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AGEING**

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# Hepatitis Victoria/LiverWELL™

*Love Your Liver Campaign and  
HEPReady Regional*

Evaluation report

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# 1. Executive Summary

## KEY FINDINGS

- Hepatitis Victoria developed and implemented a multi-faceted campaign – *Love Your Liver* – to increase awareness of hepatitis and liver health.
- Key messages communicated through the campaign were: Testing for hepatitis is easy and getting treated is even easier; A vaccine is available to prevent hepatitis B; Hepatitis C is curable with medications made more affordable under the PBS; and Hepatitis B is easily treated and managed.
- The campaign targeted areas of Victoria with high prevalence of hepatitis or population groups known to be at high risk.
- The geographic areas targeted by the *Love Your Liver* campaign were also target areas for *HEPReady Regional* education activities with the expectation that increasing awareness about liver health in these targeted communities would raise readiness for education workshops.
- The *HEPReady Regional* workshops aimed to raise awareness of viral hepatitis and liver disease and promote uptake of testing, treatment and immunisation.
- The workshops also intended to: build workforce capacity to manage or appropriately refer clients living with, or at risk of, viral hepatitis; enable the workforce to engage with and support the community and provide services which are informed and free of stigma; and build knowledge of appropriate referral pathways and develop professional and supportive networks.
- Eight *HEPReady Regional* workshops were conducted between June 2018 and October 2019, with seven of these being conducted in regional areas. The number of people attending ranged from 4 to 24, giving an average attendance of 14 people. Workshops in Shepparton, Dandenong, Traralgon, Brimbank and Mildura were preceded by *Love Your Liver* activities.
- Most *HEPReady Regional* workshop participants reported hearing about the workshop through direct email or from colleagues and managers. There was no difference in reported recall of publicity about hepatitis for workshop participants from regions that experienced the *Love Your Liver* campaign and those that did not.
- Basic knowledge was very high for workshop participants before and after the workshops. Most participants indicated that they would act on the knowledge gained in the workshop. Only a small percentage said they already identified risk factors, recommended testing or recommended vaccination. This suggests that it was the workshop that contributed to behavioural intentions.
- Nearly all participants said they would recommend the workshop to others.
- Deliberative engagement with local stakeholders supported implementation of *Love Your Liver* and *HEPReady Regional*. Local mayors took an active role in promoting the campaign and workshops. This is likely to have amplified the effect of the activities in these areas.
- Through the combined implementation of the *Love Your Liver* campaign and *HEPReady Regional* education workshops, Hepatitis Victoria has contributed to the following priority focus areas in the Victorian Hepatitis C Strategy 2016-2020 and the Victorian Hepatitis B Strategy 2016-2020:
  - Victorians are supported to reduce their risk of contracting viral hepatitis
  - Victorians with viral hepatitis know their status
  - The Victorian workforce has the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to deliver best practice hepatitis B & C prevention, testing, treatment and care
  - Systems and settings are integrated to meet the needs of people affected by hepatitis B & C

## 1.1. OVERVIEW

The *Love Your Liver* campaign was devised as a follow-up to Hepatitis Victoria's *Be Free from Hep C* campaign in 2016 and the *Love Your Liver* theme campaign conducted in the North West Melbourne Primary Health Network catchment from November 2017 to February 2018.

The *Love you Liver* campaign was designed to raise awareness in the community about the importance of liver health, to increase uptake of testing and treatment for hepatitis B and hepatitis C, and to create a new positive approach to liver health while minimising the stigma associated with viral hepatitis. The *Love Your Liver* campaign was implemented in two phases: the first *Love Your Liver* campaign phase (LYL#1) in late 2017 and early 2018 which was followed by the second phase conducted in 2019.

The *Love Your Liver* campaign created a geographically targeted campaign for five regional areas with high prevalence of viral hepatitis:

- Shepparton
- Dandenong/Frankston
- Latrobe Valley
- Brimbank/Maribyrnong
- Mildura

Informed by the work contained in the Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C Mapping projects published by the Doherty institute in March 2018, localities for the *Love Your Liver* campaign were selected as regions where prevalence of hepatitis B and or C was relatively high or where treatment uptake was low. For instance, Shepparton had high rates of hepatitis C, while Dandenong had high rates of both hepatitis B & C. Uptake of treatment was high in Dandenong, but not in other targeted areas.

The *HEPReady Regional* project provided preparatory place-based workforce development workshops for health and community workers, to increase knowledge levels regarding viral hepatitis in regional Victoria as well as increasing their capacity to manage or appropriately refer clients at risk of viral hepatitis. The workshops also encouraged testing and vaccination. The feature of these forums was to bring local champions and expertise together with lived experience. Workshops also raised awareness of stigma and discrimination particularly in relation to workforce interaction with people living with viral hepatitis.

There were eight *HEPReady Regional* workshops conducted between June 2018 and October 2019. A total of eight workshops were conducted. Seven of the eight workshops were conducted in regional areas – Brimbank being the exception. The number of people attending ranged from 4 to 24, with an average attendance of 14 people. Workshops in Shepparton, Dandenong, Traralgon, Brimbank and Mildura were preceded by *Love Your Liver* activities. The *Love Your Liver* public relations and media campaign was conducted 4-6 weeks prior to a *HEPReady Regional* workshop being held in each target area. The rationale was that increasing awareness about liver health in these targeted communities through the implementation of the *Love Your Liver* campaign would raise readiness for education workshops.

This evaluation report is based on information provided by Hepatitis Victoria, interviews with project staff, and analysis of data collected by Hepatitis Victoria staff or external consultants that was provided to the evaluation team at La Trobe University.

## 1.2. ACTIVITIES

Videos, print advertisements, bus backs and bus shelter advertisements, and shopping centre panel and street furniture advertisements were developed for the *Love Your Liver* campaign. These ensured that a consistent campaign was implemented across the different regions while presenting messaging and imagery appropriate for region specific audiences. Local newspapers, radio, and general practice clinics were the channels through which the creative content was disseminated.

Presentation of general practice films and advertisements exceeded the number “booked” which indicates the reach of the campaign extended beyond expectations. Radio and newspaper advertising, bus backs, shopping centre panels and GP clinic advertising are more difficult to evaluate in terms of reach; however, guidance on placement and distribution of campaign materials is based on estimated numbers of people likely to be exposed in each place.

The campaign team developed and implemented a comprehensive social media strategy, including Facebook advertising, Facebook videos, Google Search network, podcasts, Twitter, WeChat, and Instagram. There was a high level of engagement with social media activities, through Google Search and Facebook in particular.

The *HEPReady Regional* workshops aimed to raise awareness of viral hepatitis and liver disease and promote uptake of testing, treatment and immunisation. In addition, the workshops intended to: build workforce capacity to manage or appropriately refer clients living with, or at risk of, viral hepatitis; enable the workforce to engage with and support the community and provide services which are informed and free of stigma; and have knowledge of appropriate referral pathways and develop supportive professional networks.

Handouts and material used at the workshops were available via the online portal and on completion of the event attendance certificates were available for download for professionals who required them to contribute to continuing professional development registers.

*HEPReady Regional* workshops were promoted by direct emails to relevant local services. These included information on the events as well as flyers, and through social media, newsletters, signature blocks, promotion via events pages maintained by peak bodies, local government and other regional services. Workshops were also publicised with a communications campaign that included letters to regional networks and direct contact, as well as direct approaches to local media representatives. Almost half of the workshop participants who gave feedback using a survey said they learnt about the workshop from their colleagues or manager. The source of awareness of colleagues and managers is not known. Hepatitis Victoria emails alerted 36.6% of all respondents to the availability of the *HEPReady Regional* workshops. Workshop participants did not report advertisements in HEPChat or on social media as a source of awareness of the workshops.

## 1.3. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

The *Love Your Liver* campaign team engaged with key stakeholders across each region, including local government, health and community services, local media, and local dignitaries who became champions of the campaign. Relationships were strengthened with the local councils in areas where the *HEPReady Regional* workshops were running in conjunction with the *Love Your Liver* campaign. This was demonstrated

by several the Council Mayors becoming “HEP Heroes”. These individuals agreed to speak at the *HEPReady Regional* workshops and publicly recognised the *Love Your Liver* campaign.

Media releases were successfully distributed to local print media at the start of each geographic campaign to highlight the extent of the issue in the region, and the opportunity for people to take charge of their health. Local television, radio, and newspaper outlets picked up the media releases and provided greater campaign exposure.

A range of external stakeholders were engaged to organise and present the *HEPReady Regional* workshops. Stakeholders contacted by Hepatitis Victoria staff included Primary Health Networks, local government, community health services, Aboriginal community-controlled health services, regional integrated hepatitis nurse consultants, local GPs and gastroenterologists and, where possible, local lived experience speakers. Such collaborations were important for providing local expertise.

#### **1.4. HEPREADY WORKSHOP FEEDBACK**

Knowledge levels were assessed through a participant survey. Based on the set of questions included, basic knowledge was very high before the workshops in most locations. Attitudes after the workshop were very positive.

Participants were asked whether they would act on the information they’d heard at the workshop. Approximately three-quarters said they were very likely to identify risk factors for hepatitis B and C, recommend testing, or recommend vaccination. Just under half (46%) said they were very likely to identify care pathways in the local area, with the remainder saying they were “somewhat likely”. No workshop participants indicated that they were “very unlikely” to take any action. In most instances, these actions appear to be new for workshop participants. Fewer than 10% indicated they already identified risk factors, recommended testing or recommended vaccination. This suggests that it was the workshop that was contributing to behavioural intentions.

