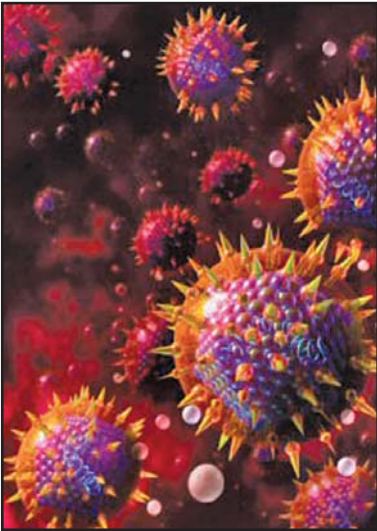




Embracing diversity | Annual report 2009/2010

HEPATITISVICTORIA

Hepatitis C



Hepatitis C is a blood borne virus that causes inflammation of the liver. Over time it may damage the liver, with the amount of damage ranging from slight to serious. A small number of people with hepatitis C will develop cirrhosis (serious scarring of the liver) and a very small number may go on to develop liver cancer.

For transmission of hepatitis C to occur, the blood of an infected person needs to enter the bloodstream of another person.

Living with hepatitis C can be difficult. The physical, emotional, social and financial impacts are often profound. Many people with hepatitis C continue to experience discrimination and stigmatisation, which can lead to social isolation, marginalisation and difficulty in accessing appropriate services and care.

It is not only individuals who are affected. Hepatitis C affects our whole community, not least because of the economic impact on the health care system.

You can't get it from sharing food and drink, cups and glasses, hugs, kisses, toilets or from mosquito bites. Hepatitis C is not considered a sexually transmissible infection (STI).



Our Board

Peter Higgs

President

Jean Wyldbore

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James Synot

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Michelle Wills

Peter Waples-Crowe

Helen McNeill

(CEO, non-voting position)

Our staff

Helen McNeill

Chief Executive Officer

Emily Adamson

Programs Manager

Piergiorgio Moro

Campaigns and Advocacy Program

Alex Taylor

Prisons Program

Raymond Paterson

Cultural Diversity Program

Rebekah Alsop

Indigenous Program

Emily Lenton

Young People's Program

Louisa Walsh

Project Coordinator

Hep C: Take Control Project

Diane Wilde

Book Keeper

Garry Sattell

Community Participation Coordinator

Ray Hehr

Communications Coordinator

Halo Jones

Office Coordinator

Our Research Advisory Committee

Scott Bowden

Damon Brogan

Suzanne Fraser

Peter Higgs

David Iser

Emily Lenton

Stephen McNally

Jacqui Richmond

Pam Wood

Jean Wyldbore

President's report



The Board started the year in great anticipation with the development of the *3rd National Hepatitis C Strategy* and *1st National Hepatitis B Strategy*. Implementation plans are now being finalised for these two new strategies and we look forward to the next stage when they will be delivered.

In Victoria we were pleased to have a *Viral Hepatitis Taskforce* established. Although it has taken a while for this to gain momentum we are hopeful that it will deliver some solid outcomes over the next 12 months.

The *Victorian Hepatitis C Strategy* was reviewed and we anticipate significant involvement in developing new strategies or action plans to direct Victoria's response to the many challenges we face.

After some strategic and carefully planned advocacy work by Hepatitis C Victoria with a group of clinicians, nurses and consumers, it was announced in the May 2010 budget that \$4.1 million would be provided over four years to develop a *Hepatitis C Integrated Model of Care* for Victoria. The funding includes provision for the employment of 10 hepatology nurses. This is certainly the largest boost to funding for people with hepatitis C in Victoria and we will continue to work with the Department of Health and other stakeholders to ensure that this money benefits everyone with hepatitis C by being used to fund innovative and flexible models of care.

The media has focused more attention on hepatitis C this year than is usual primarily because of the 'Croydon Cluster' where a

large number of women have tested positive to hepatitis C after undertaking medical procedures in a private clinic in Croydon. The ensuing Department of Health 'look-back' and identification of women at risk has been extensive. Hepatitis C Victoria worked collaboratively with the Department to ensure that any required support is made available for these women. Legal proceedings in this case are ongoing.

