

# Fostering a vibrant PEER WORKFORCE

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**There** are few more worthwhile investments that can be made by community organisations than in a strong and effective peer workforce. Across the sector, peer workers can at times be used tokenistically or added on to programs purely to boost its perceived relevance in the community which often leads to ineffective outcomes and engagement. Hepatitis NSW prides itself on investing in building a vibrant, informed and engaged peer workforce that is at the heart of the work we do. The success of our programs is directly down to the efforts of our peer workforce. Putting peer-workers at the centre of the work of community-based organisations is the only way to achieve real successes in health promotion, workforce education and community support.

## HNSW's PEER PROGRAMS

- Hep Connect phone-based peer support service
- C-een & Heard positive speaker program
- Living Well peer-facilitated chronic disease self-management program

**JD** a Hepatitis NSW  
peer worker



**The experts on living with hep C  
are the people living with hep C**



**Mary** a Hepatitis NSW  
peer worker

## Why peer workers?

- Unrivalled expertise in the social impacts of hepatitis C
- Invaluable real-world insight into community impacts and issues
- Effective and honest community engagement
- Empowers the affected community; investing in peers is an investment in a stronger affected community
- Develops an authentic community-driven response to viral hepatitis
- Utilise the power of personal stories and experiences
- Bottom-up rather than top-down approach to health promotion
- Role models for the affected community
- Creates community-led and community-centred work
- The benefits of program participants having direct engagement with people with experiences similar to their own

## How Hepatitis NSW has built a vibrant peer workforce

- Building programs with peer workers and their input at the core
- Deferring to peer expertise for relevance of programs
- Annual training – paid
- Professional development on facilitation, public speaking, phone support
- Appropriate remuneration for peer expertise
- Giving peers genuine ownership of, and investment in, programs they deliver
- Placing peer expertise on par with medical/ tertiary educated expertise
- Peer workers are valued staff members
- Creating a supporting environment for peers to flourish