The majority of respondents (97%) said they would recommend this workshop to others.

#### **1.5. IMPLEMENTATION FACILITATORS**

Implementation of the *Love Your Liver* campaign was facilitated by several factors including:

- The active involvement of council leaders in all five regions
- Councillors and Mayors publicly endorsing the campaign
- Access to region specific prevalence data
- Close liaison with media outlets and key health and community organisations
- Collaborative working relationship with media companies
- Advertising material being developed by a professional communication company

Hepatitis Victoria staff noted that the key to successful *HEPReady Regional* workshops was the inclusion of presenters with knowledge of the local issues and local services. Primary Health Networks and community health services were consulted and invited to present at the workshops along with local community health services. Regionally based primary health care practitioners and specialist providers working in the regions added substance to the discussions.

Other facilitators that enabled the success of the *HEPReady Regional* workshops included:



- Attendance of local experts and presenters where regionally appropriate
- Introduction of the Integrated Hepatitis Assessment and Care tool as a tool to support local, collaborative approaches to work with individuals living with viral hepatitis.
- Access to additional training such as online pharmacy training and AOD specific training

## 1.6. CONCLUSIONS

*Love Your Liver* was an integrated campaign with a local presence and good community reach in the targeted areas. It employed a range of strategies to raise awareness of the importance of liver health. It delivered a successful awareness raising campaign across five regions, incorporating campaign collateral and public relations strategies in traditional and social media with statistics/webmetrics indicating reach was good. Hepatitis Victoria reported an increase in phone calls to their Infoline service from targeted areas during the campaign period, suggesting that there was an impact on awareness which led to searches for additional information.

Implementation of the *HEPReady Regional* project may have amplified the impact of the *Love Your Liver* campaign in those areas where both activities took place. Councillors who were recruited and inducted as *Hep Heroes* because of their involvement in the *Love Your Liver* campaign and *HEPReady Regional* workshops may continue to raise awareness about liver health and viral hepatitis. In addition, Hepatitis Victoria reported that workshops and promotion of the Integrated Hepatitis and Care component of *HEPReady* provided opportunities for participants to build regional networks and local referral pathways. Following the workshops, Hepatitis Victoria also received requests for additional professional development and for packages of educational materials.

## 2. *Love Your Liver* and *HEPReady Regional*

### 2.1. OVERVIEW

The *Love Your Liver* campaign and *HEPReady Regional* education project were funded by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS). The *Love Your Liver* campaign and *HEPReady Regional* workshops addressed priority focus areas in both the Victorian Hepatitis C Strategy 2016-2020 and the Victorian Hepatitis B Strategy 2016-2020:

- Victorians are supported to reduce their risk of contracting viral hepatitis (Priority focus area 2)
- Victorians with viral hepatitis know their status (Priority focus area 3)
- The Victorian workforce has the skills, knowledge and attitudes needed to deliver best practice hepatitis B & C prevention, testing, treatment and care (Priority focus area 5)
- Systems and settings are integrated to meet the needs of people affected by hepatitis B & C (Priority focus area 2)

By combining professional development workshops for staff from services which engaged with people living with, or at risk of, viral hepatitis with the *Love Your Liver* campaign aimed to build greater community awareness of viral hepatitis and liver disease and lead to increase uptake of viral hepatitis testing, treatment and immunisation. The workshops equipped workers, particularly the primary care and community health workforce, to respond to anticipated increased demand for hepatitis testing and vaccination. It was expected that regional areas in which the *Love Your Liver* campaign was implemented were likely to have increased service demand as a result of the campaign.

#### 2.1.1. *Love Your Liver*

The first phase of the *Love Your Liver* campaign (LYL#1) was conducted in the North West Melbourne Primary Health Network (NWMPHN) catchment between November 2017 and February 2018. The target audience was 'at risk' communities, and the program was designed to encourage individuals to seek testing and treatment for hepatitis B and hepatitis C. Campaign activities included: advertising in local papers, shopping centre panels, bus back advertising, media releases to local media and Chinese and Vietnamese language newspapers, promotion (via Hepatitis Victoria website, *HEPChat*, and *Good Liver*, inclusion in NWMPHN's e-newsletter, direct emails to health and community organisations) and a social media campaign.

The second phase of the campaign re-developed and disseminated the previous campaign's creative, images and collateral assets to become a geographically targeted information and call to action campaign with multi-pronged advertising and public relations channels:

- radio advertisements
- quarter page print advertisements (local papers)
- bus back advertising
- street furniture advertising
- GP videos
- Facebook advertising and Google ad search

The media channels and tools used were specifically tailored to each region, to ensure greatest reach; Facebook and Google were used across each of the locations.

Informed by the data contained in the Hepatitis B and Hepatitis C Mapping projects published by the Doherty institute in March 2018, the second phase of the campaign was undertaken in the following regions of Victoria with high prevalence or low treatment uptake rates:

- Shepparton
- Dandenong/Frankston
- Latrobe Valley
- Brimbank/Maribyrnong
- Mildura

The *Love Your Liver* public relations and media campaign was conducted 4-6 weeks prior to a *HEPReady Regional* workshop being held in each region.

### **2.1.2. *HEPReady Regional***

The preparatory place-based workforce development workshops delivered during the *HEPReady Regional* project increased regional Victorian health and community workers' knowledge regarding viral hepatitis and their capacity to manage or appropriately refer clients at risk of viral hepatitis and to encourage their clients to undergo testing and vaccination. A key feature of these forums was to bring local champions and expertise together with lived experience. Workshops also raised awareness of stigma and discrimination, particularly in relation to health workforce interaction with people living with viral hepatitis.

## **2.2. TARGET GROUPS**

The location of each workshop was informed by data from 4<sup>th</sup> annual Hepatitis B and C mapping reports<sup>1</sup>. The groups targeted by the *Love Your Liver* campaign were adults from culturally diverse backgrounds at risk of or are living with hepatitis and who reside in one of the five targeted regions. The project was also targeted to reach health and community workers, and friends and relatives of those who may have concerns about liver disease and viral hepatitis in each of the targeted regions.

The target audience for the *HEPReady Regional* workshops was health professionals and staff of services which engaged with people living with or at risk of viral hepatitis, and included drug and alcohol services, community health, Aboriginal community organisations, custodial sector staff, social workers, homelessness and housing services, maternal and child health services, and infection control staff.

## **2.3. AIMS AND LEARNING OBJECTIVES**

### **2.3.1. Love Your Liver**

The *Love Your Liver* campaign was designed to:

- raise awareness in the community about the importance of liver health
- increase uptake of testing and treatment for hepatitis B and hepatitis C to continue to live a happy and healthy life
- create a new positive approach to liver health in the community while minimising the stigma associated with viral hepatitis.

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.ashm.org.au/HBV/hepatitis-b-mapping-reports/>  
<https://www.ashm.org.au/HCV/hepatitis-c-mapping-reports/>

The following campaign messages were conveyed in a positive, non-confrontational and engaging way:

- Testing for hepatitis is easy and getting treated is even easier.
- A vaccine is available to prevent hepatitis B.
- Hepatitis C is curable with medications made affordable under the PBS.
- Hepatitis B is easily treated and managed

Secondary campaign messages included:

- Hepatitis is a virus that can cause inflammation of the liver.
- Left untreated, hepatitis may result in liver disease.
- Up to six Australians die every week from liver-related diseases.
- Symptoms take a long time to develop, so you may look and feel well, yet still have hepatitis.
- The only way to find out if you have hepatitis is to get tested by your GP.

### **2.3.2. *HEPReady Regional***

The *HEPReady Regional* workshops aimed to raise awareness of viral hepatitis and liver disease and promote uptake of testing, treatment and immunisation. They were designed to build workforce capacity to manage or appropriately refer clients living with, or at risk of, viral hepatitis; enable the workforce to engage with and support the community and provide services which are informed and free of stigma; increased knowledge of appropriate referral pathways; and develop professional and supportive networks.

Learning outcomes for those attending the professional development workshops included increasing:

- Understanding of the function of the liver
- Knowledge of the appropriate referral pathways for people at risk of or living with hepatitis B.
- Understanding of hepatitis B disease symptoms, transmission, testing, prevention and management.
- Understanding of hepatitis C testing, prevention, transmission and treatment.
- Understanding of local referral pathways for people at risk or living with hepatitis C.
- Knowledge of the viral hepatitis elimination agenda (by 2030) and the importance of addressing stigma associated with the diseases.
- Knowledge of Hepatitis Victoria's tailored professional development and health promotion programs.

The workshops were designed to complement the activities of other education providers such as the Victorian HIV and Hepatitis Integrated Training and Learning program (VHITTAL) and The Australasian Society for HIV Medicine (ASHM).

## **2.4. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT**

Extensive stakeholder consultation was undertaken by the *Love Your Liver* campaign team during intensive periods preceding the campaign and the *HEPReady Regional* workshops to:

- Scope and maintain local support from Mayors and local councils
- Seek support from regional media outlets
- Boost participant registrations for *HEPReady Regional* workshops

A range of external stakeholders were engaged to organise and present the *HEPReady Regional* workshops. Stakeholders were engaged, including with Primary Health Networks, local government (Figure 17),

community health services, Aboriginal community-controlled health services, regional integrated hepatitis nurse consultants, local GPs and gastroenterologists and, where possible, local lived experience speakers. Such collaborations were important in providing local expertise at workshops.