Internationally, it is worth noting that in May this year the World Health Organisation, at its 63rd World Health Assembly, adopted a *viral hepatitis resolution* that will lead to the development of a global strategy for the prevention and control of hepatitis.

I take this opportunity to thank all members of the Hepatitis C Victoria Board for their efforts over the past 12 months. Special thanks also to Helen in her role as CEO for her exemplary work locally and nationally, and for her support of the Board during 2010.

We are all looking forward to the next 12 months when we will ask our members to consider extending our organisation's functions to include hepatitis B. We will also, naturally, continue our work for the many Victorians affected by hepatitis C.

Peter Higgs
President



CEO's report

It is with great pleasure that I report that Hepatitis C Victoria has again grown in the last 12 months and that we have continued to embrace the challenges of working with all people affected by hepatitis C in our community. We are now delivering more programs and services, and are reaching more health and community workers and people with hepatitis C than we ever have before.

At Hepatitis C Victoria we have targeted programs for young people, culturally diverse communities, prisoners and the Indigenous community. These programs are not 'special' or 'extra' work that we do, rather they are an essential part of our core business.

Our excellent reputation and the quality of our work has been recognised by a new three-year contract with the Department of Health, which increased our funding. This support by the Department of Health is gratefully acknowledged.

While our Annual Report details the work and achievements of each of our programs, other outcomes in 2009/2010 include:

- our Research Advisory Committee hosting two forums that brought nearly 100 researchers and community workers together to discuss common areas of interest
- upgrading our website so that it is more comprehensive, interactive and accessible
- beginning the process of considering how we might contribute to the response to hepatitis B
- consolidating partnerships with Justice Health, VACCHO and MHSS
- bringing our bookkeeping function in-house to ensure that our financial management systems are of the highest standard
- sitting on key decision-making committees at a national and state level, and advocating strongly for an increased focus on prevention of hepatitis C and improvements in access to quality care, treatment and support services for people with hepatitis C.

One of our core values at Hepatitis C Victoria is working in partnership. Quite simply, we could not achieve what we do without the many volunteers, community and health workers, researchers, clinicians and organisations with whom we work every day. In particular we acknowledge and thank the people with hepatitis C who have worked with us to ensure that those who really matter to the organisation stay central to all that we do.

This annual report is a testimonial to the work done in the last 12 months by our team of talented staff, who are energetic and dedicated to improving hepatitis C-related outcomes for our community.

During this year we said farewell to Kirk Peterson and Kim Dick – we thank them for the wonderful work they did, and wish them well for the future. Finally, I would like to thank each member of our Board for their leadership, governance and support, which are so important to this organisation.

Helen McNeill
CEO



Programs Manager



It has been another action-packed year. Over the last 12 months Hepatitis C Victoria has undertaken a variety of projects that enabled us to connect with organisations and workers from diverse backgrounds across Victoria.

Program-based achievements include:

- responding to 1342 phone calls on the Hep C Infoline
- delivering 78 education sessions to workers and prison inmates
- having over 400 workers attend general training sessions on hepatitis C, which were delivered in their workplaces
- further growth in our Indigenous Program. Welcoming two new educators, Ross Morgan and Rebekah Alsop.

New initiatives include:

- implementing a 12-month pilot chronic disease self-management project. The *Hep C: Take Control* Project delivered five sessions to 35 participants over five sites. Evaluation demonstrated that the program is safe, appropriate, well targeted, and has a substantial impact on important aspects of people's lives. This pilot was funded by a grant from the Department of Health and Ageing.
- developing a new treatment booklet for

people who inject drugs. Patrick, our community development student who undertook his placement with Hepatitis C Victoria, developed this resource. The style of the booklet is fresh and bold.

- contributing to and being a member of the Hepatitis B Alliance (formerly known as the Hepatitis B Working Group). The Alliance aims to enhance and improve treatment and support services for people living with chronic hepatitis B.
- the *Street Shot* Photographic Competition that used creative photography and an exhibition to promote awareness about hepatitis C prevention to young people and youth-focused organisations. The project was extremely successful and reached 91 young people and involved 11 services.
- developing a set of evaluation strategies that will enable us to monitor and evaluate the implementation and impact of our key programs and projects.

Emily Adamson

Programs Manager



Campaigns and Advocacy Program

The Campaigns and Advocacy Program seeks to determine and address the underlying reasons why people with hepatitis C experience difficulties with disclosure, discrimination and access to services.

