

Harm Reduction Excellence | Breakout Session 1

Highlights of the Harm Reduction Masterclass

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VAADA SERVICE
PROVIDERS
CONFERENCE
2024



Highlights from the

Harm Reduction Masterclass

Presented by Brit Chapman // Health Promotion Team

Who is Harm Reduction Victoria?

HEALTH RIGHTS
HUMAN RIGHTS
HARM REDUCTION



We are a community-based organisation
that specialise in:

- health promotion
- community empowerment
- and peer education

for Victorians who use drugs with the sole
aim of reducing drug related harms.

We aim to provide a voice for people
who inject/use illicit drugs & to
address the health & social justice
issues experienced by people who
inject/use drugs.



free
Palestine

KAUST



Australia's Drug User Orgs

HRVic is the drug user organisation for the state of Victoria and a member of the national network of drug user organisations, headed by AIVL.



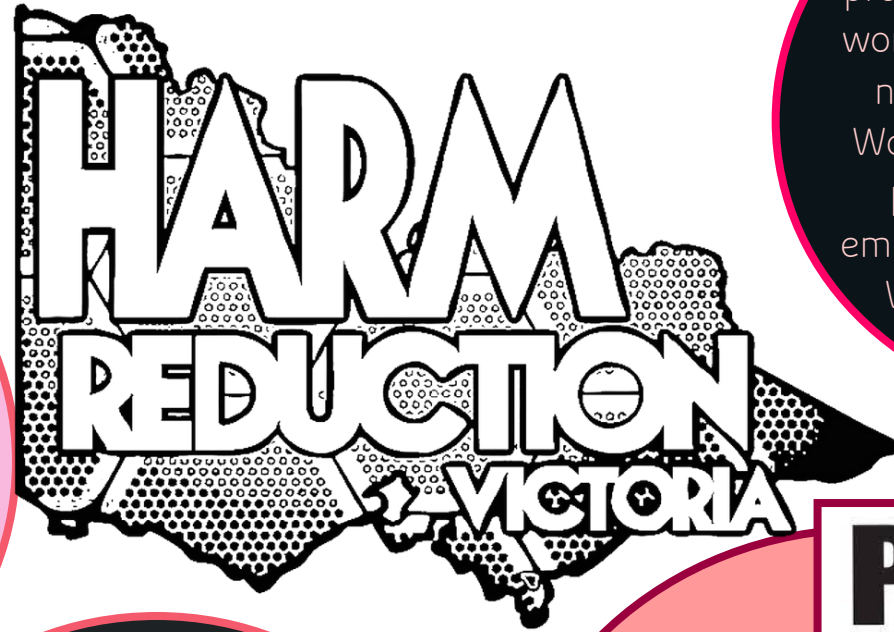
AIVL

Australian Injecting &
Illicit Drug Users League

AIVL is the national peak body representing all state and territory drug user organisations across Australia.



Some of our work...



Festival and event-based crowd care & harm reduction services. Chill space and substance specific info, amongst other services and projects



Quarterly magazine by & for drug users. Education, entertainment, art...



Workforce support & development program for current HR peer workers, providing training & networking opportunities. Works with organisations to promote & support the employment of more LE Peer Workers who use drugs.



Provides community and professional development training, overdose education and naloxone distribution, NSP services, outreach, hep C elimination work, and much more!