## **2.5. EVALUATION OF LOVE YOUR LIVER AND HEPREADY REGIONAL**

This evaluation report is based on information provided by Hepatitis Victoria, interviews with project staff, and analysis of data collected by Hepatitis Victoria staff or external consultants that was provided to the evaluation team at La Trobe University.

### 3. *Love Your Liver* Campaign

#### 3.1. OVERVIEW

The key activities implemented by the *Love Your Liver* campaign were:

- Development and dissemination of creative content
- Stakeholder engagement to support the campaign
- Social media activity
- Public relations activity to encourage local reporting of issues and *Love Your Liver* campaign

#### 3.2. CREATIVE CONTENT

Development of the creative content for the *Love Your Liver* campaign included:

- Articulation of specific campaign objectives and messaging requirements
- Preparation by Hepatitis Victoria experts of a brief for external creative company
- Development of creative content
- Engagement of external media placement company and development of media channel campaign.

As the campaign was targeted for each region, the activities planned and implemented in each area varied to suit the context. Table 1 outlines the creative content that was developed and disseminated for each targeted region, and the media channels and digital platforms that were employed. Professional marketing companies were engaged to design and implement the PR/media aspects of the *Love Your Liver* campaign and to provide metrics for the reach and impact of campaign collateral.

**Table 1: *Love Your Liver* creative content and dissemination channels by region**

Creative focus	Location	Media channels	Digital
<b>Love you Liver – hepatitis B and C</b> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Have you been tested / vaccinated for hepatitis B?</li> <li>• Are you at risk of hepatitis C? If so, need to speak with your GP about getting tested</li> <li>• Hep C can be cured.</li> <li>• There is a vaccination against hep B.</li> </ul> Creative required for radio spot and digital media	Shepparton	Local radio and print media (newspaper)	Facebook Google HV website
	Dandenong/ Frankston	Local newspapers GP screens Bus back advertising: July to October	Facebook Google HV website
<b>Love your Liver – Cancer Prevention</b>  Utilising existing collateral and new radio creative (per Shepparton)	LaTrobe Valley	Local radio advertising Advertising in local papers Bus back advertising Street furniture advertising GP screens Shopping centre panels	Facebook Google

Creative focus	Location	Media channels	Digital
	Brimbank/ Maribyrnong	Advertising in local papers Bus back advertising Street furniture advertising GP screens Shopping centre panels	Facebook Google
	Mildura	Local radio advertising Advertising in local papers Street furniture advertising Shopping centre panels	Facebook Google

In addition to utilising *Love Your Liver* creative content in all areas, other common activities included:

- Local media campaign
- Linking campaign activities to other activities in the region
- Wider social media campaigns (i.e. Twitter, Facebook, WeChat, Instagram)
- Promotion of local champions as Hep Heroes including podcast interviews
- Media and podcast interviews with local health professionals

A consistent campaign was implemented across regions, whilst ensuring that messaging and imagery were appropriate/relevant for different target audiences. Creative content and messaging used insights and feedback from Hepatitis Victoria’s CALD education team.

The key methods of disseminating the creative content of the *Love Your Liver* campaign included:

- Advertisements in local newspapers, except in Brimbank/Maribyrnong (Figure 1 and Figure 2)
- Bus back and bus shelter advertising (Figure 3 and Figure 4)
- Street furniture and shopping centre signage (Figure 5)
- General practice films – 30 second videos and advertisements (Figure 6, Figure 7 and Figure 8)



Figure 1: Advertisement in Shepparton News and Latrobe Valley Express newspapers



Figure 2: Advertisement in Frankston Standard Leader and Greater Dandenong Leader newspapers



Figure 3: Bus back advertisement



Figure 4: Bus shelter advertisement





Figure 5: Shopping Centre panel



Figure 6: General practice films



Figure 7: Advertisement in Medical Centres



Figure 8: Medical Centres - Tonic

### 3.3. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

A number of Council Mayors have become “HEP Heroes”, which is indicative of the strong relationships Hepatitis Victoria built with the local councils in areas where *HEPReady Regional* workshops ran in conjunction with the *Love Your Liver* campaign. These individuals spoke at the *HEPReady Regional* workshops, engaged with local media and are publicly recognised by Hepatitis Victoria for their involvement with the *Love Your Liver* campaign.

Councillors who signed up as HEP Heroes as a result of the *Love Your Liver* campaign are:

- Cr Roz Blades, Mayor of City of Greater Dandenong:
- Youhorn Chea, previous Mayor of City of Greater Dandenong
- Cr Lucinda Congreve, Mayor of Brimbank City Council
- Cr Simon Clemence, Mayor of Mildura

The buy-in and support by local council leaders in the targeted areas facilitated the implementation of the *Love Your Liver* campaign. Hepatitis Victoria supported these councillors by providing them with region-specific prevalence data to cite in their media and public speaking engagements which enabled them to publicly back the campaign and highlight the health issues affecting individuals in regional areas.

Factors that facilitated the *Love Your Liver* campaign included:

- Close liaison with media outlets and health services in each region (e.g. health providers, GP practices)
- Professional communication company development of advertising material
- Collaborative working relationships with media companies

The campaign team also developed and implemented a comprehensive social media strategy, including Facebook advertising (Figure 9), Facebook videos (Figure 10), Google Search network (Figure 11), Podcasts (Figure 12), Twitter, WeChat, and Instagram.

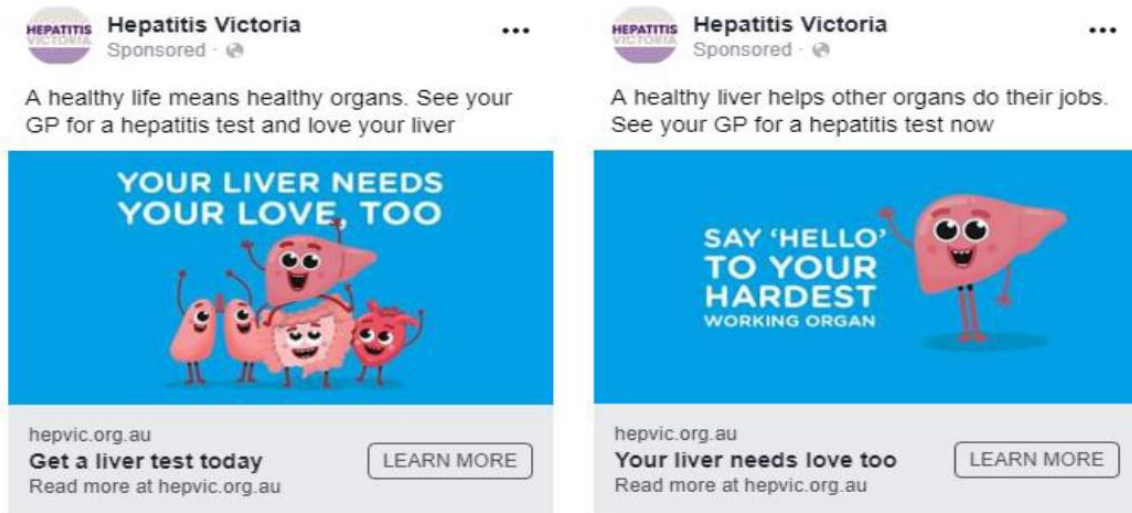


Figure 9: Facebook advertising

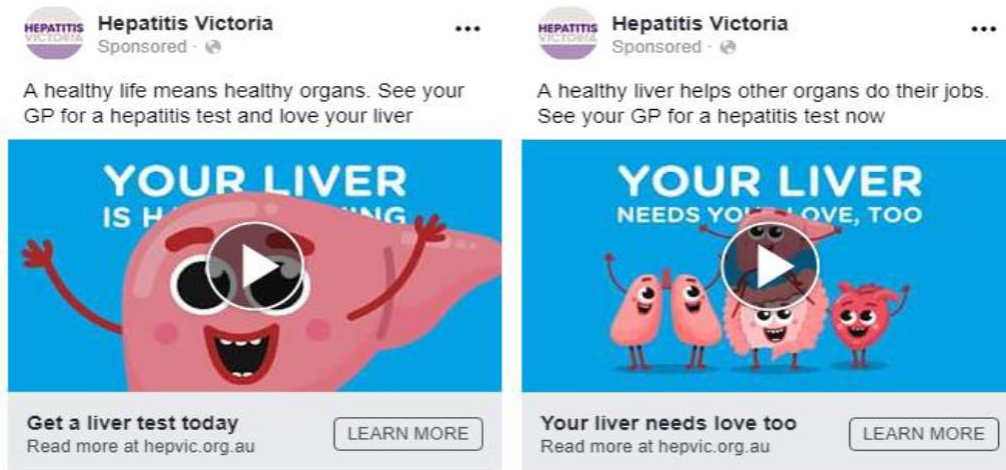


Figure 10: Facebook video

### Hepatitis Victoria - Love Your Liver

[Ad](#) hepvic.org.au

A Healthy Life Means Healthy Organs. See Your GP For A Hepatitis Test Today

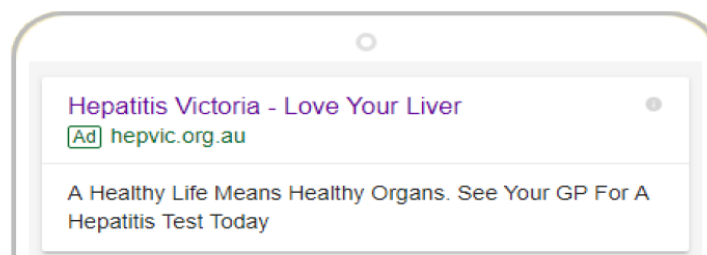


Figure 11: Google Search network

Hepatitis Victoria

## Youhorn Chea, Mayor of Dandenong & great HEP Hero

2 Nov 2018 · 14 min

▶ Play episode



HEP Hero Youhorn Chea believes if you have hepatitis B or hepatitis C it is absolutely vital to see a specialist and get the condition treated.