Program-based achievements include:

- conducting 22 education sessions for more than 300 people. The sessions, including *Workforce Development Forums* and *Bloody Serious Facts*, focused on stigma, discrimination and how to address these issues in the workplace and within policy and infection control guidelines. Feedback on these sessions has been very positive:
“I’m more comfortable talking about hepatitis C”, “I would recommend this training to other clinicians”, “I now feel our organisation will be more hepatitis C friendly”, “Well presented”, “A very informative session”
- undertaking the production of several information leaflets about hepatitis C and the workplace. More information leaflets will be finalised in the second half of 2010
- publication of an article in the December 2009/January 2010 issue of the *Australian Journal of Nursing*. The article, co-authored by Pier Moro, the Campaigns and Advocacy Educator, Frances Cieslak and Scott Bowden, discussed the legal and disclosure issues related to working as a nurse if one has a blood borne virus like hepatitis C
- presenting two papers at the National Hepatitis Conference in Hobart.

Collaborative highlights include:

- providing advice, support and referral to people who are or may be at risk of discrimination. The program worked with the *Public Interest Legal Clearing House*, the legal firm *Maddocks*, the *Australian Nursing Federation*, the *Department of Human Services* and the *United Health Group*
- participating on the Yarra Drug and Health Forum sub-committee, which sponsored a groundbreaking research paper by the Burnet Institute on the feasibility of establishing a supervised injecting centre in Melbourne
- partnering with the Indigenous theatre group *Ilbijerri Theatre Company*, for the staging of their production of *Chopped Liver*, which focused on hepatitis C issues and young people
- participation in the committee for the *Ballarat Safe Skin Project*, which looked at improving the quality of information available on the importance of infection control in the body art sector
- participation in the homelessness festival organised by the *Royal District Nursing Service*.

Ongoing projects include:

- Production and presentation of *Hep Chat*, the weekly radio program on 3CR
- Production of the quarterly electronic newsletter – *Viral Low Down*.

Piergiorgio Moro

Campaigns and Advocacy Educator



Cultural Diversity Program



It has been estimated that in Victoria there are 8,000 people from culturally diverse backgrounds who have hepatitis C. Many people from such backgrounds experience barriers in gaining access to accurate health information. The Cultural Diversity Program seeks to address this by providing hepatitis C information and education to organisations, agencies and groups that work with culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) clients.

Collaborative highlights include:

- working in partnership with Multicultural Health Support Service (MHSS) on several projects including: the MHSS Blood Borne Virus/Sexually Transmitted Disease Working Group, the Transmission Steering Group, and the Glossary Reference Group. This partnership has provided Hepatitis C Victoria with access to specialist knowledge about CALD groups. This assists with the promotion and dissemination of translated information about hepatitis C to various health, community and educational programs across Victoria. The program's involvement in such roles enables it to identify and develop strategies to address hepatitis C issues in CALD communities. The program also provides regular training about hepatitis C to MHSS staff.

Program-based achievements include:

- delivering information and education sessions to over 150 people, mostly workers from various health and community sector backgrounds

- delivering Training Sessions to: bi-lingual workers, interpreters, migrant settlement workers at Eastern Access Community Health, Multicultural Women's Health, Box Hill Migrant Information Centre, Salvation Army Community Aged Care, Eastern Access Resource Centre and the Evergreen Senior Citizens Group
- organising two *Love Your Liver Lunch* events in regional Victoria. Community activity grants were offered to a number of organisations to encourage them to provide a healthy lunch to their clients or students. The first was held at Otway Community College, a major provider of adult, community and further education in the Colac district. The second event was held at Ovens and King Community Health Service based in Wangaratta. Both events were attended by a range of health professionals and students including GPs, nurses, alcohol and drug workers, social workers, teachers and adult education college students.

Other initiatives:

The work of the program has also been promoted via radio interviews, particularly during Hepatitis Awareness Week in May 2010. There were three radio interviews, two with 3CR and one with 3ZZZ that promoted Hepatitis Awareness to the Somali community.

Ray Paterson

Cultural Diversity Educator



Indigenous Program

The Indigenous Program aims to disseminate hepatitis C prevention and management messages to Aboriginal health organisations, drug and alcohol agencies, rehabilitation services, prisons and other organisation that provide services to Aboriginal people.

