



MEDIA ALERT

WORLD HEPATITIS DAY ORATION: RENEWED CALLS FOR NEEDLE & SYRINGE PROGRAMS IN PRISON

The Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users League's (AIVL) World Hepatitis Day Oration will open with an address by Australian Government Health Minister, the Hon Greg Hunt MP, outlining priorities in the new National Hepatitis Strategies. The Minister's address will be followed by presentations from other key national and ACT organisations highlighting the importance of custodial settings in terms of Australia's comprehensive national focus on the elimination of hepatitis C in particular, and how the implementation of needle and syringe programs (NSP) in custodial settings is an important initiative within this broader context.

Around 100 people will be attending the event in Canberra, including federal, state and territory politicians, heads of key non-government organisations and health and corrections policy experts from around the country.

WHAT: AIVL World Hepatitis Day Oration
WHEN: Monday 22 July 2019
WHERE: Function Room, Theo Notaras Multicultural Centre (2nd Floor, North Building, 180 London Circuit, Canberra City)
TIME: 12:30pm – 1:30pm

"In terms of the new National Blood Borne Viruses (BBV) and Sexually Transmissible Infections (STI) Strategies, we are particularly grateful that custodial facilities have been included as priority settings for action moving forward. The focus on custodial settings in the new Strategies will not only enhance effectiveness of interventions for this population but also strengthen the effectiveness of initiatives to reduce the impact of BBVs and STIs for the broader Australian community. The emphasis on NSP in custodial settings is deeply significant and we are hopeful that this will encourage jurisdictions who are interested in progressing NSP in their prisons, such as the ACT Government, that still has implementing an NSP in the ACT's prison as its official policy position," said Melanie Walker, Chief Executive Officer (CEO) of AIVL.

The event will feature a panel session with Carrie Fowlie (CEO of the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Association of the ACT), Sarah-Jane Olsen (Executive Officer of Hepatitis ACT) and Chris Gough (Manager of the Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy) talking about the implications of the new National Strategies in the ACT context. AIVL will also be releasing a new report, *Missing Connections* - informed by the experiences of people who use drugs and who have been in custody - highlighting areas of harm reduction and continuity of care that require improvement in order to achieve enhanced public health outcomes.

"World Hepatitis Day takes place every year on 28 July. Worldwide, 300 million people are living with viral hepatitis unaware. Without finding the undiagnosed and linking them to care, millions will continue to suffer, and lives will be lost. Prevention is an equally important part of Australia's response and AIVL is calling on all Australian governments to ensure that people in custodial settings are not forgotten within this broader context," said Ms Walker.

AIVL is the national organisation representing people who use/have used illicit drugs and is the peak body for the state and territory peer-based drug user organisations. AIVL's World Hepatitis Day Oration is being held in association with the Alcohol, Tobacco and Other Drug Association of the ACT (ATODA), Hepatitis ACT and the Canberra Alliance for Harm Minimisation and Advocacy (CAHMA).

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