area. The police do not have to give a warning or ask the drinker to take their drink elsewhere, instead they seize the drink and pour it onto the street.

If the offender refuses or resists in any way they can be fined up to \$2,100. Many drinkers can then find themselves trapped in legal trouble they cannot afford to resolve.

AFZs are only meant to be a temporary measure and once the problem has declined they should lapse and not be reimposed but this does not happen and even where there has been success there is a call to continue them and even to extend them as is happening in Waterloo.

It is interesting that visible drinking has reduced markedly and the police report large drops in crime in the area but residents still feel they need more AFZs. What is even more worrying is that an AFZ can be requested by one individual who lives or works in the area. Thus imposing their opinions on the rest of the street who don't even realise it's happening.

There is no extensive community consultation and only people who access the City of Sydney website on a regular basis would know the plans were on exhibition. Community input mainly comes from written submissions lodged within 28 days with Council staff.

Although AFZs are meant to target violent antisocial behaviour, most often they are used to move on Aboriginal street drinkers, the disadvantaged and the homeless as is seen constantly in King's Cross, Darlinghurst, Woolloomooloo, Redfern and Waterloo. Many AFZs are targeted around Housing NSW estates.

These zones only result in the displacement of the drinkers to somewhere else and nothing is done to help these people who are often the most disadvantaged in the country.

***This is a discriminatory and inequitable policy that allows those people rich enough to pay inflated hotel prices to sit and drink on the footpath while the poor are breaking the law if they sit on a nearby bench and have a tinnie.***

AFZs are a blunt instrument used by the police to appear like they are doing something, when in fact there are no real resources, to enforce them. In Kings Cross on the weekend there is constant street drinking and antisocial behaviour and the AFZs are totally ignored and unenforced.

AFZs are also used during special events like New Years Eve and Mardi Gras and again we find the people who miss out on getting into the licensed fenced off viewing areas are the ones who are barred from having a drink while they stand for hours waiting for the fireworks or the parade. The privileged in the licensed viewing areas however can drink to their hearts content.

Often people don't even realise they are in an AFZ especially during special events.....how often do regular people read the hundreds of signs that litter our streets?



No one denies that there are problems with alcohol related violence and the fear that many residents feel when faced with anti social behaviour but the humane answers are not by punishing

everyone with more unenforceable laws. The police have always had the powers to move people on without turning our streets into AFZs and this policy is just adding to their growing power to intrude into the lives of the citizens of this city.



## **M.A.D. PEOPLE ARE BEING SOUGHT COULD YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE ?**

Waterloo community representatives are recruiting fellow local residents who want to work with other community groups and agencies to Make a Difference in their community. We are in the process of targeting 4 key community issues. if you want to be part of solution why not join one of our new action groups.

- **Health Action Group**
- **Safety Action Group**
- **Learning, Employment and Enterprise Group**
- **Housing Standards Group**

These groups will meet three time year to work on achievable projects that can make a difference to our community. They will then report back to larger community forums hosted by our Local Member and the Lord Mayor. These groups are open to Social Housing Tenants, Private Residents, Local Business, Local Agencies.

The range of topics and issues you will be consulted on will be wide and effect you and your neighbours' lives. As a member you will receive regular feedback on what we have found out and on actions taken as a result through letters, email messages and local media.

Register your interest today by contacting the Housing Communities Programme, Factory Community Centre, 67 Raglan Street, Waterloo, NWS 2017 or call us on 02 0698 9569 or contact your local housing Team leader.

## **GO ON, BE A STAR !**

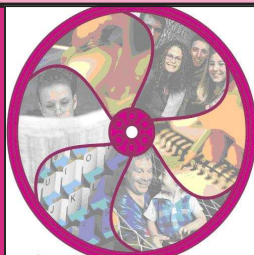
Want to meet new friends?  
Access support & advice?  
Looking for a new hobby or interest group?  
Looking to learn new skills?  
Become involved in you Local Community Centre

The Factory Community Centre 9698 9569

The Settlement 9698 3087

South Sydney Community Aid MNC 9319 4073

Redfern Community Centre 9288 5713



Community and Neighbourhood Centres have a variety of activities groups, training and support services to offer. For more information call any of the above centres who will be able give you details of their activities. There is something for everyone.

