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The Australian National Council on Drugs (ANCD) has requested the media to respect the rights of all people working and using the newly opened medically supervised injecting centre by not turning its opening into a media circus.

Chairman of the ANCD, Major Brian Watters, said "This matter has been debated by many people in many places around the country. There are those that continue to support this centre and there are those that continue to oppose it, but we should never forget the tragedy of addiction and the often sad reality of the lives of those people who might use the centre. The ANCD has for some time been saying that should a medically supervised injecting centre proceed, a rigorous evaluation of that centre must occur, so an informed decision can be made on its value. What ever our personal feelings on the conduct of this trial there is no public gain in exposing people either working in the centre or having to use it. Now that the decision has been made to implement this trial, all of us, including the media, must accept that decision. The ANCD, like many other organisations, will maintain a watching brief over the operation and outcomes of the centre."

Major Watters went on to say, "This has been a difficult issue for the Council. Like the community we have a range of views amongst our members, but as a group we do realise that if an evidence based debate on medically supervised injecting centres is to occur in this country then a scientifically conducted trial may have value. Having agreed to proceed with the trial, the onus now lies with the NSW Government and the Uniting Church to ensure that this trial does produce valid data to allow an objective judgement on the value of medically supervised injecting centres to be made."

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The Australian National Council on Drugs is the peak advisory body to Government on drug policy established by the Prime Minister in 1998. (www.ancd.org.au)

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