

“Good to see it out in the open, not hidden”: Findings from the evaluation of a peer led national hepatitis C health promotion campaign

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WHAT IS THE IT'S YOUR RIGHT CAMPAIGN?

Eliminate Hepatitis C (EC) Australia and the Australian Injecting and Illicit Drug Users League designed Australia's first public peer-led hepatitis C testing and treatment campaign, co-designed and delivered by peer workers with lived and living experience of injecting drug use and hepatitis C.

- *It's Your Right* linked people who inject drugs with peer workers and trusted services and engaged them in hepatitis C testing and treatment.
- *It's Your Right* combined vibrant, rights-based messaging in street advertising with peer-led engagement strategies adapted to local community needs.
- Engagement strategies included tailored messages for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, client outreach, cash incentives, point-of-care testing, and events.



Figure 1: Examples of posters with rights-based messaging.

IMPLEMENTATION

It's Your Right was implemented between April and December 2022 by EC Australia and eight peer led services across Australia.



METHODS

- A mixed methods evaluation collected process and outcomes data from each state and territory.
- Street advertising reach data, surveys of people who inject drugs (n=165), organisational service delivery data and focus groups (n=23) with campaign implementers was collected and analysed.

RESULTS

REACH

8.9 million people across Australia were estimated to have seen at least one *It's Your Right* campaign product. Survey demographics indicate that the campaign reached people who inject drugs, including Aboriginal people, people who have unstable housing, and people who had never attended the implementing service before.

ENGAGEMENT IN HEPATITIS C TESTING AND TREATMENT

Implementing services recorded 2,595 hepatitis C client conversations, 1,343 people were tested, including 194 Aboriginal people (14%), and 151 people were referred for treatment, including 16 Aboriginal people (11%). 1,254 financial incentives were provided to clients engaging in testing and/or treatment.

"It is good to see it out in the open not hidden away. Like on the bus, everyone can see it." Survey participant

CAMPAIGN RECALL AND ACTIONS TAKEN FROM SEEING THE CAMPAIGN

165 people were surveyed about their recognition of the campaign: 53% of respondents were able to spontaneously recall the campaign 72% of respondents could recall when shown campaign images Campaign recognition was highest in Needle and Syringe programs (53%), on buses (30%) and on street advertising (27%). After seeing the campaign, 38% of survey respondents spoke to a peer worker and 33% got tested.

"I like how it says 'It's Your Right' - reminds me that I'm not a bad person for needing treatment/getting hep C" Survey participant

CONCLUSIONS

It's Your Right was the first Australia-wide hepatitis C campaign co-designed and delivered by peer workers with living and lived experience of injecting drug use.

Findings indicate that:

- Peer workers were critical to the campaign success, as their skills, knowledge and personal experiences helped to breakdown service barriers.
- The campaign succeeded in linking people who inject drugs, including Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people, to peer workers and engaging them in testing.
- Public visibility of *It's Your Right* enabled peers to start conversations, and financial incentives paired with trusted peer-led services, facilitated testing uptake and referral to treatment among people who inject drugs.

Further funding will be sought to sustain future rounds of the campaign and investment in peer led models that can contribute to the elimination of hepatitis C.

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