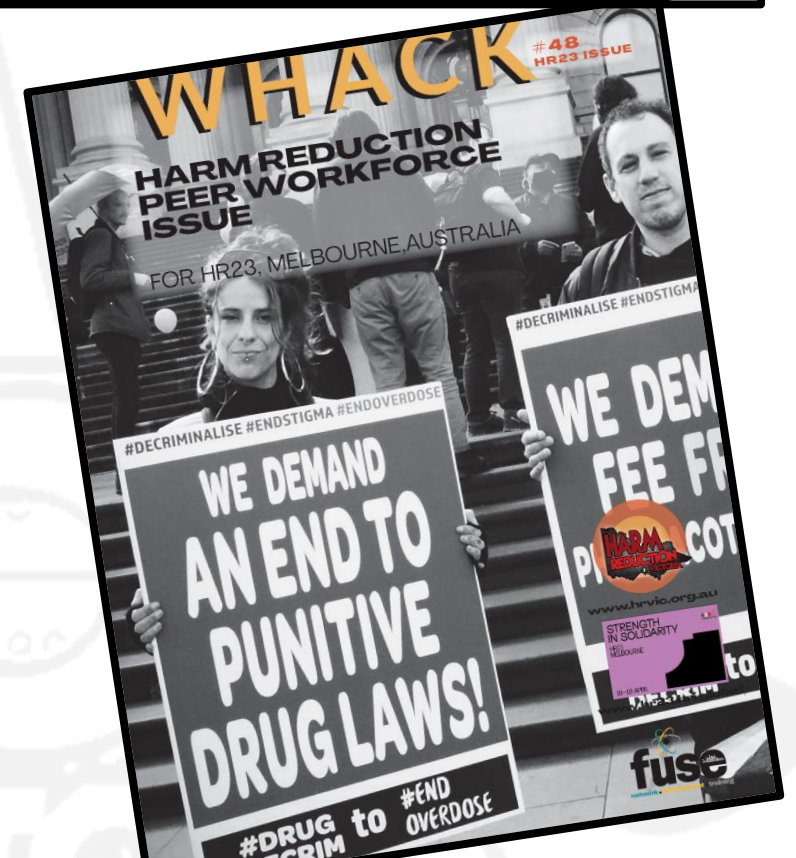


Pharmacotherapy Advocacy Mediation Support. Phone based service for community members engaged with or interested in pharmacotherapy. Also works with prescribers & pharmacies.

HEALTH
PROMOTION TEAM

more of our work...

- Drug law reform
- One-on-one brief interventions
- Advisory committees (as facilitators or participants)
- Written submissions
- Policy papers
- Facilitate advocacy network
- Advise researchers
- Organise/attend rallies and protests calling for drug user health and human rights
- ...the work is varied and endless!





Hep C Testing & Treatment

If you have a client that you think may have been exposed to hep C but hasn't been treated, let them know there are options:

the new treatment has
almost 100% cure-rate,
and is pretty much pain-
free

Anyone can call HRVic's
Hep C line for info on
testing & treatment



FREE CALL
1800 430 806



HARM REDUCTION MASTERCLASS –

A BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO HARM REDUCTION
7 MODULES, DELIVERED OVER 2 HALF DAYS.

Topics include:

- Harm reduction 101
- Safer injecting
- Overdose
- Naloxone administration
- Pharmacotherapy
- Working with people who use drugs
- Stigma and discrimination

Facilitated by 2 living experience peer workers and can be accessed via the VAADA/ Elevate professional development platform.

HARM

WHAT?!



HARM MINIMISATION VS HARM REDUCTION



"Harm Minimisation": THE THREE PILARS OF AUSTRALIA'S DRUG STRATEGY



Supply Reduction

Federal Police, customs and Border Force, prohibitionist drug policies, courts and prisons in prosecution of drug manufacturing and distribution

HARM REDUCTION



NSPs, SCSs, pharmacotherapies, non-abstinent education, safe supply, drug checking, etc...



Demand Reduction

Rehabs/detox units, therapy, treatment programs, abstinence only programs, pharmacotherapies, diversion programs and drug courts, prevention medications

National policy since 1985



What is Harm Reduction?

Harm Reduction is about keeping people alive & well

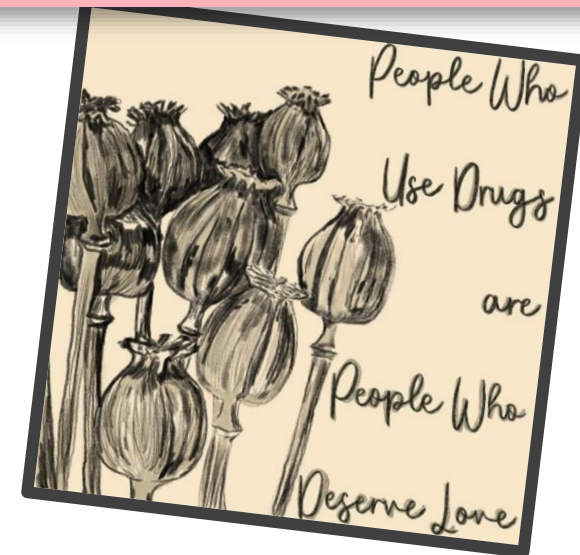
Harm reduction is a way of responding to drug use aims to lessen risks & harms, without necessarily aiming to reduce or discourage the use of drugs

First talked about when HIV appeared in the 1980s. Drug using communities and governments needed ways to keep active users alive and prevent HIV transmission, without alienating them by discouraging drug use.