Program-based achievements include:

- delivering 12 training sessions to 120 Aboriginal workers in Aboriginal community controlled health organisations
- speaking to over 100 Aboriginal community members about hepatitis C at men's and women's meetings
- supporting the Ilberijerri Theatre company to develop a new script that focused on young people, body art and hepatitis C
- providing community activity grants to five Aboriginal community controlled health organisations to support them to host a *Love Your Liver* Lunch during Hepatitis Awareness Week. Over 80 workers and community members attended regional *Love Your Liver* Lunches
- providing information to Aboriginal prisoners at Marngoneet prison.

Ross Morgan and Rebekah Alsop

Indigenous Educators



Ross and Rebekah were unavailable to be photographed due to work commitments.

Prisons Program



Hepatitis C Victoria's Prisons Program encourages and supports prisoner participation in hepatitis C education sessions and ownership of hepatitis C knowledge.

Program-based achievements include:

- delivering 78 education sessions in eight prisons throughout Victoria
- continuing our involvement in the Transitional Assistance Program (TAP), providing hepatitis C information for prisoners before release. We ran 44 sessions in four prisons that reached more than 350 prisoners. The TAP session is an important time to remind prisoners of the transmission risks inside prison and to consider whether there are any health issues that need to be addressed prior to or upon release. As prisoners' thoughts turn towards their lives on the outside, it is an opportune time for them to reflect on the transmission risks that may lie ahead, particularly within close relationships
- delivering 29 education sessions in seven prisons for Prison Peer and Health Infection Control Educators. These Educators play a vital role in educating inmates about hepatitis C and have been a great support for those who undertake treatment while in prison. We sustain and nurture this valuable partnership with Prison Peer and Health Infection Control Educators by offering ongoing support and education.

- organising activities in prisons for Hepatitis Awareness Week. Activities were held at a few prisons, most notably at Marngoneet, which organised two hepatitis C education sessions. The day was organised and supported by clinical services staff and the Health Infection Control Educators did a great job in promoting the sessions to the inmates. It was well attended by program staff and approximately 30 prisoners
- conducting three training sessions for 43 prison staff. This provided an opportunity to address some of the workplace concerns for staff about blood borne viruses. It also provides prison staff with an insight into some of the issues faced by the prisoners, and our work within the prison system
- strengthening Hepatitis C Victoria's relationship with Justice Health by participation in quarterly partnership meetings. These meetings are an opportunity to work collaboratively on future prison projects. They also assist each organisation's work and support common goals.

Alexandra Taylor

Prisons Educator



Young People's Program

The Young People's Program works in partnership with organisations that have contact with young people who may be at risk of contracting, or who have hepatitis C.

Program-based education sessions for 2009/2010 included:

- regular training for Youth Justice staff. This year we expanded our program for training new Youth Justice staff to also include Youth Justice Custodial Services workers. Education sessions were also delivered to young people in the Parkville Youth Residential Centre as part of their general health education. Overall, the Program delivered 16 sessions to 183 people.
- developing a new partnership with the Council to Homeless Persons Youth Policy Unit. Our education sessions provided statewide training to residential workers who support young people in Department of Human Services (DHS) care
- regular education sessions, in partnership with Harm Reduction Victoria, have been provided to services that work with young people who are in contact with the criminal justice system. Six sessions were delivered, training 86 youth workers. Workers have provided positive feedback through evaluation forms indicating that they felt more confident to discuss hepatitis C with their clients after participating in our training. When asked what they would do differently after completing the training, replies included: *'I will discuss hepatitis C risks with clients, for example when they talk about injecting'*,

'I will approach the topic of hepatitis C with my clients more confidentially', 'I will get information about hepatitis C out to my community', 'I have a different approach and outlook about hepatitis C as a whole'.

- arranging for our peer educators, who are trained to work with young people, to co-facilitate three sessions in schools as part of the *Street Shot* Photographic Competition. Hepatitis C Victoria also delivered an education session to four schools and approximately 200 students in the Barwon region as part of the City of Greater Geelong's Drug Action Week.

