



Newtown Neighbourhood Centre Incorporated

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Karen Becker
Director Drug Health Services
Building 301
Locked bag 1
Rozelle 2031

12/5/2004

Dear Ms. Becker,

I write in regard to the cancellation of drug and alcohol counselling provided by Central Sydney Area Health at the Newtown Neighbourhood Centre.

The Neighbourhood Centre is situated in the heart of Newtown and provides an easily accessible and non-threatening place for drug and alcohol users to seek help. This is why so many people use it.

Newtown has a high population of people who use drugs and alcohol and the centre is seen as a place to come for help. The Neighbourhood Centre provides a comprehensive range of services to people who have problems with the use of drugs and/or alcohol. Narcotics Anonymous hold 6 weekly meetings and Alcohol Anonymous 2. All meetings are very well attended. Our information and referral service responds daily to inquiries from relatives and friends of users, people who have recently left rehabilitation and current users and the free phone service provides practical assistance in contacting appropriate facilities. Drug and alcohol counselling is an integral and important part of this service.

The previous counsellor Angie Campillo was fully booked at least three weeks in advance and while she did refer her current clients to other facilities we are left with informing new inquirers and previous clients that the service is not available. Many people don't see Royal Prince Alfred Hospital as an alternative to services here and people with the highest needs are least likely to access counselling at any health facility, which may be seen to be required to enact a duty of care that a community service such as this centre is not. We are also seen as potentially able to offer more options to people in need.

Drug and alcohol outreach counselling has been offered at the centre for many years. This has created an expectation and in some cases a dependency that this service will be available

I ask that you reconsider your decision to withdraw this highly valuable service. Rather than ceasing what are known to be successful and accessible services we should be looking at building on them.

Would it be possible to meet with you to discuss this further?

I look forward to hearing from you.

Yours Sincerely

www.newtowncentre.org

Helen Petagna
Centre Co-ordinator
Newtown Neighbourhood Centre