Sustainable harm reduction:

Evaluation of cardboard Fitkits dispensed from automatic dispensing machines

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I would like to acknowledge the people of the Gadigal and Dharawal Nations on whose land this work was created and pay my respects to Elders past, present and future.

I would like to acknowledge the people who inject drugs who have generously given their time to participate in this research.

Disclosures of interest

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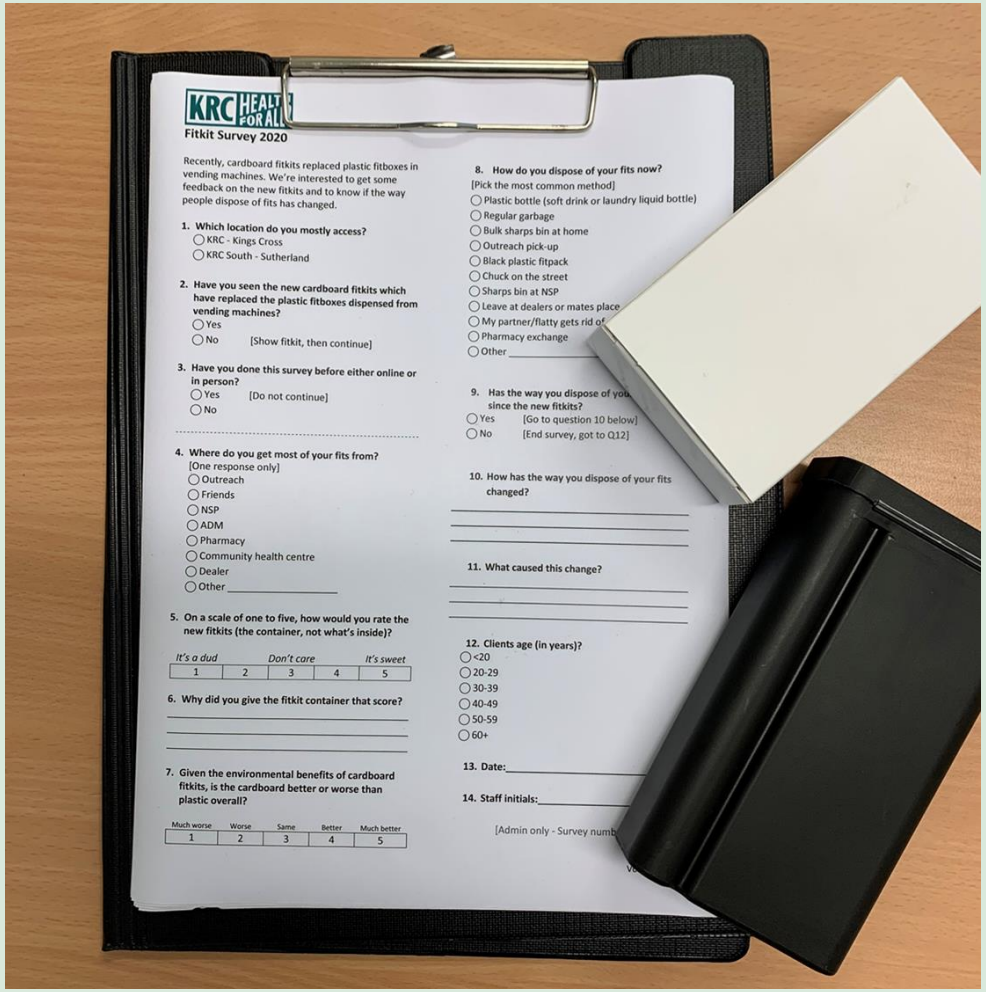
Background

