**Case Study 3C: Fictional interview with the mayor around new Sydney Injecting Room (Audio version accessible)**

**Mayor Barassa has long spoken about her concerns regarding the length of time taken for a second injecting room to open in the city. She sits down with our local reporter today to discuss the impacts she believes it will have on the community.**

**Q: Thank you for sitting down with me today, Mayor Barassa. It has been a long journey to this moment – what do you believe this service means for the community?**

**A**: Thank you. I’m very relieved to hear that the voices of our community have been heard and that following a two-year trial of the medically-supervised southern injecting site, that this site has now been opened. This community health centre has always been identified as the preferred site by the Department of Health and Human Services, because of its accessibility for clients.

**Q: How did your involvement start with the project?**

**A**: I believe the initial discussions took place around planning the second safe injecting room after a report to the state government showed demand for the facility had surged. I was shown this report by a colleague and immediately began to look into it further. Of course, I already had some knowledge of the issue. As I’m sure you’re aware, as I have spoken about this publicly in the past, my son received treatment at the first injecting room and it was a huge support in his recovery. I absolutely believe this service model saves lives.

**Q: How is your son now doing?**

**A:** I am very pleased to say that he has been drug-free for two years now. He’s got a full-time job, and recently moved in with his girlfriend. I know not everyone is able to see such a huge turnaround so quickly, but from knowing just how unwell he was when he first went in and sought treatment to now, it’s hard to tell he is the same person.

**Q: That’s wonderful to hear such a good news story for the program. Not everyone though has been supportive of this service – you may be aware of the open letter from one frustrated local resident who has expressed anger at what they feel was an inadequate consultation process, along with concerns that the service’s proximity to a public park is a risk to child safety due to its potential to attract drug activity in the form of dealers and users to the area. How do you respond to these fears and concerns?**

**A:** Firstly, I would say that we certainly did hear those concerns during the consultation process – that process included community surveys and an open information session where we listened to similar resident fears and discussed them at length - and we absolutely took those very seriously.

However, what international research has actually shown, is that the establishment of these kinds of services in communities does not in fact increase drug consumption, drug dealing or crime in surrounding areas. Instead, most evidence has demonstrated that supervised injection facilities are associated with improvements in public order. That’s including fewer instances of people seen openly injecting in our streets and parks for example, while also significantly reducing the amount of injecting equipment such as needles or syringes that would otherwise be unsafely discarded in public spaces. So, this is a win for those residents too.

**Q: Has that been true of the first service that was previously launched in this area? Are you able to provide data on how many other people that first site has helped?**

**A:** Certainly - I have been informed that the latest figures from the opening of that service until this week, show that the injecting room has received about 110,000 visits in total. They’ve safely managed around 3,200 drug overdoses and saved the lives of at least 21 people.

No deaths have been recorded at the facility. As a family member to someone who I believe was saved by that service, this is an amazing feat, and my hat goes off to the generous and patient folks who work there.

**Q: Do they expect as many people to be supported by the new facility?**

**A:** Based on the data we have received, yes, we believe the area that the new facility is in will attract the same number of people and, given it is using the same model of care, benefit the same number as well.

**Thank you again, Mayor Barassa, for your time.**

**Thank you.**

**[ENDS]**