

## ADVOCACY FOR UNIVERSAL ACCESS TO HEPATITIS C MEDICINES

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**Background:** The first of the new hepatitis C direct-acting antivirals (DAAs) was approved by the Federal Drug Administration for use in the USA in December 2013. Global media focused on the extraordinarily high price of the medicine and negative impact on affordable access to the ‘miracle cures’. In light of this, Hepatitis Australia led the national advocacy for universal access to the new DAAs — which many Australian stakeholders told us could not be achieved.

**Methods:** Hepatitis Australia’s sustained advocacy included: creating opportunities to change the narrative from the price of treatment to its value; working in partnership with community and clinical leaders; lodging submissions; organising parliamentary meetings; supporting the affected community to tell their stories; developing social media campaigns; writing open letters to the Minister and opinion editorials targeting the Prime Minister and more.

**Results:** On Friday, 18 December 2015, Minister Lee’s staff contacted Hepatitis Australia to inform us that the Minister would be holding a press conference the following Sunday to announce that the first tranche of the hepatitis C DAAs would be listed on Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme from March 2016.

**Conclusion:** The advocacy activities undertaken by Hepatitis Australia in conjunction with our members and partners over a two-year period, culminated in a \$1billion government investment in hepatitis C treatments providing treatment access to all Medicare eligible adults regardless of fibrosis stage or population group. Australia is now a recognised world leader in provision of government-funded universal access to hepatitis C DAAs, providing the basis for the elimination of hepatitis C as a public health threat within a generation. Insights from this presentation may be applicable to the planning and implementation of future advocacy campaigns.

**Disclosure of Interest:** Hepatitis Australia recognises the considerable contribution that industry partners make to hepatitis C community awareness and information activities. We also acknowledge the need for transparency of disclosure of potential conflicts of interest by acknowledging these relationships in information resources and presentations.