

The Living Well program: bringing hepatitis C treatment to marginalised people

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Introduction

The *Live Hep C Free* program (formerly *Living Well*) is a 4 week course for people in residential rehabilitation centres, or experiencing homelessness. The facilitators are people with experience of living with hep C who assist others to live free of hep C. The facilitators act as a bridge: mentoring and empowering participants toward services.

The program has built an innovative model that provides information on hep C, liver health and diet as well as bringing hep C testing, FibroScans, and treatment into residential rehabilitation centres. The program partners with local liver clinics to increase access to hep C information, testing and treatment for marginalised people by meeting them where they're at.



PHOTO: Exposition by PAF

Benefits of the *Live Hep C Free* program:

- Run by peer facilitators with lived experience of hep C and treatment
- Courses provide a safe space to talk about hep C and works to empower people to make informed decisions around their health and hepatitis
- Everyone who attends a Live Hep C Free course can get a hep C test, a FibroScan and access treatment
- Partner residential rehabs offering treatment to clients while in rehab
- Linking rehabs with local liver clinics to develop an ongoing relationship

Outcomes

This model has the potential to contribute significantly to the elimination of hepatitis C in Australia by reaching marginalised people living with the virus and bringing appropriate hepatitis healthcare and information to them.

Live Hep C Free has been met with great enthusiasm by participants and is strongly supported by the residential rehabs and liver clinics we partner with.

Live Hep C Free's achievements 2016/17

- **172 participants in the program**
- **First ever hep C treatment started** at Phoebe House residential rehab
- **Collaboration** with South Eastern Sydney Local Health District **to set-up a hep C clinic** at Jarrah House residential rehab
 - **32 people** experiencing homelessness **accessed FibroScan, blood testing and treatment** at Ozanam Learning Centre

Results

Many participants have never tested for hep C due to marginalisation, homelessness and drug use issues.

Bringing in dietitians and liver clinic nurses helps to break down traditional barriers to healthcare for this population and provides practical, useable information for participants to put into practice in daily life.

The *Live Hep C Free* program utilises the unique expertise of peer facilitators to empower people in residential rehabs to take control of their health and take action on their hepatitis.