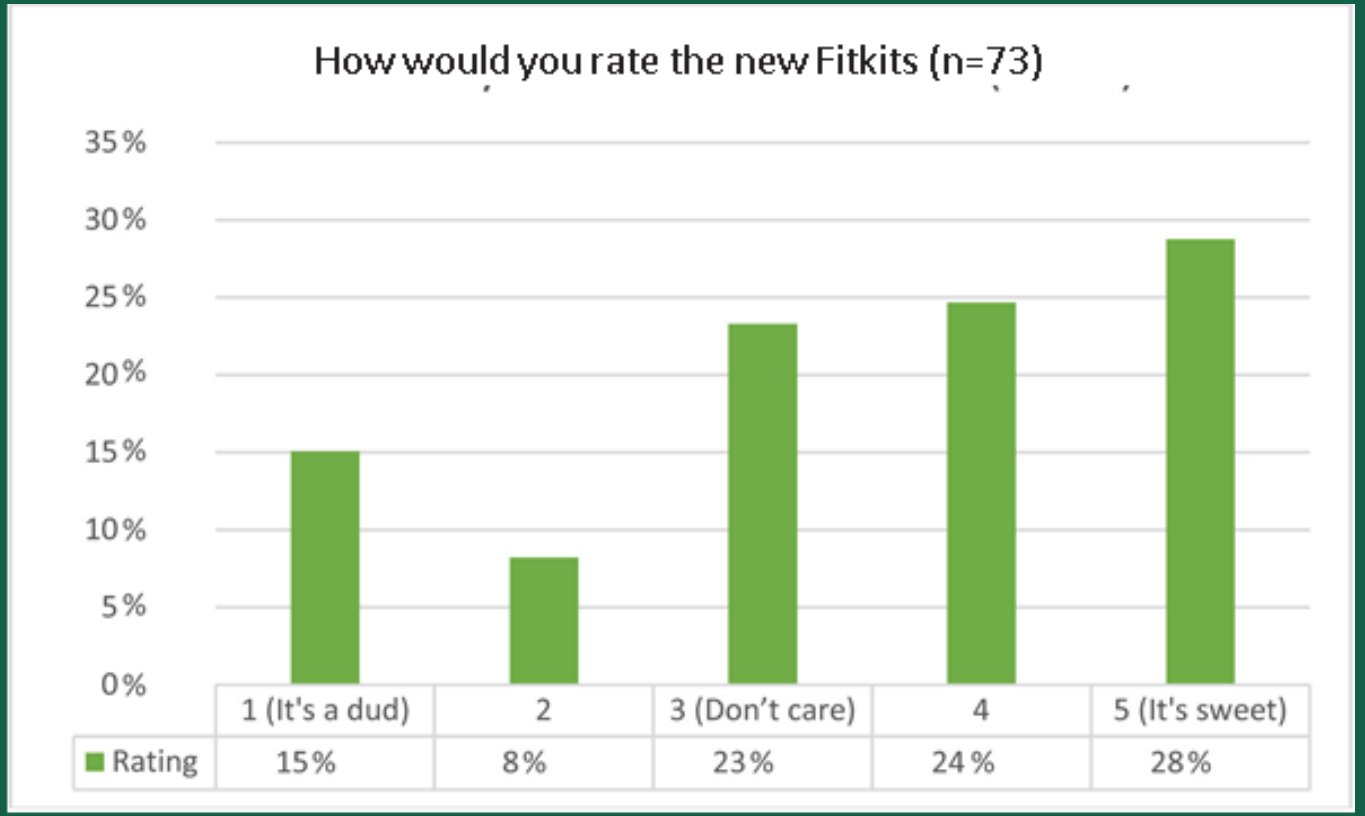
- The Kirketon Road Centre (KRC) Needle & Syringe Program (NSP) dispenses over 54,000 Polypropylene Fitpacks® annually
- Fitpacks® cannot be recycled, taking many years to slowly decompose
- KRC's Community Sharps Disposal Officer often retrieved discarded Fitpacks® with the disposal compartment unused