Other initiatives included:

- presentation of the 'Hepatitis C Prevention and Early Intervention Project' to the Hepatitis Australia Hepatitis C Health Promotion and ANEX conferences
- co-authoring a blog with Hepatitis C NSW for *Between the Lines*, an interactive website about drug and alcohol for young people, promoting *You don't wanna mess with me*, a new DVD that was created by the Centre for Culture, Ethnicity and Health
- developing *What's the Chance?*, an interactive game that explores risks and busts some myths associated with injecting and body art
- revising the *Hepatitis C and Body Art: Educators' Kit* for secondary schools, which will be offered to secondary school nurses and students.

Emily Lenton

Young People's Educator



The *Hep C: Take Control* Project



The *Hep C: Take Control* Project was a pilot chronic disease self-management (CDSM) project funded by the Department of Health and Ageing. *Hep C: Take Control* ran as a six-week program in which hepatitis C-related topics and issues were discussed and where participants set personal health goals each week. Courses were held at Box Hill Hospital, The Alfred, Bendigo Health and Hepatitis C Victoria. Course content was determined through a series of focus groups that included a range of consumers and sector workers. There was a strong focus on lifestyle management and goal setting for achieving positive behaviour change.

Thirty-five people with hepatitis C participated in the course. Participants were at different stages with their hepatitis C – some had never had treatment, some were thinking about treatment, some were newly diagnosed and some had gone through treatment without clearing the virus.

The *Hep C: Take Control* Project was evaluated by the Primary Health Innovation Team at Deakin University.

Key findings of the evaluation included:

- Participants indicated that ‘being tired, having no energy’, ‘stress and worry’, ‘managing work’, ‘exercise’ and ‘quitting smoking’ were all areas of their health that needed improvement at the start of the course.

- The most common goals set during the course were to establish an exercise routine and getting planned rest and relaxation. The evaluation indicated that by the end of the 6 week program participants were progressing well with their goals.
- Participants reported that working in a group and writing down their goals enhanced goal achievement. Barriers to achieving their goals were fatigue and time management.
- Hepatitis C knowledge improved throughout the program.

A questionnaire called the hei-Q was used to measure the impact of the course in a range of areas. Participants displayed improvements in every area measured by the hei-Q, but the greatest improvement was in the area of ‘social inclusion and support’. The evaluators describe this improvement as the largest they have ever seen in any CDSM program using the hei-Q as an evaluation tool.

Feedback about the course from participants was overwhelmingly positive and some participants have developed their own informal support networks to maintain the relationships they built during the course.

Hepatitis C Victoria is currently exploring opportunities to expand the *Hep C: Take Control* Project.

Louisa Walsh

Hep C: Take Control Coordinator



Community Participation Coordination

The Community Participation Program includes coordination of the Hep C Infoline, Support Services, Volunteering and Member Services. This program also coordinates the Volunteers Public Speaker Program and the *Love Your Liver* Lunch Program for National Hepatitis Awareness Week.

Program-based achievements include:

- an increase of 22% in calls to the Hep C Infoline compared with the 2008–2009 period. There were:
 - 1,181 contacts throughout the year
 - 9,402 booklets distributed
 - 467 referrals made to other services (including 107 to the support group and 277 to medical services)
- growth in the Hepatitis C Victoria Support Group with up to 16 people attending each month. This group provided support for a total of 150 people throughout the year. This year has also seen a significant increase in collaboration with external agencies to either initiate a new support group or to enhance current support groups
- training five public speakers through the Positive Speakers Bureau. These volunteers have spoken at several events including: S100 GP training, Pharmacy Guild training, mental health nurses' training and at mental health forums. Three volunteers now assist in office administration duties

- sixty people living with hepatitis C attended the metropolitan *Love Your Liver* Lunch, which was part of the National Hepatitis Awareness Week Launch. In addition, over 100 people from rural/regional Victoria were able to attend *Love Your Liver* Lunches due to Hepatitis C Victoria's community activities grants' project
- co-facilitating the *Hep C: Take Control* Program (with Louisa Walsh, the *Hep C: Take Control* Coordinator). Other tasks related to the program included promoting it to external agencies and the ongoing training of workers.

The Community Participation Program received positive feedback from the community:

'Good news - I have cleared hep C! Thanks to you I was able to understand more about hep C and thanks to the support group I was able to share my feelings and experiences – I really appreciated everything you've done for me.'