"The medicines are very good and efficacious, but you need to continue to use them, otherwise you could face big health problems, so my message is to get treatment as soon as possible," he says.

Youhorn talks about his life overcoming hepatitis C and how as a leader in the Cambodian community he can set an example of what needs to be done to regain liver health.

**Figure 12: Podcast interview**

### 3.4. PUBLIC RELATIONS ACTIVITY

Targeting local media was a successful strategy that encouraged local reporting of hepatitis and the *Love Your Liver* campaign. Media releases were distributed to local print media at the start of each geographic campaign to highlight the extent of the issue in the region and to encourage people to take charge of their health.

- 19 June 2018: Your Liver needs your love too <https://bit.ly/2WhbnpY>
- 16 August 2018: Latrobe Valley's Health do you really care <https://bit.ly/2Nh3xsr>
- 8 February 2019: Health alert in Brimbank <https://bit.ly/2NIsHGx>
- 20 May 2019: Mildura workshop to probe serious public health concern <https://bit.ly/2pkiaTJ>
- July 2019: Dandenong forum on 19 July to deal with urgent health issue <https://bit.ly/2WhsoAk>

A media release promoting the *Love Your Liver* animation went live on 9 July 2018 which coincided with the launch of the 15 and 30 second online ads in medical centres and on TV in parts of regional Victoria. Media outlets picked up this release and the *Love Your Liver* campaign received increased exposure through TV and radio coverage.

- 9 July 2018: *Your liver needs your love, too* cute animation characters debut <https://bit.ly/2Nd9LcQ>

Media interest in viral hepatitis and liver health has traditionally been low, mainly because of the difficulty of providing a human face to the issue. Hepatitis Victoria did however successfully secure coverage at various points throughout the 12-month campaign, for example:

- September 2018: TV coverage for the Traralgon Forum on WINTV, PRIME and Channel 9 Gippsland.
- October 2018: one-hour national call-in show with Dr Paul Gow on ABC Radio Nightlife.
- June 2019: Martin Forrest (Health Promotion Manager, Hepatitis Victoria) interviewed on Mildura ABC and Southern Cross radio about HEPReady workshop run during this LYL integrated campaign.

### 3.5. CAMPAIGN REACH

Figures on the reach of different elements of the campaign were provided by the creative consultants. These include:

- General practice settings
  - 30 second films broadcast in 15 GP practice waiting rooms
  - Ads booked to play 43,200 times (played 117,951 times)
- Medical centre settings
  - Ads booked for 13 medical centres (shown at 17 medical centres)
  - Total play of 25,346 ads over 12-week period
  - Campaign booked 144,000 ad plays at 50 medical centres (delivered 391,182 plays at 55 centres)
- Facebook
  - Of a total of 63 Facebook comments, the highest number of comments was received from the Latrobe Valley.

**Table 2: Google Search statistics**

Region	Impressions	Clicks to Site
Shepparton	313	15
Dandenong/Frankston	5,448	180
Latrobe Valley	783	26
Brimbank/Maribyrnong	2,684	90
Mildura	435	18
Victoria	29,555	1,191
<b>Total</b>	<b>39,218</b>	<b>1,520</b>

### 3.6. CONCLUSIONS

Hepatitis Victoria successfully delivered the *Love Your Liver* awareness raising campaign that incorporated advertising and media collateral and public relations strategies in traditional and social media across five regions of Victoria. The integrated campaign employed a range of strategies to raise awareness of the importance of liver health, based on the *Love Your Liver* implementation experience in 2017.

Outcomes such as statistics/webmetrics show that the reach to the local communities in these regions was good and that the additional work undertaken through the *HEPReady Regional* project amplified the impact of the campaign.

As the campaign was conducted in a targeted way with a local presence in each of the areas, Councillors were highly engaged in the *Love Your Liver* campaign and *HEPReady Regional* workshops. Consequently, many of these Councillors have since been inducted as Hep Heroes and continue to raise awareness about liver health and viral hepatitis in their communities.

Definitive outcomes in terms of raised awareness and behaviour change, such as increased demand for hepatitis B vaccination and hepatitis C treatments, and reduced numbers of notifications of both conditions, are not (and cannot be) immediately identifiable. It is anticipated that raised awareness and behaviour change will be evidenced through notification and treatment data collected by DHHS.

Based on the lessons learned over the course of the campaign, and the insight and knowledge that Hepatitis Victoria has gained previously, the following comments and observations can be made:

- Building greater awareness and getting people to change their behaviour and respond to a call to action requires intensive and consistent resourcing and significant investment (funding) over time.
- Should further funding be available to continue this campaign, Hepatitis Victoria recommends focusing efforts on one regional area of high prevalence over a 12-month period to build and maintain the momentum of the campaign and its impacts.
- Third party advocates and supporters help extend the campaign's reach to CALD and other more isolated community members.
- Ongoing engagement with GPs ensures that viral hepatitis is on their radar and equips them to deal with viral hepatitis and liver disease in these communities in an appropriate, sensitive and proactive way.

## 4. *HEPReady Regional*

### 4.1. OVERVIEW

*HEPReady Regional* workshops were conducted between June 2018 and October 2019 in:

- Shepparton – June 14, 2018
- Dandenong – July 19, 2018
- Traralgon – September 20, 2018
- Geelong – December 6, 2018
- Brimbank – March 7, 2019
- Mildura – June 21, 2019
- Albury-Wodonga – September 12, 2019
- Bendigo – October 29, 2019

Seven of the eight workshops were conducted in regional areas – Brimbank being the exception. Workshops in Shepparton, Dandenong, Traralgon, Brimbank and Mildura were preceded by *Love Your Liver* activities as described earlier (Figure 13).



Figure 13: Photos of *HEPReady Regional* workshops (Geelong, top left; Albury-Wodonga, right; Bendigo, bottom)

Individuals registered for *HEPReady Regional* workshops were also enrolled in the *HEPReady* online learning portal, which offered pre-reading on the basics of liver health, hepatitis disease types, and the important of lifestyle and diet for maintaining a healthy liver. The *HEPReady Regional* workshops covered:

- Latest developments in treatment of Hepatitis C and treatment and management of hepatitis B
- Local perspectives on hepatitis in the area
- Health pathways
- LiverWELL app
- *Love Your Liver* campaign
- Integrated Hepatitis Assessment and Care
- Lived experienced speakers

Handouts and material used at the workshops were available via the online portal and attendance certificates were available for download for continuing professional development registers.

#### 4.2. WORKSHOP PROMOTION

Prior to each workshop a comprehensive list of primary health care services and other services which may engage with people living with, or at risk of, viral hepatitis was developed and direct emails (Appendix 2: Figure 27) were sent offering information on the events. Other promotional tools included flyers (Figure 15), social media posts (Figure 14), newsletters, signature blocks, and promotion via events pages maintained by peak bodies (Figure 16), local government and other regional services. Workshops were also publicised through a communications campaign that included letters to regional networks and direct approaches to local media representatives.



Figure 14: Instagram Post for *HEPReady Regional* Mildura Workshop





The flyer features a green banner at the top with the text 'HEPReady Regional Workshops' in white. Below the banner, there are two images: on the left, a group of people at a community event with a red canopy; on the right, a scenic view of a tree with autumn foliage and a path. The 'HEPReady' logo with a green checkmark is in the top right corner. A list of locations is on the left side of the flyer.

HEPReady  
Regional Workshops

Shepparton  
Dandenong  
Moe  
Geelong  
Brimbank  
Mildura  
Albury Wodonga

HEPReady

Hepatitis Victoria is pleased to announce that we are bringing accredited professional development workshops to a town or suburb near you in the near future.

These workshops provide an opportunity for all staff and services who may engage with people living with viral hepatitis and liver disease to develop professional skills and strengthen networks.

Supported by the Department of Health and Human Services, these series of workshops will bring a local perspective to the testing, treatment, management and prevention of viral hepatitis.

Expert speakers will present on the epidemiology and prevalence of hepatitis B and recent developments in the management of this disease which impacts the Victorian community.

**Upcoming workshops are being held at:**

Shepparton - June 14 2018

Dandenong -19th July 2018

Traralgon – 20<sup>th</sup> September 2018

Geelong - November 2018\*

Brimbank - February 2019\*

Mildura - April 2019\*

Albury - Wodonga May 2019\*

*\*Date to be announced 6 weeks prior to workshop*

Note: Actual workshop dates varied from dates listed above. An additional workshop was held in Bendigo

Figure 15: HEPReady Regional Workshop Flyer



**HEPReady® Regional Workshop-Traralgon**

Commissioned by the Victorian Government's Department of Health and Human Services.

Will feature expert presenters and lived experience speakers.