Started as a radical idea, but is now considered international best practice and endorsed by organisations such as UNAIDS & WHO

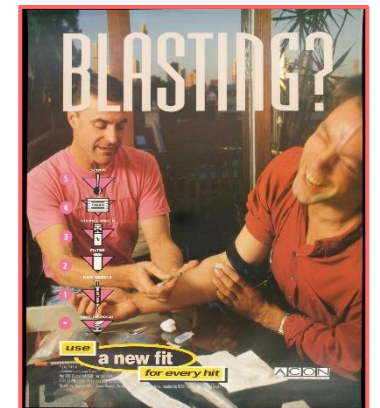
Put simply, Harm Reduction is about **valuing people and their lives.**

Harm Reduction **does not agree that illicit drug use needs to equal death, disease & discrimination**



Australia

- No evidence, but we had activism in 70s too
- Response to HIV – people who inject drugs and sex workers helped stop epidemic
- First NSPs illegal in NSW, quickly became policy





Harm Reduction and Drugs

like it or not,
drugs are here to
stay – we always
have, always will
use drugs

responding
to drug use in ways
which emphasise
reducing harms, without
aiming to reduce,
discourage or cease the
use of drugs

drug use is a
complex, multi-faceted
phenomenon
→ a continuum of
behaviors from severe
use to total
abstinence

doesn't minimize
or ignore real harm
and danger that can be
associated with illicit drug
use – clearly some use is
safer than
others

almost all
of us use drugs
& the use of
mood-altering
substances is
normal

empathic,
compassionate,
empowering in its
approach

drug use is not
inherently bad
→ most drug use does
not have negative
consequences

non-judgmental,
non-coercive
provision of services
and resources

Harm Reduction and Drugs

recognises that the realities of poverty, class, racism, social isolation, past trauma, sex-based discrimination, and other social inequalities affect both people's **vulnerability to** and **capacity for** effectively dealing with drug-related harm



evidence-based
and
cost-effective
practices

**nothing about
us without us!!!**

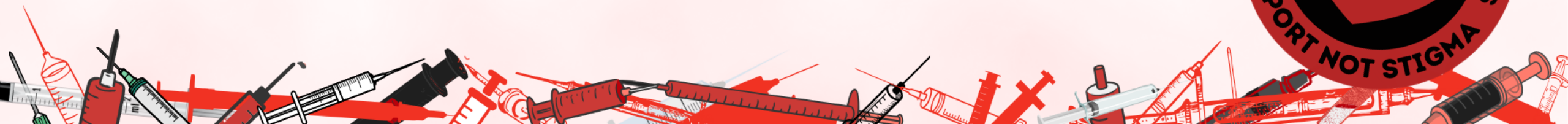
real harm reduction includes active and meaningful participation of drug users and community stakeholders in shaping sensible policies and practices around drug use

→ **empowerment of drug users as the primary agents in reducing drug related harms**



DOES HARM REDUCTION WORK??

- Australia has one of the lowest HIV rates among IDU in the world
- Opioid Substitution Treatment makes up vast majority of in-demand drug treatment programs
- Methadone and buprenorphine – on WHO Essential Medicines List
- NSP shown to be one of the most effective public health programs – studies found that for every \$1 spent on NSPs, \$4 is saved directly and up to \$27 indirectly
- Peer education evaluates as highly effective
- Harm Reduction does not encourage people to take drugs