Garry Sattell

Community Participations Coordinator



Communications Coordination



The Communications Program involves diverse tasks that include producing the *Good Liver* magazine and the Annual Report, coordinating Hepatitis Awareness Week, maintaining and updating the Hepatitis C Victoria website, developing education resources and attending to the day-to-day promotional requirements of our staff.

Program-based achievements for 2009/2010 include:

- producing four editions of *Good Liver* magazine. The engaging themes that were covered this year were: *the ABCs of hepatitis*, *Community and social inclusion*, *Treatment research and trials* and *Getting older*
- coordinating Hepatitis Awareness Week. This year, Victoria hosted the national launch for World Hepatitis Day at Federation Square. A rock concert was held on the main stage. The line-up featured several up-and-coming young bands and was headlined by Angry Anderson and his band. Several schools from around Melbourne were invited to attend this event and a student questionnaire was prepared to engage and educate students about viral hepatitis
- four schools brought an estimated five teachers and 86 students to the concert
- 58 student questionnaires were returned. These were evaluated and a prize awarded for the most correctly answered questionnaire from each school
- hosting the *Street Shot* Photographic Competition opposite the main stage and

the metropolitan *Love Your Liver* Lunch was held in Chocolate Buddha Restaurant.

- assessing submissions of interest for the redevelopment of Hepatitis C Victoria's website. *Couch Creative* was selected on merit to update our website. The site has several new features and up-to-date information about hepatitis, treatment and our organisation's services.

Staff promotional resources include:

- two Education and Training Calendars, three Hepatitis C Forum flyers, two Hepatitis C Discussion flyers and five education session flyers.

General education resources produced include:

- two updated tattoo and body art posters
- a poster for the *Hep C: Take Control* Program
- a new treatment booklet called, *Are you thinking about treatment for the hep C virus?*
- an organisational brochure to advertise our organisation's services
- making a start on the *Hepatitis C and body art: educators' kit for secondary schools*; the *Hepatitis C training for prison peer educators*; and the *Prisons* magazine.

Ray Hehr

Communications Coordinator



Office Coordination

Our membership program continues to be strongly supported. We have over 300 members who regularly receive *Good Liver*, and over a thousand more copies of the magazine are distributed through other organisations such as liver clinics, hospitals and member organisations. Our electronic newsletters, *Liver Spot* and *Viral Lowdown*, now each have an audience of over 350 and that number is growing monthly. In total, nearly 700 people receive regular e-mail notification of Hepatitis C Victoria events, programs and important news about hepatitis C.

From June to July last year, we sent out nearly 8,500 printed resources in response to Infoline calls and orders from workers. When they became available in May, there was a huge demand for the four new pamphlets from Hepatitis Australia - *Treat It, Beat It*; *Guide To Healthy Living*; *Testing Information*; *My Choice, My Rights*. We also increased our Hepatitis Awareness Week mailout to include more than 300 GPs, 250 libraries and 200 pharmacies.

Over the last 12 months we've had some wonderful volunteers who have helped with numerous mailouts, worked on our filing system and catalogued our library. Throughout the year I have been kept busy paying invoices, attending meetings, preparing mail to be sent out, ensuring the office supplies are well stocked and generally making sure the office runs as smoothly as possible.

Halo Jones
Office Coordinator



Hepatitis C Victoria



Hepatitis C Victoria is an independent, community-based, not-for-profit organisation funded primarily by the Victorian Department of Health. The organisation is governed by a Board of Directors and the day-to-day work of the organisation is carried out by a CEO and staff. We are fortunate to have a growing number of talented volunteers who work throughout the organisation.

Support

For a community organisation such as Hepatitis C Victoria, donations are the 'bit extra' that helps our activities to flourish. Donations to Hepatitis C Victoria are tax deductible and very welcome.

Join

To advocate effectively on behalf of the hepatitis C community with a strong and relevant voice at State and Federal levels, Hepatitis C Victoria must be representative of that community. To this end, a strong membership base is essential. Become a member – it's free for individuals – and work with us for hepatitis C support, advocacy, referral, education, workforce development and information provision.

Contact

For more information about Hepatitis C Victoria, about becoming a member or volunteer, or to find out more about our resources, please contact us:

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