**What will we cover?**  
Epidemiology, methods of transmission, progression, treatment and management

**Who should attend?**  
ANYONE!  
Nurses, AOD workers, school health nurses, health educators, pharmacists, health professionals, prison workers, students in health care, social workers

Understand the care and referral pathways local to your area.

The HEPReady workshop is an opportunity for your workforce to develop a holistic perspective of viral hepatitis.

**Date:** Thursday, 20th September 2018  
**Time:** 9:00am-3:00pm  
**Location:** Comfort Inn and Suites, 5601 Princes Hwy, Level 2 Traralgon, Victoria 3844  
**Cost:** Free

CPD points available.

For more information, contact Gayatri Ravisankar at [gayatri@hepvic.org.au](mailto:gayatri@hepvic.org.au) or 93859111

**Click to REGISTER**

The HEPReady regional workshop (funded by the Department of Health and Human Services) is an opportunity for your workforce to develop a comprehensive understanding of hepatitis along with local perspectives.

- Will feature expert presenters, lived-experience speakers and community based health experts.
- What will we cover? Epidemiology, methods of transmission, progression, treatment and management.
- Understand the care and referral pathways local to your area.
- Who should attend? ANYONE! Nurses, AOD workers, health educators, school health nurses, pharmacists, health professionals, students in health care, social workers

CPD points available.

**Figure 16: VAADA Event Advertisement for Traralgon Workshop**

### 4.3. STAKEHOLDER ENGAGEMENT

A wide range of external stakeholders were engaged to provide public endorsements and support for the *Love Your Liver* campaign and *HEPReady Regional* workshops, including:

- Mayor of Shepparton Cr Kim O’Keefe
- Shepparton City Councillor and practice nurse, Cr Fern Summer
- Greater Dandenong City Council and its Mayor, Cr Youhorn Chea
- State Member for Dandenong the Parliamentary Health Secretary Gabrielle Williams
- Mayor of Latrobe City Council, Cr Darrell White



Figure 17: Mildura Mayor Simon Clemence at *HEPReady Regional* Mildura Workshop

#### 4.4. PARTICIPANT SURVEYS

##### 4.4.1. Procedure

Two surveys were completed at the workshops to evaluate the impact of the *HEPReady Regional* education sessions on increasing knowledge (and intention to act).

The initial survey used for *HEPReady Regional* workshops in Shepparton and Dandenong was distributed at completion of the workshop (i.e. was a post-workshop survey) and questions asked the respondent to:

- Rate the degree to which learning needs have been met / activities are relevant to practice / learning objectives of the program have been met
- Indicate areas of workshop strength
- Indicate areas for improvement
- Indicate interest in further units of study (Table 3)

**Table 3: Units of study**

Please circle any of the following units that might be of interest to you:		
Working with Migrant Communities	Hepatitis B and Chinese Community	Epidemiology for HBV & HVC
Hepatitis Treatment System	Hepatitis C and People who Inject Drugs	Mother, Baby and Hepatitis
Chronic Hepatitis	Stigma and Empathy	Infection Control
HBV & HCV Treatment	Alcoholic Hep & NAFLD	HBV & HCV Testing

In order to determine whether knowledge had been acquired by attending the workshop, pre- and post-workshop surveys were developed, with knowledge questions asked at both time points. These surveys were used at the Traralgon, Geelong, Brimbank, Albury-Wodonga and Bendigo workshops.

The revised pre-workshop survey asked respondents to indicate how they became aware of the workshop and what motivated them to attend. They were also asked to indicate whether they had seen advertising or promotional material about hepatitis in the local area recently.

The revised post-workshop survey also asked whether respondents would recommend the workshop to others.

#### 4.4.2. Participants

Online registration lists expressing interest in attending the workshop and attendance lists signed by attendees on the day of a workshop indicate that between 4 and 24 participants attended each workshop (Table 4). Discrepancies exist between online registrations and attendance lists suggesting that not all individuals who registered were able to attend on the day and that some attendees had not registered online prior to the workshop. In some cases, the number of surveys received was greater than the number of attendees documented, suggesting that not all workshop participants signed in at the commencement of the workshop. Therefore, reported registration and attendance numbers (Table 4) are only approximate numbers of workshop participants.

**Table 4: Workshop location, date, registration, attendance and surveys received**

Workshop Location	Date	Online Registrations (excluding HV staff/speakers)	Attendees (excluding HV staff/speakers)	Pre-Surveys Received	Post-Surveys Received
<b>2018</b>					
Shepparton*	June 14	21	12	N/A	10
Dandenong*	July 19	Not available	24	N/A	11
Traralgon*	September 20	20	13	14	11
Geelong	December 6	24	16	16	15
<b>2019</b>					
Brimbank*	March 7	Not available	22	23	14
Mildura*	June 21	7	4	4	4
Albury-Wodonga	September 12	16	14	14	11
Bendigo	October 29	13	<i>Data not available</i> <sup>^</sup>	11	10
<b>TOTAL</b>		<b>36</b>	<b>115</b>	<b>82</b>	<b>65</b>

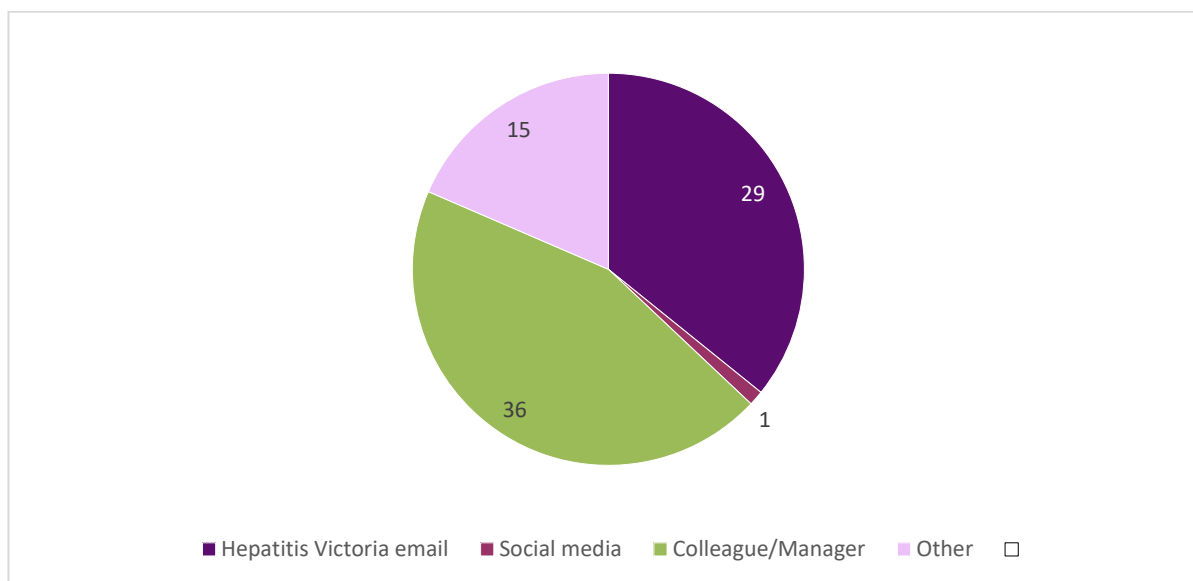
Note: \* = *Love Your Liver* location ^ A minimum of 11 can be assumed based on survey responses

#### 4.5. SURVEY RESULTS

At least 115 attendees participated in the *HEPReady Regional* workshops with 82 pre-surveys and 65 post-surveys fully or partially completed. As some participants partially completed the surveys, the number (n) of respondents answering specific questions is included in reporting the results.

#### 4.5.1. Workshop Promotion

Participants were asked how they came to be aware of the workshop. Responses are summarised in Figure 18.



**Figure 18: Respondents' source of awareness of workshop - all workshops**

Other ways that respondents said they became aware of the *HEPReady Regional* workshops included general practitioner, Hepatitis Victoria website, Victorian Alcohol and Drug Association (VAADA), *HEPReady* Condensed workshop, conference or from a Regional Infection Control Nurse.

#### Awareness of *Love Your Liver* Campaign

Respondents were asked if they had seen local advertising/promotional material about hepatitis, and if so, what it was and where. This question was intended to capture whether the *Love Your Liver* campaign had been observed (and recalled) by respondents. Almost half of respondents recalled seeing any hepatitis advertising; 38.3% indicated they had not seen promotional material and 12.3% could not remember

Respondents who reported recently seeing advertising and promotional material about hepatitis described a variety of material types and locations including bus stops, general practice/ community health centres, posters and shopping centre as their source of hepatitis advertising.

#### 4.5.2. Motivation to Attend Workshop

Respondents described a wide variety of reasons for attending the workshop, including:

- Increasing knowledge about hepatitis, harm minimisation, and infection control
- To understand referral pathways, treatment and management
- Because they work with people living with, or at risk of, hepatitis
- To increase confidence in discussing hepatitis
- Increasing knowledge and skill to support interventions for clients
- Networking and professional development opportunity

### Learning Expectations

Specific expectations included learning about:

- Available hepatitis treatments
- Changes in legislation
- Support services
- Hepatitis B surveillance
- How to identify hepatitis
- Prevention
- How to provide good care to people living with hepatitis
- Addressing stigma and discrimination
- Risks related to drug use

#### 4.5.3. Pre-workshop Knowledge

Respondents were asked questions to assess their prior knowledge of aspects of hepatitis to be covered during the workshop:

1. There is a vaccine for hepatitis C (False)
2. There is a treatment and cure for hepatitis B (False)
3. Hepatitis B can be transmitted from a mother to her baby during childbirth (True)
4. People with hepatitis may feel well even though liver damage is happening (True)
5. Hepatitis can be transmitted through sharing razors and toothbrushes (True)
6. Hepatitis B can be sexually transmitted (True)

The survey responses indicate that prior knowledge was high in relation to all these knowledge questions (Figure 19).

