

# **“Hidden in Plain Sight”: Strengthening NSW Needle and Syringe Program (NSP) Data for better insights and impact**

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## **Background/Approach:**

The NSW NSP has been a key harm reduction initiative for over 30 years, originally introduced in response to the AIDS pandemic. Current NSP reporting frameworks have remained largely unchanged for around 15 years, and don't reflect the contemporary scope and impact of the program. Data collection within the sector relies on two annual snapshot surveys for insights and has limited capacity to respond to emerging trends and ad-hoc data requests. In response to these gaps, local health districts (LHDs) have developed their own databases, making consistency and governance challenging when attempting to understand the NSP landscape.

## **Analysis/Argument:**

The Kirketon Road Centre (KRC) worked with the NSW Centre for Population Health to review collection, usage and management of current NSP data across different stakeholder groups. Key stakeholder interviews included clients, researchers, NSP staff and policy officers.

## **Outcome/Results**

The project recommended an enhanced and standardised model of data collection. This significant update to current practices aims to streamline reporting processes and develop useable, accurate, and timely data sets for the NSP sector to map and focus service needs while enhancing client input. The project also recommends the implementation of a simple, centralised cloud-based platform to provide real-time dashboard-style reporting across the state. This platform would enable exploration of new alignments and opportunities, including collaboration with a statewide early drug warning project. Key insights included an unanticipated appetite from staff and clients to obtain more information to help with understanding trends in behaviours and to tailor the NSP services accordingly.

## **Conclusions/Applications:**

Improvements in NSP data collection technology along with a consistent and contemporaneous set of indicators should enhance service responsiveness and delivery of evidence-informed service improvements for clients. Revised state-level data should also enable improved assessment of emerging needs, localised quality improvement of NSP services, and create new targeted research opportunities.

## **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

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