

## **ENGAGING DIVERSE COMMUNITIES IN THE RESPONSE TO HEPATITIS B: THE HEPATITIS B COMMUNITY ALLIANCE NSW**

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**Background:** An estimated 218,000 people are living with chronic hepatitis in Australia. The burden of disease is unevenly distributed among the population, affecting primarily communities that are already marginalised and facing other health disparities, including migrant communities from the Asia-Pacific region and Africa.

**Methods:** Inspired by the highly successful hepatitis B community campaign in the USA, *San Francisco Hep B Free*, in 2013 the Multicultural HIV and Hepatitis Service (MHAHS) called on leaders from the affected communities in NSW to come together and form a Community Alliance to address hepatitis B.

At an initial forum community leaders discussed and endorsed the scope, aims and objectives of the Alliance as well as potential strategies to engage their communities around hepatitis B. Since then, annual meetings have been conducted and activities for the year discussed and implemented.

**Results:** The Alliance has grown from strength-to-strength with membership comprising more than 15 communities. A range of initiatives have been carried out with strong, consistent and clear key messages being conveyed to communities in a culturally appropriate manner. These have ranged from community education and resource development to ethnic media campaigns and an outreach testing clinic. Partnerships are currently being facilitated among communities and key hepatitis services.

**Conclusion:** The NSW Hepatitis B Community Alliance has been successful in bringing together and supporting a diverse group of communities affected by chronic hepatitis B.

Community leaders have been instrumental in guiding the work, assisting with community input and facilitating access to communities affected. The Alliance has proved effective in engaging and mobilising communities which is critical to the response to chronic hepatitis B in NSW.