Methods

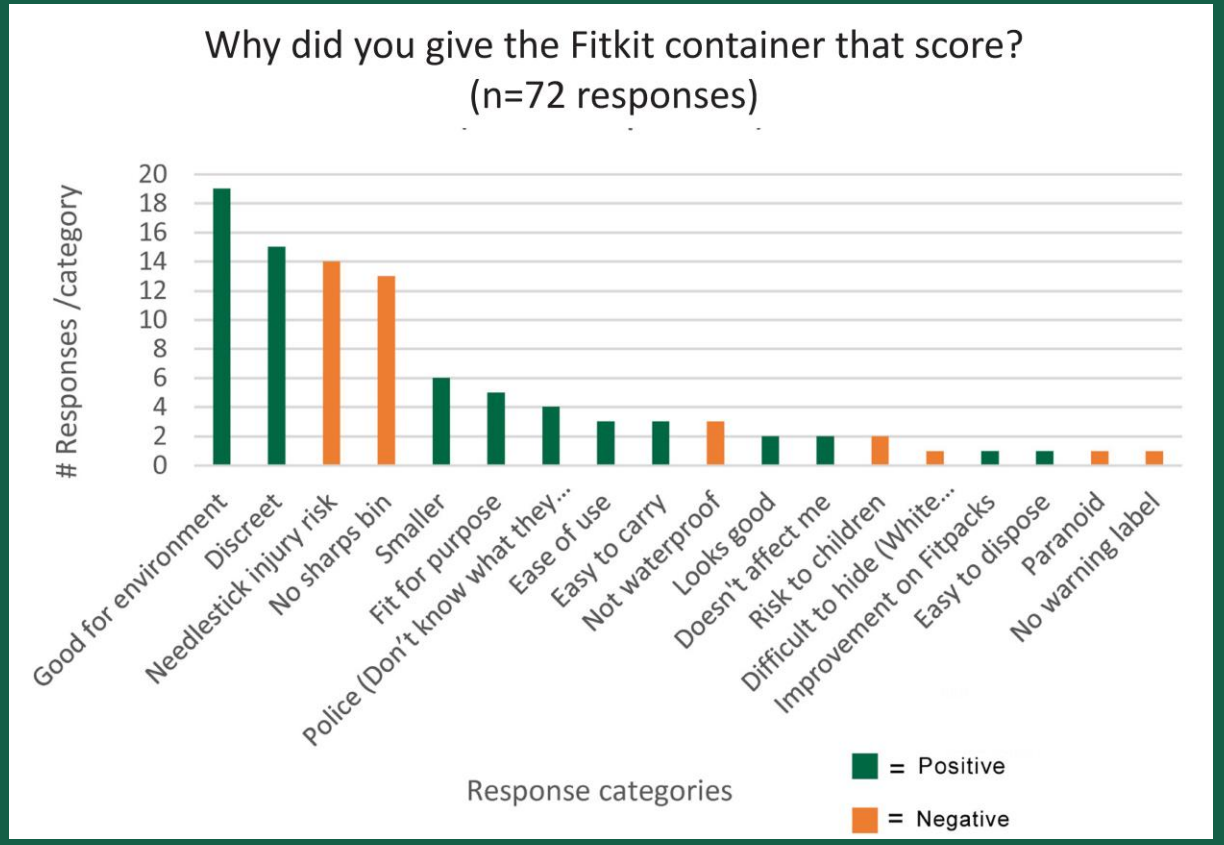
- Conducted in early 2020
- Surveys (n=80) and in-depth interviews (n=3)
- Across KRC's primary NSPs
  - Darlinghurst (inner city)
  - Caringbah (South of Greater Sydney)
- Surveillance data (NSP NMDC & Community sharps collection data)
- SESLHD HREC review (20/02/2020).



