



## Group dispelling hepatitis stigma

THE Cairns Hepatitis Action Team will hold their second annual resilience event for World Hepatitis Day, a show of strength for those dealing with the disease.

CHAT member Sharon Murphy lived with hepatitis C before clearing the virus in 2012 with the latest antiviral treatment available. "I enjoy speaking to the public and health care workers, anyone I can really, to share my story and dispel common misconceptions," she said. Another CHAT member, Yvonne Drazic has lived with

hepatitis B since being diagnosed nearly 30 years ago. "I ignored it for many years until the symptoms increased and I was told I had cirrhosis of the liver," she said. "I very nearly left it too long." It is estimated there are almost half a million Australians living with hepatitis B or hepatitis C, but many are not yet diagnosed according to CHAT.

This year's event will have CHAT members offering free massage and reiki sessions while sharing stories about their experiences of living with hepatitis B or C. The second annual Resilience event for World Hepatitis Day will be held on July 27. It will run from 9am to 1pm on Tanks Market Day, Tanks Art Centre in Edge Hill.



# CAIRNS HEPATITIS ACTION TEAM

CHAT is an unfunded group made up of a collection of individuals affected by Hepatitis B and C working in a volunteer capacity, and is facilitated by a Queensland Health staff member in a secretariat role.

### OUR OBJECTIVES:

- Increase community awareness of hepatitis B and C
- Combat stigma & discrimination
- Advocate for fair access to treatment
- Working for local, state and national changes

### CHAT ACTIVITIES OVER THE LAST 4 YEARS:

- 3 Resilience Art Exhibitions attracting initially 300 members of the public and 1000 in the final year
- 10 radio interviews covering Cairns, Cape York, Torres Strait, Sunshine Coast and Australia Nationally
- 12 local newspaper articles often in conjunction with a clinician
- Run 2 art workshops for Hep C positive people
- Supported 2 Hep B community education projects
- Contributed a personal story to Together we can See Our Future (Hepatitis Australia)
- Contributed submissions to PBAC and the Inquiry into Hepatitis C in Australia
- Most members are Queensland Positive Speaker Bureau trained

Personal storytelling through art and music for self-management has been healing and shows that focusing away from the negative health impacts of viral hepatitis increases resilience, self-confidence and friendship.

The planning of large events required engagement with community and health services. The group discovered that through planning and personal disclosure during these activities, an unexpected support network developed between members.

Health promotion and community action using strength based principles have resulted in our group being a practical real life example that reflects the Ottawa Charter principles: empowering individuals and communities to access and create their own opportunities to educate whilst developing personal skills, strengthening community action, re-orienting health services, and building collaborative healthy public policy.

# CHAT



## Cairns Hepatitis Action Team

