

# THE VALUE OF A PEER AND CLINICAL PARTNERSHIP TO FACILITATE HEPATITIS C HEALTHCARE ACCESS IN PRIORITY SETTINGS

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## **Background:**

In order to reach the hepatitis C elimination goals in Australia, attention needs to be paid to addressing the unique challenges in accessing healthcare faced by priority populations.

## **Methods:**

Making hep C testing and treatment as easy-to-access and on-the-spot as possible is critical to increasing uptake in priority settings. The Live Hep C Free program does this by partnering hepatology nurses with experienced, trained, and paid peer workers in alcohol and other drug services, homelessness services, residential rehabs, and other priority settings.

Live Hep C Free opens up opportunities to access hep C testing and treatment where it would not otherwise exist. The program then provides a supportive and facilitated bridge into the on-site healthcare for people who might already have considerable barriers to accessing the care they need.

## **Results:**

Since July 2018, peers from the Live Hep C Free program have engaged with nearly 1,500 people about hep C in more than 70 service visits across NSW. Peers have helped to assist almost 200 people into hep C screening and over 100 into treatment.

Clinical partners have reported peer engagement and referral has “greatly increased” their clinical service delivery. They cite peers’ persistence in encouraging testing, their support of those on treatment, and their creation of a welcoming environment as vitally important to improving their reach and impact.

## **Conclusion:**

The long-term aim of regular, consistent peer support and on-site hepatitis healthcare is service-based micro elimination of hepatitis C. By providing immediate and simplified access to on-site healthcare, Live Hep C Free helps alleviate the difficulty some people face in navigating the health system by meeting people where they’re at with the healthcare they need.

## **Disclosure of Interest Statement:**

Hepatitis NSW is funded by the NSW Ministry of Health. However, part funding for some of this program has been received from a pharmaceutical grant from Merck Sharpe and Dohme (MSD) by way of an unrestricted educational grant.