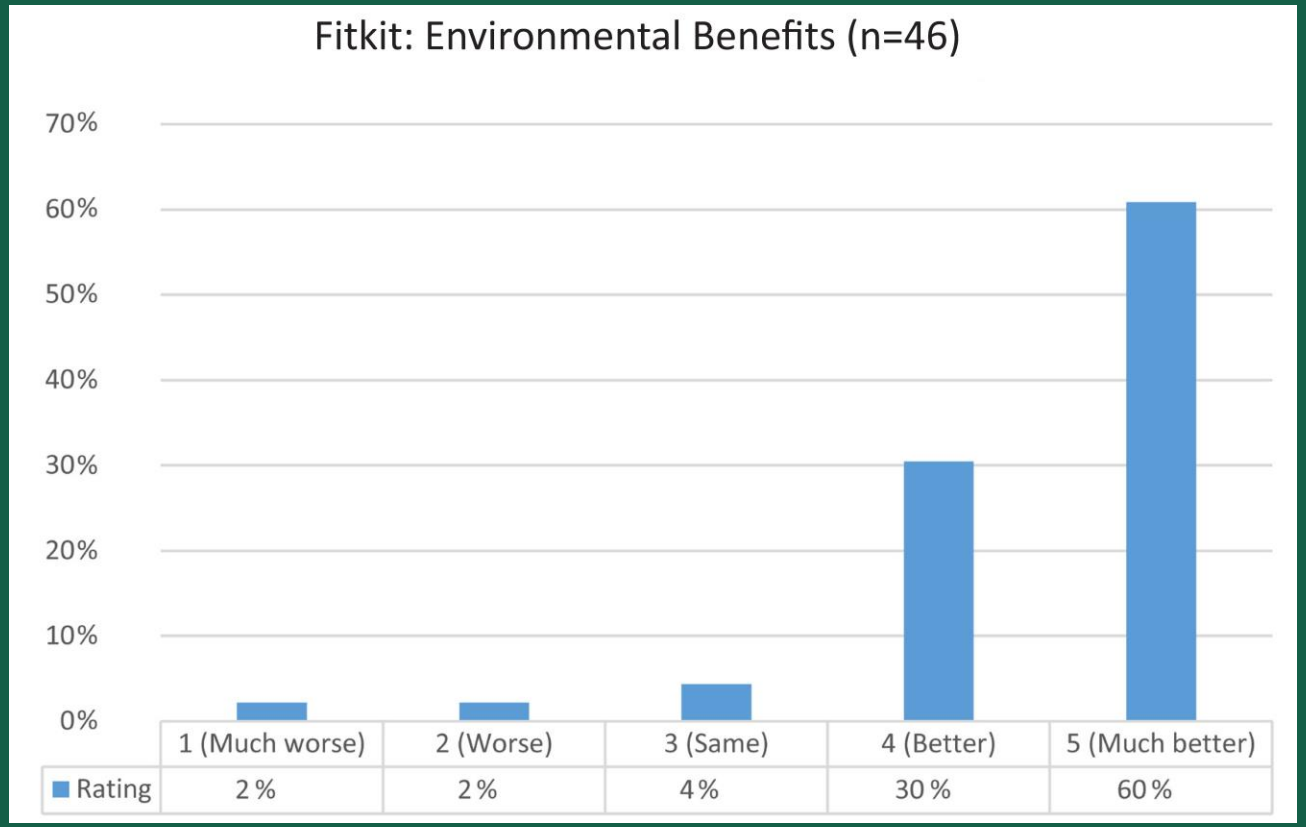
Results


How would you rate the new Fitkits (n=73)
35%
30%
25%
20%
15%
10%
5%
0%
1 (It's a dud)
2
3 (Don't care)
4
5 (It's sweet)
Rating
15%
8%
23%
24%
28%