**Police, Fire, Ambulance  
Triple Zero (000)**

In an emergency

**Crime Stoppers  
1800 333 000**

Report crime anonymously

**Police Assistance Line  
131 444**

For non emergencies

## **A Residents View Point on Harm Minimisation**

The original concept of Harm Minimisation was to minimise the self-inflicted medically-based harm endured by a person whilst using various substances, mainly illicit substances. Over the period the concept's target group has been narrowed down to those who inject illicit substances. The rehabilitation component of the original concept has been forgotten whilst medically safe usage has been promoted.

Those whose lifestyle is adversely impacted by the substance abusers are not considered worthy of any consideration by the Harm Minimisers and their acolytes.

A classic example of this callous self-centred self-serving attitude is the government operated Needle Bus that has taken up residence on The Block in Redfern.

From this bus, needles for the purpose of self injecting illicit substances are dispensed free of charge to all who ask. The bus is located alongside a child care centre and is there during the centre's operating hours. Children are growing up seeing drugs being openly injected on a daily basis. These children are being taught by the Harm Minimisers that injection of illicit drugs and the associated culture is 'normal'. One wonders where the Department of Community Services is, and why it allows this systematic ongoing imprinting of children to occur. A brothel can not be located where it can be seen by children going about their daily routine. There is no such restriction on where the needle bus can be located.

The needle bus operators, a government activity, claim that they have been asked to have the bus in its current location. They will not identify who made this request. The needle bus is a honey pot for both users and dealers from outside of the catchment area that the bus is meant to service. The police do not bother checking those going into Redfern Train station for drugs. They have learnt over the years that the people exiting the station are those carrying illicit drugs. The Needle Bus is adjacent to the station. It supplies free of charge the means of using the drugs.

The local community has openly expressed to the Needle Bus operators their desire for the bus to be relocated from the area. They regard it as having an adverse impact on the area, and to pose a severe threat to the area's children, especially the children's induced idea that 'normal' behaviour includes the use of illicit drugs.

The bus operators, by their very denial of the request for relocation, strongly express a view that the area's children are of less value to the community than donating a needle to an injecting illicit drug user. That there is a purpose built needle dispensary operated by the same government department within five minutes walk is considered to be of no consequence by the needle bus's owners.

The needle bus operators are yet to provide factual evidence of its effectiveness to the community. All that has been supplied to date is an unsupported "Trust us" verbal report. When questioned, they claim to have a statutory duty towards self injecting illicit drug users. It seems that duty overrides the duty of care towards children.



## **Methadone**

Although methadone itself was synthesized during World War II to replace morphine in treating wounded soldiers, using methadone to help opiate addicts withdraw from heroin was not explored until the late 1940s. In the year 1964, the medical team of Doctors Nyswander, Kreek, and Dole proposed its use as a safe, reliable replacement for the chronic use of highly addictive opiates. Methadone can be a successful treatment for Substance Mis-users who make a commitment to seek help through the programme and can lead to them abandoning a drug-seeking lifestyle. Behaviours once abandoned, because opiate drugs took over a person's life, like personal grooming and eating a properly balanced diet, return. Money used for drugs begins to stay in people's purses and wallets. Patients find that they can hold a job because their time and attention is no longer occupied with drug-seeking or using. Bills can once again be paid on time. Families become more stable, and the risk of becoming infected with or transmitting diseases like Hepatitis C or HIV through dirty needles or risky sexual practices is reduced practically to zero argues one health professional. The debate about the effectiveness of the methadone programme rages on. There has always been opposition to the principle of handing out free opium-based drugs like methadone. It is argued that the biggest flaw in the current system is that there is no incentive for the addicts to wean themselves off drugs altogether. The methadone programme can be seen only a means to manage the habit, rather than complete abstinence and that must change. Some users even argue that withdrawing from methadone is worse than withdrawing from Heroin. Addicts must genuinely want to give up before any treatment can be successful, and that applies as much to alcohol, nicotine and gambling as it does to drugs .