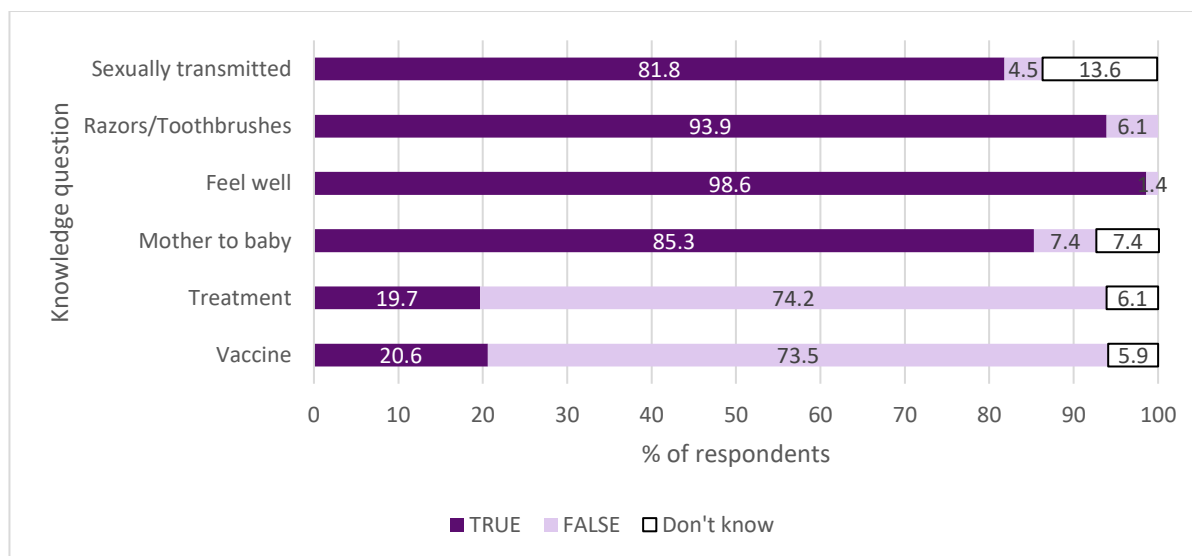
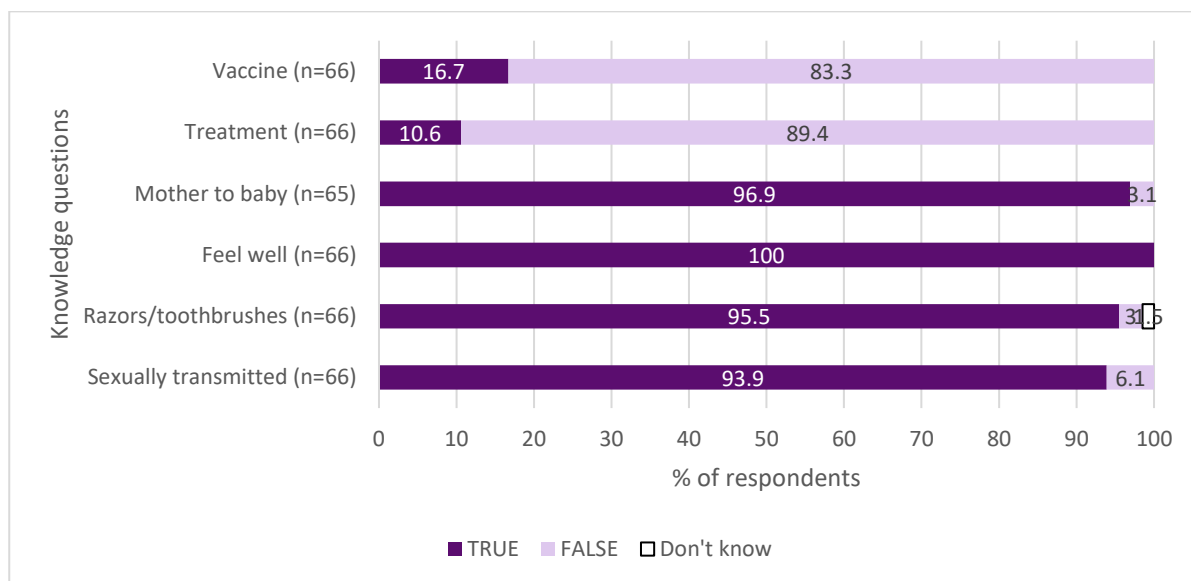


Figure 19: Respondents' answers to knowledge questions - all workshops

#### 4.5.4. Post-workshop Knowledge

Questions in the post-workshop survey were designed to determine knowledge gain because of the education provided through the workshop. As noted above, results from the pre-survey indicate that

participants’ knowledge of hepatitis was high before the workshop, so large gains could not be expected. Despite this, there were consistent increases in the proportion of respondents who gave the right answer after the workshop (Figure 20).



**Figure 20: Respondents' post-workshop answers to knowledge questions - all workshops**

#### 4.5.5. Attitudes

After the workshop, two statements assumed to reflect negative attitudes towards individuals living with hepatitis were presented and respondents were asked to what extent they agreed or disagreed with them.

1. Only people who inject drugs are at risk of hepatitis
2. I would not share food with a friend who has hepatitis

Almost all respondents disagreed with both statements indicating low levels of stigma or discriminatory attitudes.

#### 4.5.6. Intention to Act

Participants were asked four questions to assess their intentions to undertake certain actions to raise their own awareness about hepatitis, or that of others, following the workshop. The question asked “As a result of today’s workshop, how likely is it that you would”:

- Identify risk factors for hepatitis B and C
- Recommend hepatitis testing to colleagues/patients/family/clients
- Recommend hepatitis B vaccinations to colleagues/patients/family/clients
- Identify the care pathways in your region

More than 71% of respondents were very likely and 18% likely to identify risk factors for hepatitis B and C; 74% were very likely and 13% likely to recommend testing; 82% were very likely and 13% likely to recommend vaccination; and 46% were very likely and 54% likely to identify care pathways in the local area. Between 5.3% and 10.5% of respondents indicated that they are already identified risk factors, and recommended testing and vaccination before the workshop.

#### 4.5.7. Workshop Feedback

Respondents were asked what they liked about the workshop. Thematic analysis of written responses indicates that in addition to respondents who said they “liked it all”, respondents valued the following features:

- Breadth of guest speakers, particularly lived experience speakers
- Relevance of information to clients
- Depth of content
- Friendly, approachable environment
- Treatment information
- Tailoring to local area
- Networking

Respondents provided the following feedback about operational matters and the workshop content.

Operational matters:

- Increased advertising for the workshop in the local area, particularly provided more advanced notice of workshop dates
- Punctuality
- Consider weeknight/ weekend meetings to allow general practitioners to attend
- Access to PowerPoint presentation to write notes during the workshop

Content:

- Discussion of symptoms as information suggested that individuals are only tested if they fall into a risk category
- Discuss regulations of the Australian Immunisation Handbook
- Provide more information about hepatitis B and pathophysiology of disease progression to fibrosis, HCC, liver failure etc.
- Focus on content relevant to non-medical service workers
- Include culturally specific presenters for particular target communities
- Provide more opportunities for discussion

Nearly all respondents (59/61)

#### 4.6. CONCLUSIONS

Hepatitis Victoria staff observed that the key to the success of the *HEPReady Regional* workshops was the inclusion of local presenters with knowledge of the local issues and local services, particularly Primary Health Networks and community health services. Including regionally based primary health care practitioners and specialist providers added substance to the discussions.

Other factors that enabled the success of the *HEPReady Regional* workshops included:

- Providing opportunities for developing and strengthening local professional networks
- Introduction of the Integrated Hepatitis Assessment and Care tool which provides a local, collaborative way to work with individuals living with viral hepatitis.
- Access to additional training such as online pharmacy training and AOD specific training



The workshops and promotion of the Integrated Hepatitis and Care component of *HEPReady* provided opportunities for participants to build regional networks and local referral pathways for social workers, mental health practitioners, case workers and AOD staff. (See Appendix 3).

Following the workshops, Hepatitis Victoria received requests for additional professional development (and packages of educational materials). For example, a request was received for professional development of pharmacists in the Shepparton region and for training for the AOD workforce. Engagement with Aboriginal health services has resulted in separate health promotion campaigns developed in partnership with both Rumbalara Aboriginal Cooperative and Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Co-Operative.