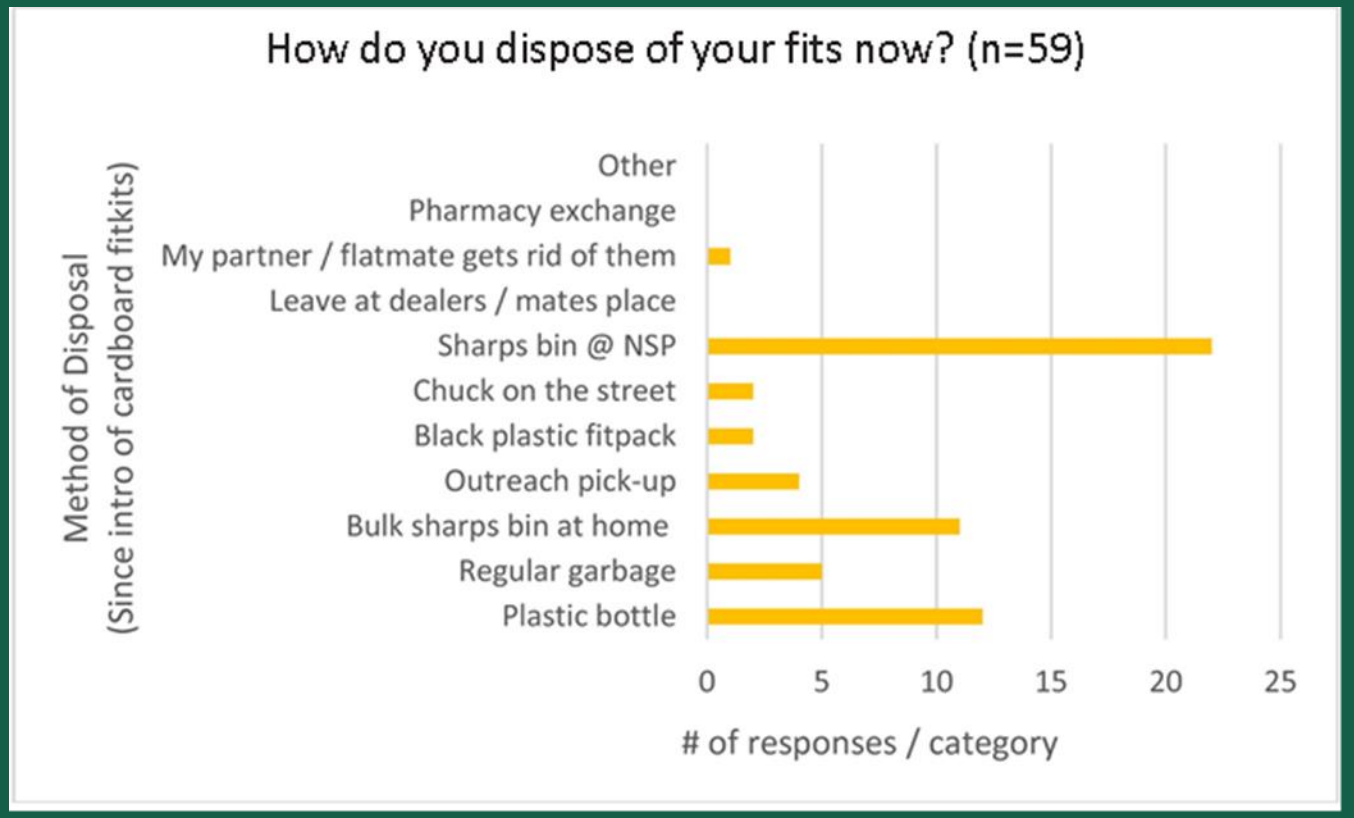
Results


Why did you give the Fitkit container that score?
(n=72 responses)
Responses /category
20
18
16
14
12
10
8
6
4
2
0
Good for environment
Discreet
Needlestick injury risk
No sharps bin
Smaller
Fit for purpose
Police (Don't know what they...
Ease of use
Easy to carry
Not waterproof
Looks good
Doesn't affect me
Risk to children
Difficult to hide (White...
Improvement on Fitpacks
Easy to dispose
Paranoid
No warning label
Response categories
= Positive
= Negative