## **Editorial comment on HR debate**

There are pros and cons to any HR treatment, despite much controversy over their effectiveness. What is agreed is that Substance Misuse is everyone's challenge. There is no right or wrong or easy answer. However what most people are agreed on is that the whole community should be involved in the planning and implementation of these and other much needed support services.

RedWater News is calling for a clearer dialogue between those responsible for planning and implementing these services and us local residents. In addition we are seeking improved support and choices for both the misuser and the collective community trying to tackle these issues.

# USEFUL CONTACTS

Housing NSW (24/7)	1300 468 746
South Sydney Community Transport	9319 4439
UNSW Community Development Project	9245 1841
Tenant Participation Resource Service	9690 1781
HCP Community Development worker	9698 9569
Interpreter Service	13 14 50
Tenant Union Hotline	9251 6590
Redfern Legal Centre	9698 7277
Barnado's Family Support	9698 9577
Woman's and Girls Emergency Centre	9360 5388
Mental Health Crisis	9867 5738
www.Redwatch.org.au (contact Geoff)	9318 0824
RICHSS (Home support Service)	9319 3587
Youth Health Service	9516 2233
Police Assistance Line	131 444
Crime Stoppers	1800 333 000
Life Line	131 114
Kids Helpline	1800 551 800
Needle clean up hotline	1800 633 353
Alcohol and drug information line	9361 8000
Domestic Violence Hotline	180 656 463
Homeless persons	9265 9081
Food Distribution Network	9699 1614
Office of Kristina Keneally MP	9699 8166
City of Sydney Council (24/7)	9265 9333

## KEY SUPPORT NUMBERS FOR THOSE FACING FAMILY VIOLENCE

Aboriginal Catholic Ministry	9698 42645
Aboriginal Homeless	9799 8446
Aboriginal Medical Service	9319 5823
Barnardos Intensive Family Support Service	9698 9577
Care connect	9310 3699
Central Sydney SCARBA Service	9310 3788
Family Health Service	9515 9788
Child Protection / Family crisis	1800 066 777
DoCS Domestic Violence Helpline	1800 656 463
Domestic Violence Advocacy Service	8745 6999
Greek Welfare Centre	95162188
Relationship Counselling	9390 5366
Anglicare Counselling	9799 9311
Lesbian and Gay Rights Service	9332 1966
Mensline Australia	1300 78 99 78
Disability Abuse and Neglect Helpline	1800 880 052
Salvo Care Line	1300 36 36 22

## The Factory Community Centre

### Activities include

- Support and Advice
- Russian Group
- South Sydney Blindes Group
- Chinese Group
- TAFE courses
- Photo Voice
- Salsa Dance Classes
- Swimming 4 Everyone
- Computing lessons
- REDWatch Group
- Mobile Play Bus (Wet Days)
- RedWater News Group
- Waterloo Recycling Workshop
- HCAP Worker
- Barnardos Learning Centre
- Spanish Care
- Jewish Care
- LETS Group
- Balnaves Opera House Tickets
- GA, NA, AA, support groups

Come along and join us

67 Raglan Street, Waterloo  
Tel: 02 9698 9569

Contacting Housing NSW has never been easier with the launch of 1300 HOUSING (1300 468 746)

A 'one-stop-shop' for tenants, clients, and anyone needing assistance with housing. This all inclusive number will direct you to the right area via a simple menu option. All maintenance requests should now be directed through the Housing Contact Centre.

Remember we're here to help, so if you're not sure, just ask us!



Housing Contact Centre

1300 HOUSING  
1300 468 746