

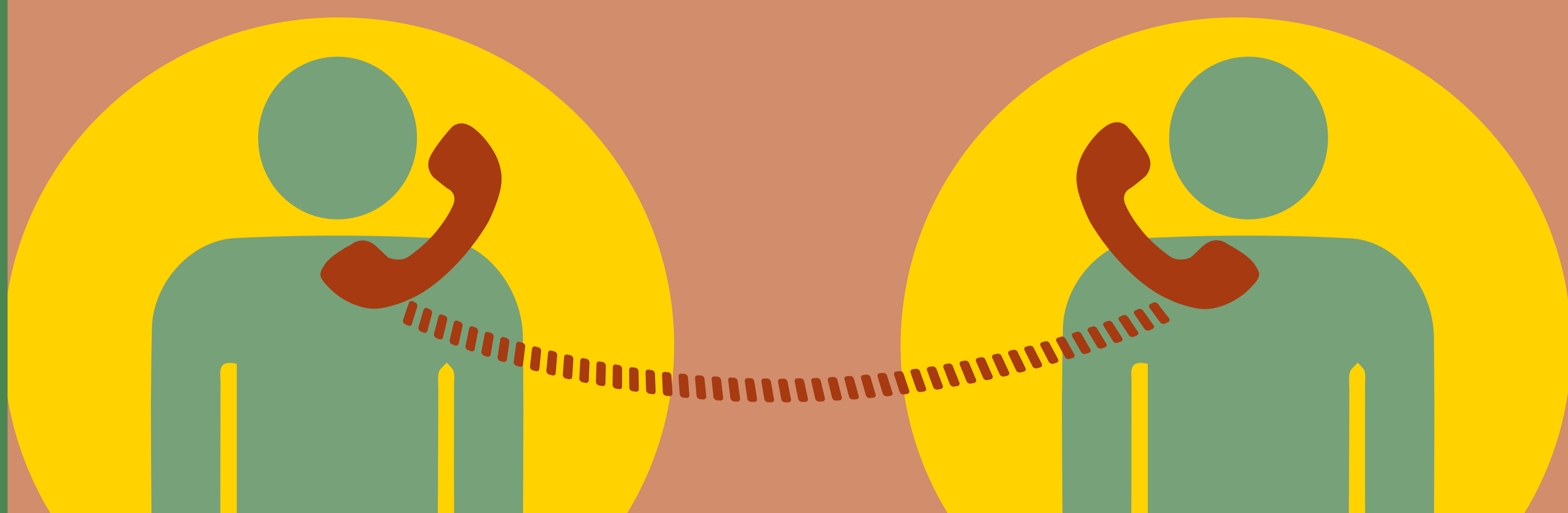
# Hep Connect: Delivering One-to-One Telephone Support to People Undergoing HCV DAA Treatment by People Who Have Treatment Experience

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## Background

*Hep Connect* delivers a free telephone-based service to people in NSW undertaking hep C DAA treatment, and is peer-led by people with treatment experience, including those with liver transplant experience.

The *Hep Connect* program supports people living with hep C, and their family and friends, with information on the new DAAs alongside continuous support throughout the treatment duration.



## Methods

Clients are referred mainly through the *Hepatitis Infoline* as well as the Hepatitis NSW website, online support and email services, and referrals from Hepatitis NSW staff and external agencies such as GPs and Liver Clinics.

The *Hep Connect* peer support workers are trained annually. The Project Officer matches each client with an appropriate peer support worker based on geographic location, age and gender.

Peer workers provide clients with support based on their lived experience as well as psychoeducational information while respecting the clients' autonomy and self-determination around the frequency of support

delivery. Some clients request ongoing support while others require fewer support calls. Most clients are supported weekly for the duration of their treatment plus 1-2 calls following treatment completion.

Throughout the treatment peer workers keep clients informed about the need to return to their treating GP, nurse or specialist at least twelve weeks after completing treatment to have a final blood test that will determine whether their treatment has been successful.

To maintain the program's ethical standards and protect the peer worker's privacy and confidentiality, peer calls are made to clients off-site using a blocked private number.

## Results

The *Hep Connect* program delivered 200 calls to individuals accessing DAA treatment between March 2016 and June 2017.

The ongoing evaluation demonstrates:

- Clients reported 100% satisfaction with their *Hep Connect* peers and that calls were relevant to their circumstances
- 100% of clients reported *Hep Connect* calls were instrumental to their decision to access HCV treatment
- 100% of clients reported the *Hep Connect* calls were instrumental to treatment adherence
- 100% of clients reported that *Hep Connect* support calls were a key factor in curing their hep C.

For more evaluation data see [www.hep.org.au](http://www.hep.org.au) click on "How we are performing"

***"Thank you to my Hep Connect worker for the support calls. What a great service! It has made it easier for me to get through the treatment"*** Hep Connect Client



## Conclusion

The *Hep Connect* program demonstrates that peer support services are pivotal in the suite of services necessary to support some individuals into and through treatment, and consequently move toward the goal of eliminating hep C in the DAA era.

Peer-based phone support is efficacious in supporting some individuals and instrumental in informed decision making around accessing, adhering to, and successfully completing hep C treatment.