## 5. Appendix 1: Examples of Love Your Liver & HEPReady local print media coverage

WINTV Gippsland - Unknown (20/09/2018 18:08)  
 Gippsland has some of the highest rates of hepatitis B and C in Victoria with low rates of treatment and care. More local medical professionals are now being urged to test, treat and manage the deadly infections.  
 Inty: [Martin Forrest](#) (Hepatitis Vic), [Jennifer MacLachlan](#) (Doherty Institute), [John O'Donoghue](#) (GP)  
 View  
 Clip: <http://news.mmu.vic.gov.au/search/?clip=edcf3bba9892e3c5bedbbe1547ffb d6d>

Nine Gippsland - Unknown (20/09/2018 18:08)  
 Gippsland doctors take part in pioneering research to fight the rise of preventable liver cancer; the program will target those living with hepatitis to encourage them to seek treatment before it's too late.  
 Inty: [Martin Forrest](#) (Hepatitis Vic), [Harriet Shing](#), [Phoebe Trinidad](#) (Clinical Nurse Consultant)  
 View  
 Clip: <http://news.mmu.vic.gov.au/search/?clip=ee4f19444a76a65b797add70e185c 12b>

Figure 21: Description of WINTV and Channel 9 Gippsland TV media coverage

# Changing attitudes

A LOCAL NURSE WANTS THE UNDERSTANDING OF HEPATITIS B AND C TO CHANGE

By Ashlea Witoslawski

Goulburn Valley Health clinical nurse consultant Chris Biesiekierski believes the community has much to learn when it comes to general understanding and treatment of hepatitis B and C.

Working in the field for seven years, Mrs Biesiekierski has seen many changes and developments which have provided chronic sufferers with easy and non-invasive treatment options.

Those living with chronic hepatitis C can also receive direct-acting antiviral medications as part of the Federal Government's Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

"The government made a statement in hepatitis treatment by making it available to everyone," Mrs Biesiekierski said.

As of January 1 last year, there are seven DAA medicines available via script, following a clinical assessment.

Mrs Biesiekierski said new treatments were more effective than ever, resulting in a cure for 95 per cent of people in the region.

"Before this, the treatment period was long and the success rate was only 40 to 50 per cent," she said.

In the past 12 months, Mrs Biesiekierski has been working to increase community focus on the viruses, educating local GPs on their role in the fight.

This is a battle Mrs Biesiekierski is passionate about continuing across the Goulburn Valley and northern Victoria.

"We need to get more GPs on board, treating all the patients they can," she said.

"We want more people to be tested to help eliminate hep C."

Mrs Biesiekierski believes stigma in the health industry, including

among pharmacists and health care professionals, is a major issue not helping the negative perception of the viruses.

"People shouldn't be treated any differently to other patients but it happens," she said.

"The stigma is blown out of proportion."

Mrs Biesiekierski is looking forward to new medications being released in August and continuing to be inspired by her work.

"It's really amazing making a radical difference to these people's lives because there is really no other chronic disease you can do that with."

### Hepatitis B symptoms

- fever;
- joint pain;
- fatigue;
- nausea;
- vomiting;
- loss of appetite;
- abdominal pain;
- dark urine;
- clay-coloured stools; and
- jaundice or a yellowing of the skin and whites of the eyes.

### Hepatitis C symptoms

According to the Centres for Disease Control and Prevention, up to 80 per cent of those with acute hepatitis C will not experience symptoms.

In some cases, people will experience symptoms not long after being infected.

These symptoms can be mild or severe and include:

- fever;
  - feeling tired; and
  - poor appetite.
- If you develop hepatitis C

symptoms soon after infection, you might also have these symptoms:

- nausea or vomiting;
- stomach pain;
- joint or muscle pain;
- abnormalities in urine or bowel movements;
- yellowing of eyes or skin.

Figure 22: Shepparton News - Article 6 June 2018

## Our statistics higher than average

By Ashlea Witoslawski

Statistics show hepatitis B and C rates are 50 per cent higher in Shepparton than the state average.

According to the Doherty Institute's National Mapping Project Report 2016, 0.76 per cent of the population in Shepparton is living with hepatitis B compared to 0.57 per cent for the rest of the Murray Primary Health Network region.

The rates of treatment uptake and care are also very low at 4.8 per cent and 15.1 per cent respectively.

The situation for hepatitis C is even more grim, with 1.44 per cent of the Shepparton population living with the virus compared to 0.98 per cent in the Murray region, and only 11.3 per cent taking up treatment compared to 18.1 per cent for the Murray region as a whole.

Hepatitis Victoria acting chief executive Garry Irving said it was a serious health issue which

needed to be urgently addressed.

"If not detected both hepatitis B and hepatitis C are debilitating and can also be deadly, leading to liver cancer, Australia's fastest growing deadly cancer," he said.

Hepatitis B is the most common liver infection in the world and is caused by the virus entering the body and travelling to the liver via the bloodstream.

The virus attaches to healthy liver cells and multiplies.

This triggers a response from the body's immune system, however, many people were often unaware they have been infected.

In Australia, more than 232 000 people have chronic hepatitis B and one-third of people living with chronic hepatitis B in Australia have not been diagnosed.

Hepatitis C is a virus which reproduces by making copies of itself in liver cells.

The virus does not kill liver cells directly, but the immune response initiated by the presence of the virus in the liver can cause liver inflammation and cell death.

The virus is spread by blood to blood contact, most commonly through unsterilised tattooing or body piercing procedures, unsterilised medical procedures or vaccinations and needle-stick injuries.

In Australia, it is estimated that 230 470 are living with chronic hepatitis C.

Although often shrouded by negative stigma, both hepatitis B and C can be treated before the damage to your liver is permanent.

To help tackle the current epidemic, Hepatitis Victoria is hosting 'HEPReady Shepparton' on Thursday for health and community workers keen to understand the issues and help decrease the virus' prevalence in the region.

Greater Shepparton City Council is supporting the event, with Mayor Kim O'Keeffe positive about making a change.

"Viral hepatitis is one of the chief causes of liver cancer, the fastest growing cancer in Australia and having a course like HEPReady

in Shepparton is important, as it offers knowledge and tools for our health and community workers to help deal with the problem right away," she said.

HEPReady is supported by the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services, and will bring a local perspective to the testing, treatment, management, care and prevention of viral hepatitis.

Expert speakers will present on the epidemiology and prevalence of hepatitis B and hepatitis C and recent developments in the management of these conditions impacting the Shepparton community.

Hepatitis Victoria will also be launching a 'Love your Liver' media

campaign in mid June to raise awareness of the issue.

● **HEPReady Shepparton regional workshop is on Thursday from 9 am to 3.30 pm at Quest Shepparton, 177-183 Welsford St, Shepparton. Free lunch and refreshments will be provided. Register on the Hepatitis Victoria website.**

Figure 23: Shepparton News – Article 9 June 2018

# Treatment offers hope

By Ashlea Witoslawski

At 21, a Benalla woman, who has asked to remain anonymous, received a shocking diagnosis of hepatitis B.

“It scared me a great deal because I turned yellow.”

Although easily treatable, some questionable decisions in her youth led to a diagnosis of hepatitis C the following year.

“I was young and dumb,” she said.

“When you’re young, people say don’t do that, but you just do it.

“You don’t believe anything will happen to you,” she said.

Although she did not feel physically ill, the virus triggered a highly emotional response which started to affect her life in ways the physical illness did not.

“It really affected how I treated my family, I always wondered, what if I give it to them?”

“I feel like it did something to my brain.

“It creeps up on you and gets worse over time,” she said.

She also found it hard to get up in the morning and finding and keeping jobs became difficult.

“I always felt like there was something wrong with me that I was hiding.

“I used to agonise over job applications asking if I had any medical conditions.

“I was ashamed of it all and it really affects how you feel about yourself and your mental health.”

Three years ago, at the age

of 42, she started an oral treatment for hepatitis C and after three months was cleared of the virus, which had hindered her quality of life for more than two decades.

“I was really optimistic when the treatment came out and kept up with the research,” she said.

“I was excited thinking, we could eradicate this, how amazing is that?

“I now feel amazing.”

Although positive now, it took the Benalla woman time to begin treatment due to fear of judgement.

“Living in a small community there are privacy issues and it’s scary to walk in and think they might know,” she said.

“It requires a lot of blood visits and the local pathologist was a friend’s mum.

“I got over it, but still it wasn’t an easy thing.”

With the support of a loving, caring husband, she was able to overcome all obstacles and now lives a “normal, working, happy life”.

“I’m just a normal person,” she said.

“The new treatments are much easier and you can still live your life.”

She thanks the medical system and encourages all affected to get the treatment.

“All I can say is get the treatment, get the treatment, get the treatment.”

Figure 24: Shepparton News – Article 9 June 2018



Figure 25: Sunraysia Daily News – Article 8 June 2019

# ‘Apathy’ on hepatitis

By Ashlee Falvo  
afalvo@sunraysiadaily.com.au

DESPITE the 9000 people in the Murray Primary Health Network (PHN) region living with hepatitis B and C, attendance at a workshop held in Mildura yesterday showed “apathy”, Hepatitis Victoria health promotion programs manager Martin Forrest says.

“I hate to say it, but there does seem to be a little bit of apathy regarding viral hepatitis in the broader community,” Mr Forrest said.

“I suspect that’s part of the reason why the prevalence numbers are what they are – but it was a very productive session and I think the people who came along were very engaged.”

The Peter Doherty Institute for Infection and Immunity’s most recent national report showed most sufferers in the Murray PHN area were “unaware or not getting treated” for their condition and has the “lowest uptake of treatment and care” for hepatitis C

of any PHN in Victoria.

While hepatitis B prevalence in the region is low, the report states that only 11.8 per cent of people with the virus were getting treatment.

Mr Forrest said the workshop, held at the Alfred Deakin Centre, looked at issues facing the community, with locals sharing their lived experiences.

“We talked about transmission, prevention, treatment, testing and the more recent developments in managing viral hepatitis,” he said.

“The Victorian Government and the World Health Organisation have said that we can go for elimination of viral hepatitis, and I think if the community gets behind us we can achieve that.”

