



**National Hepatitis C Treatment Awareness Week  
23-27 May 2005**

**Australian Hepatitis Council Calls on Government to Further  
Increase Access to Hepatitis C Treatment**

Embargoed until 9am Sunday May 22

At the launch of Hepatitis C Treatment Awareness Week in Sydney today (Sunday) Australian Hepatitis Council President, Stuart Loveday, called on the Australian Government to further expand access to hepatitis C treatment.

Treatment cures over 60% of people who complete it, but there are too many barriers to people accessing treatment. "One of the most significant barriers is the compulsion on people with hepatitis C to undergo a liver biopsy" said Mr Loveday.

The Australian Hepatitis Council believes that notwithstanding further significant advances in treatment themselves, the removal of liver biopsy as a prerequisite for PBS funded treatment will significantly increase the numbers of people with hepatitis C seeking access to treatment.

This view was supported by the report of the Australian Senate Community Affairs reference committee inquiry into hepatitis C transmission through the blood supply in 2004.

Members of the Hepatitis C sub committee of the Ministerial Advisory Committee on AIDS, Hepatitis and Sexual Health have also raised concerns about the appropriateness of the continued mandating of liver biopsy to access PBS treatment.

"We understand the Australian Government is considering this recommendation and we would call upon them to make a decision as quickly as possible" Mr Loveday said "Unless we increase the uptake of treatment there will be 25,000 people with hepatitis C related cirrhosis by 2020. The cost to the government of caring for those people, not to mention the social and personal cost, will be exponentially higher than that of expanding treatment access".

**The AHC's position statement on access to treatment can be found at:  
[http://www.hepatitisaustralia.com/pages/Position\\_Statements.htm](http://www.hepatitisaustralia.com/pages/Position_Statements.htm)  
For more information contact Danielle Elston on 0423 208 289**

**Interviews can be organised with doctors, people with hepatitis C and representatives of the national and state/territory hepatitis C councils.**

**Information about Hepatitis C Awareness Week can be found at  
[www.hepcawareness.net.au](http://www.hepcawareness.net.au)**

**Hepatitis C Media Centre: [www.hepatitisaustralia.com/media](http://www.hepatitisaustralia.com/media)**