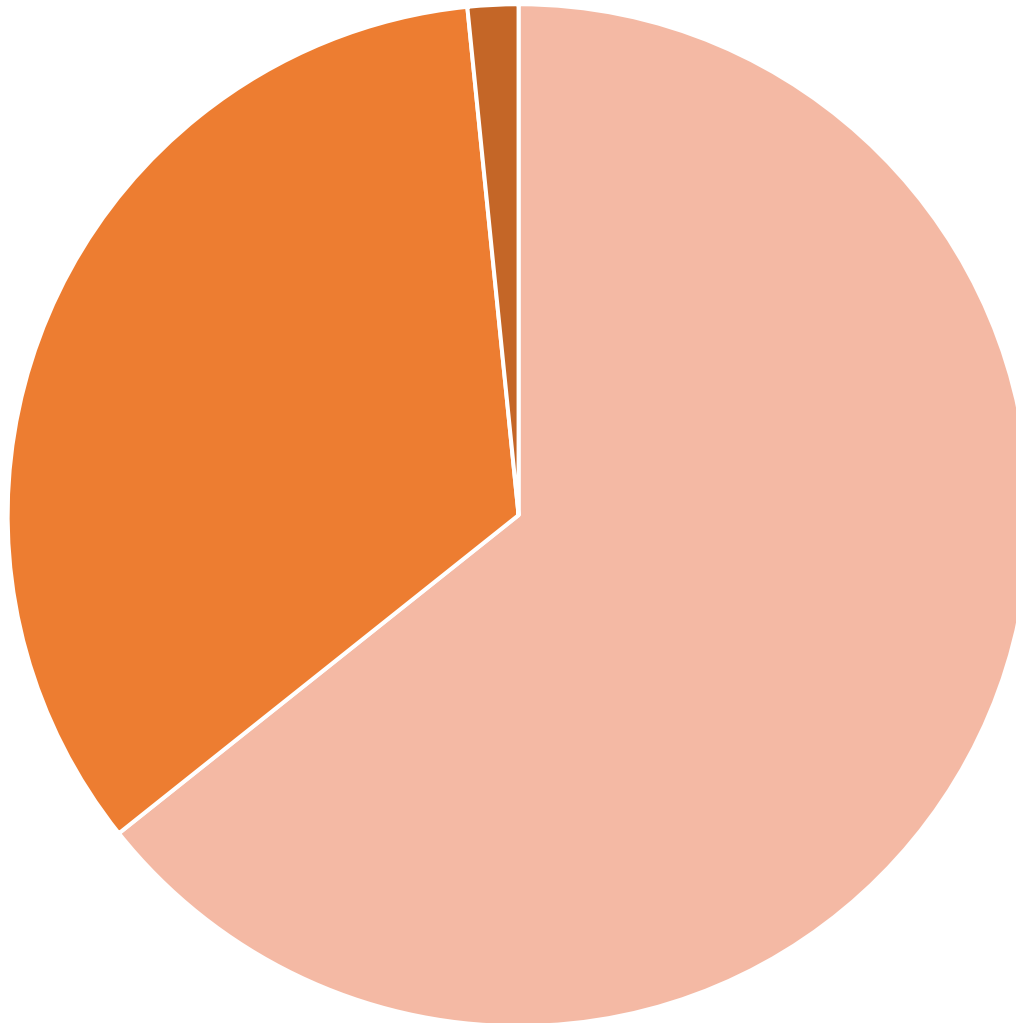


AOD Funding 2021/22

Supply Reduction:
64.3%

Demand Reduction:
(includes both treatment
and prevention)
34.1%

Harm Reduction:
1.6%



■ Supply Reduction ■ Demand Reduction ■ Harm Reduction

Barriers to working effectively with People Who Use Drugs (PWUD)



1 Myths about PWUD
especially PWID
are common

2 Many people's
knowledge about drug
use and users only
comes through the
media

3 Drug use is
criminalised and
stigmatised

4 Derogatory
language about
PWUD is common

→ This leads to the creation of
stereotypes about (illegal) drugs and
assumptions about the worth & potential
of people who use them





What do these graphics from the AFP tell us about people who use drugs?

**WARNING: SCARED OF MONSTERS UNDER THE BED?
IMAGINE THINKING BUGS ARE UNDER YOUR SKIN.**



**The face of a meth user is shocking
but a meth user behind the wheel
of a car – horrifying.**

Have a conscience.

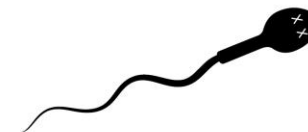
**WARNING: CHASING THE DRAGON? YOU'LL GET BURNED
AND SO WILL THE WALLETS OF AUSTRALIANS.**



**Heroin users can steal for their habit,
increasing insurance premiums.
No one wants bill shock.**

Have a conscience.

WARNING: GET OFF THE JUNK TO PROTECT YOUR JUNK.



**Cocaine is not a safe drug.
Chronic use can impact fertility
and lower sperm count.**

Have a conscience.

**WARNING: TRANSNATIONAL SERIOUS ORGANISED
CRIMINALS ARE AUSTRALIA'S REAL BOOGIE MEN.**



**Illicit drug users can bankroll
criminals who enslave women
and destroy the environment.**

Have a conscience.