“I’d advocate for more testing or vaccination (in Mildura) – let’s all work to try and keep the stigma down.”

“Particularly in small, rural communities, people are very reluctant to come forward – they don’t want to be seen picking up medicine from their local chemist.”


“They’re worried they’ll be judged because they’ve got one of these conditions.”

“But the outcomes are worthwhile, it can transform your life, give you a whole lot of extra energy and improve your mental health and wellbeing.”

Figure 26: Sunraysia Daily News – Article 22 June 2019

## 6. Appendix 2: HEPReady promotion

FW: Victoria- Viral hepatitis regional workshop in Albury Wodonga

 Gayatri Ravisankar  
To: Stephanie Houghton

[Reply](#) [Reply All](#)

W

**From:** Gayatri Ravisankar  
**Sent:** Tuesday, 27 August 2019 11:34 AM  
**To:** 'NSPForum@Forums.pennington.org.au' <[NSPForum@Forums.pennington.org.au](mailto:NSPForum@Forums.pennington.org.au)>; 'NSPForum@pennington.org.au' <[NSPForum@pennington.org.au](mailto:NSPForum@pennington.org.au)>  
**Subject:** Victoria- Viral hepatitis regional workshop in Albury Wodonga

**Subject: Victoria- Viral hepatitis regional workshop-Albury Wodonga (12<sup>th</sup> September)**

*Commissioned by the Victorian Government's Department of Health and Human Services.*

Hepatitis B and hepatitis C are debilitating diseases that if left untreated can lead to cirrhosis, liver failure and liver cancer -Australia's fastest growing cancer- The Doherty Institute's National Report 2017, says more than 2000 people Wodonga area are living with hepatitis B and C, but most are unaware or not getting treated for their condition.

The evidence reveals a dismal picture; Albury Wodonga has one of the lowest levels of uptake for the treatment and care for hepatitis B in the Murray primary health network (PHN)region. The figures of hepatitis C in the region are 83.5% of people in Wodonga and 75.6% of people living with the condition are not accessing treatment. These worrying insights are from the latest research from the Doherty Institute, and form part of the impetus behind a push to raise health and community worker awareness.

The HEPReady workshop is an opportunity for your workforce to develop a comprehensive understanding of viral hepatitis along with local perspectives. The course covers epidemiology, methods of transmission, progression, treatment management. Expert and lived-experience speakers will present on the epidemiology and prevalence of hepatitis B, hepatitis C and liver disease and recent developments in the management of these conditions impacting the region

Who can attend? ANYONE! Nurses, AOD workers, school health nurses, health educators, pharmacists, health professionals, prison workers, students in health care and social workers.

- Will feature expert presenters, lived-experience speakers and community based health experts.
- What will we cover? Epidemiology, methods of transmission, progression, treatment and management.
- Who should attend? ANYONE! Nurses, AOD workers, health educators, school health nurses, pharmacists, health professionals, students in health care, social workers.
- Understand the care and referral pathways local to your area.

*CPD points available.*

**Date:** Thursday 12<sup>th</sup> September 2019

**Time:** 9.30am-2.30pm

**Location:** The Cube, 118 Hovell Street, Wodonga, Victoria, 3690

*Lunch will be provided.*

**FREE** event. Please distribute this invitation to your interested networks, and promote where possible.

**Figure 27: Email invitation sent to Needle Syringe Program Forum at Pennington Institute**

## 7. Appendix 3: HEPReady Regional Workshop Agenda



HEPReady® Shepparton Regional Workshop

Thursday, 14<sup>th</sup> June, 2018.

Conference room, Quest Shepparton, 177 – 183 Welsford Street, Shepparton, 3630

Time	Topic	Presenter
9:00am	Registrations	
9:20 – 9:30	Welcome, Introductions, Housekeeping	Kate Webster HEPReady Business Development Manager
9:30 – 10:00	The impact of viral hepatitis on the greater Shepparton region	Martin Forrest. Health Promotion Program Manager
10:00 – 10:30	Management of hepatitis C in the community	Chris Biesiekierski Clinical Nurse Consultant Goulburn Valley Health
10:30 – 10:50	Health Pathways Locally accessible patient pathways	Annie Bence Integrated Care Consultant Murray PHN
10:50 – 11:15	Pathways of care; viral hepatitis referral options for community services	Hepatitis Victoria - HEPReady
11:15 – 11:30	Morning tea	
11:30 – 11:50	Life with hepatitis C – A personal story	Judy Jackson, Hepatitis Victoria HEPsSpeaker
11:50 – 12:00	Hepatitis C - Q & A session	Panel Session
12:00 – 12:45	How can we manage viral hepatitis in our region?	Dr Nicole Allard General Practitioner Doherty Institute
12:45 – 13:00	Lunch	
13:00 – 13:15	Hepatitis B, Introduction to afternoon presentations	Martin Forrest Hepatitis Victoria
13:15 – 14:00	Mapping of hepatitis B & C, National and local perspective	Martin Forrest on behalf of Jenn MacLachlan, Doherty Institute
14:00 – 14:20	Life with hepatitis B – A personal story	Aye Aye Khaing, Hepatitis Victoria HEPsSpeaker
14:20 – 14:30	Hepatitis B - Q & A session	Panel Session
14:30 – 14:40	Love Your Liver Awareness campaign	
14:40 – 14:50	An overview of the Department of Health and Human Services approach to viral hepatitis	Martin Forrest Hepatitis Victoria
14:50 – 15:00	Evaluation and close	

The event organisers would like to acknowledge the support of the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services to make this Forum possible

Figure 28: Shepparton workshop agenda



**HEPATITIS VICTORIA**

**Dandenong Forum:  
Leadership on Liver Health in Melbourne's South  
East**

**Thursday, 19th of July 2018**  
9 am – 1 pm  
Civic Centre level 2, City Council of Dandenong  
225 Lonsdale St, Dandenong 3175  
**Program**

Time	Session	Presenter
8:30 am	Registration, tea and coffee	
9:00 – 9:15	Welcome and Introductions	Dr Nicole Allard, Vice President Hepatitis Victoria
9:15 – 9:25	Opening statement	Gabrielle Williams MP - Parliamentary Secretary for Health
9:25 – 9:35	A statement by the Mayor of City of Greater Dandenong	Mayor Youhorn Chea - Mayor of City of Greater Dandenong
9:35 – 10:05	Specialised services: Management of viral hepatitis B and other liver health issues in our region	Associate Professor Anouk Dev Acting Director of Gastroenterology, Monash Health
10:05 – 10:25	Life with hepatitis B – A personal story	Aye Aye Khaing – A community member from South East Melbourne
10:25 – 10:50	Refugee and Migrants Health issues in our region	Mitchell Bowden, Health Promotion Project Manager, Enliven
10:50 – 11:00	Tea break	
11:00 – 11:15	Hepatitis C treatments and the pathways of care in our region	Sherryne Warner, RN NUM Gastroenterology, Hepatology Monash Health
11:15 – 11:25	Hepatitis Victoria partnership projects in this region and the future	Jawid Sayed - Hepatitis Victoria
11:25 – 11:45	Life with hepatitis C – A personal story	Rose Coulter – A community member from South East Melbourne
11:45 – 11:55	Love Your Liver: Public awareness campaign	Mark Pearce, Hepatitis Victoria
11:55 – 12:15	Importance of Integrated Hepatitis Assessment and Care	Martin Forrest, Hepatitis Victoria
12:15 – 12:25	HEPReady professional development program	Kate Webster, Hepatitis Victoria
12:25 – 12:55	Panel Discussion	All speakers taking questions from the floor
12:55 – 13:00	Closing comments, thank you	Dr Nicole Allard, Vice President Hepatitis Victoria
13:00 pm	Lunch and networking	

**Figure 29: Dandenong workshop agenda**

# HEPATITIS VICTORIA

HEPReady® Regional Workshop

Thursday 6<sup>th</sup> December 2018

Geelong Conference Centre, 20 Adams Ct, Eastern Park, Geelong, VIC, 3219

Time	Topic	Presenter
9:00 – 9:30	Registrations	
9:30 – 9:40	Welcome, introductions, housekeeping	Nicole Gunn HEPReady® Liaison <i>Hepatitis Victoria</i>
9:40 – 10:30	Hepatitis C Latest developments in treatment	Martin Forrest <i>Hepatitis Victoria</i>
10:30 – 11:00	Local perspective on hepatitis C in the Barwon region	Dr Amanda Wade <i>Barwon Health</i>
11:00 – 11:15	Morning Tea	
11:15 – 11:45	Hepatitis C lived experience	Pamela Wood <i>Hepatitis Victoria HEPspeaker</i>
11:45 – 12:30	Hepatitis C Epidemiology and elimination	Martin Forrest <i>Hepatitis Victoria</i>
12:30 -1:00	Lunch	
1:00 - 1:40	Hepatitis B treatment and management	Martin Forrest <i>Hepatitis Victoria</i>
1:40 – 2:10	Hepatitis B lived experience	Mei Quy <i>Hepatitis Victoria HEPspeaker</i>
2:10 – 2:45	LiverWELL A mobile tool to manage your health	Martin Forrest <i>Hepatitis Victoria</i>
2:45 – 3:00	Evaluation & close	Nicole Gunn <i>Hepatitis Victoria</i>

The Event organisers would like to acknowledge the support of the Victorian Department of Health and Human Services to make this workshop possible

**Figure 30: Geelong workshop agenda**