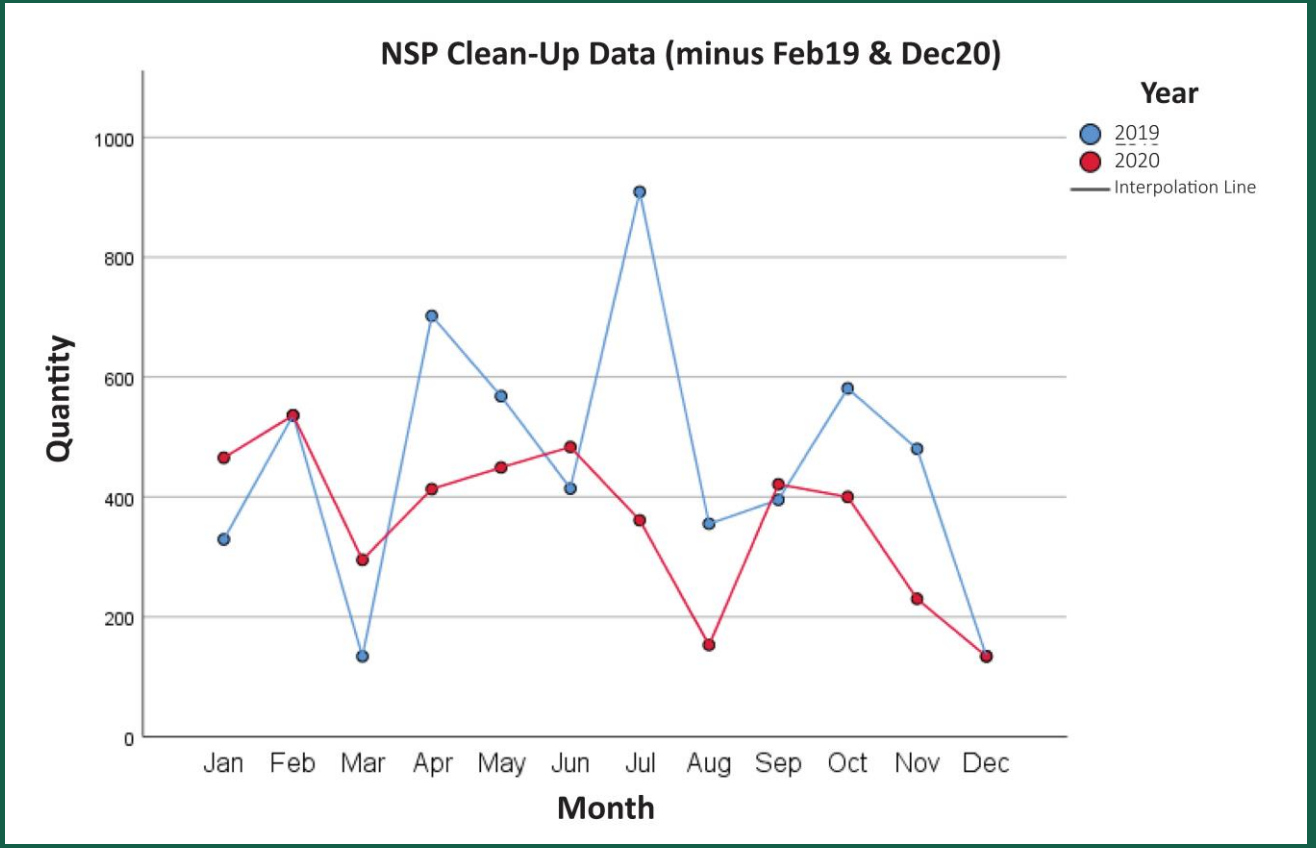
Results


Fitkit: Environmental Benefits (n=46)
70%
60%
50%
40%
30%
20%
10%
0%
1 (Much worse)
2 (Worse)
3 (Same)
4 (Better)
5 (Much better)
Rating
2 %
2 %
4 %
30 %
60 %

Results


How do you dispose of your fits now? (n=59)
Method of Disposal
(Since intro of cardboard fitkits)
Other
Pharmacy exchange
My partner / flatmate gets rid of them
Leave at dealers / mates place
Sharps bin @ NSP
Chuck on the street
Black plastic fitpack
Outreach pick-up
Bulk sharps bin at home
Regular garbage
Plastic bottle
0
5
10
15
20
25
# of responses / category

Results



(Before: Mean (M)=461.42, standard deviation (SD)=221.50; After: M=361.67, SD=130.80; t(22)=1.34, p=.19, MD=99.75)

Conclusion

We found no evidence of detrimental impacts on drug user's injecting practice, nor public amenity associated with changed packaging.

The use of cardboard Fitkits reduces the environmental impact of NSP operations, which is both valued by clients, and offers packaging cost savings which can be used to support Free-Vend and increase NSP distribution.

To date, KRC's transition to cardboard fitkits has reduced its contribution to plastic waste by 37,938 units (7,587 Kgs). This amounts to savings of $37,938 which can be reinvested elsewhere.

Harm reduction programs for drug user health should include environmental impact when assessing overall health outcomes for clients.

Contact

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