FLINDERS STREET INJECTING ROOM FURY



**POLICE UNION, TRADERS PLEA:
PLEASE DON'T MAKE US ...**

JUNKIE TOWN

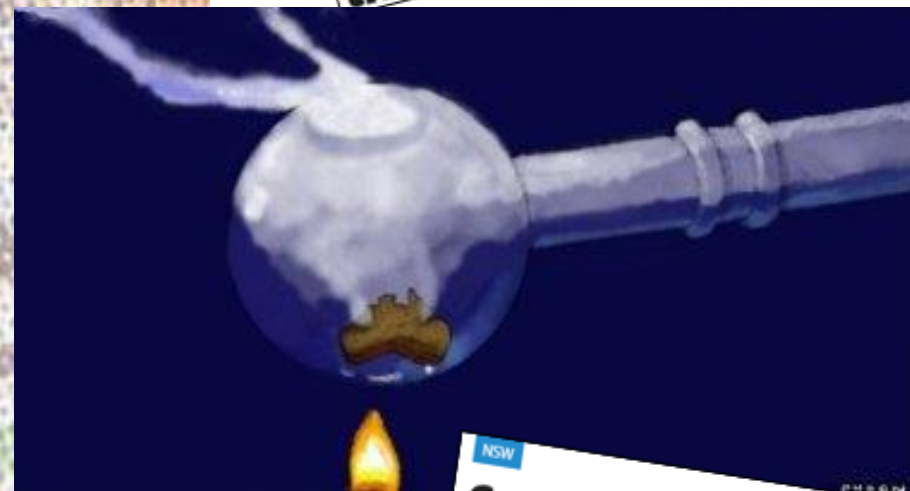
**Inside Australia's drug epidemic: how ice is tearing
our country apart**



Killers on ice getting away with murder.
TONIGHT, the ice user who killed his girlfriend... But escaped a murder
conviction because of his chronic addiction.

Central Coast

**Ice addict 'gouged out eyes and ate
them'**



Ice: Facing up to Satan's drug

NSW

**Crazy behaviour of ice addicts:
Woman chewed off toes, young
boy gouged out eyes**

The Daily Telegraph
September 28, 2015 2:01pm



7 News Melbourne

@7NewsMelbourne · 1 year



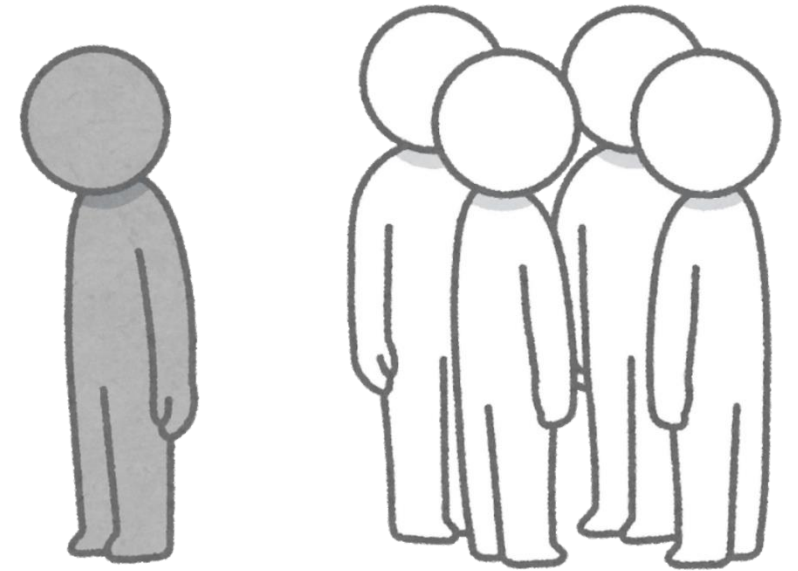
TONIGHT | An evil ice addict abandons her children after forcing them to steal to feed her habit. 7
News at 6:00pm



DRUG-RELATED STIGMA:

SOME FACTS

- Common and complex issue for PWUD
- W.H.O. ranked illegal drug dependence as the most stigmatized health condition globally
- Evident across all levels of society, inc lateral violence
- Worst offenders? Healthcare sector, media and police



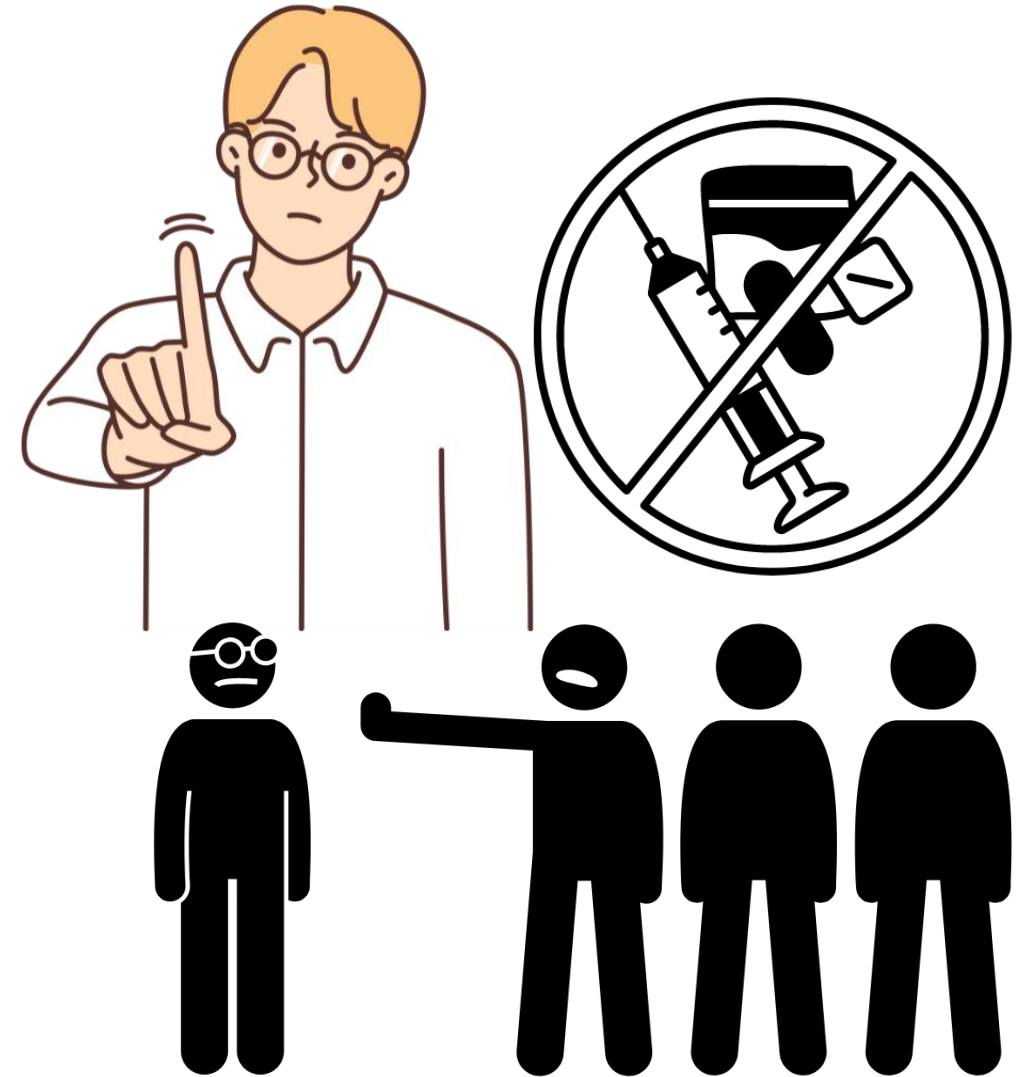
DISCRIMINATION IN THE HEALTHCARE SECTOR



- Research has shown that many PWUD regularly experience negative encounters in the health sector
- Often service providers are not aware that they are acting in a discriminatory manner
- Prior experiences mean that PWUD expect to be treated unfairly and/or differently from non drug users
- Many PWUD believe that there will be negative repercussions if they make complaints

WHAT DOES IT LOOK LIKE?

- ▶ Different treatment
- ▶ Unprofessional manner
- ▶ Refusing service, ignoring or serving last
- ▶ BBV testing without consent
- ▶ Lecturing
- ▶ Inadequate diagnosis or investigation
- ▶ Breaching privacy & confidentiality



WHAT DOES IT ALL MEAN?

- ▶ Many PWUD will avoid health services rather than being identified as a drug user
- ▶ Stigma can be a barrier to PWUD being open and honest with their healthcare provider
- ▶ The healthcare needs of PWUD are not being met

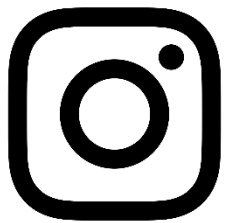


**PEOPLE WHO USE DRUGS ARE ENTITLED TO THE SAME LEVEL OF
HEALTHCARE AS ANY OTHER MEMBER OF THE COMMUNITY**

THANK YOU



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[@hrvic_hpteam](https://www.instagram.com/hrvic_hpteam)

[@harmreductionvictoria](https://www.instagram.com/harmreductionvictoria)

