



24 June 2016

Helen Tyrrell
Chief Executive Officer
Hepatitis Australia
PO Box 716
Woden ACT 2606

Dear Ms Tyrrell,

Thank you for your letter about the elimination of viral hepatitis.

Australia has come a long way since the Hawke Labor Government pioneered a national approach to blood-borne diseases with the National Strategy to combat HIV/AIDS, under the leadership of then Health Minister, Neal Blewett.

A Shorten Labor Government is committed to fulfilling the current National Strategies for hepatitis B (HBV) and hepatitis C (HVC), and to the National Partnership approach in combatting blood-borne viruses.

Undoubtedly, there is more to do.

Labor welcomed the PBS listing of new generation anti-viral treatments for HBC last year, but recognise that this is only part of the story. Cuts to the PBS make needed medications more expensive and the Abbott-Turnbull Government's GP tax by stealth make it harder for Australians to see their doctor and get the medication they need.

The success of the fight against HBV and HBC – and other blood-borne viruses – depends, first of all, on a strong public health system.

A Shorten Labor Government will make sure all Australians can get the medical care they need, when they need it. We will:

- End Malcolm Turnbull's GP Tax by stealth by restoring the indexation of the Medicare Benefits Schedule from 1 January 2017.
- Scrap the Abbott-Turnbull Government's cuts to the PBS and ensure there will be no increase to the co-payments or safety net thresholds on top of regular indexation.
- Invest \$ 2 billion in our public hospitals to make sure they can provide the best care.

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Labor supports World Hepatitis Day and other efforts to raise awareness and reduce stigma – including those by Hepatitis Australia and your member organisations. We would look forward to working with you to raise awareness.

Labor recognises the importance of tackling the issue of HBC in prisons and of a co-ordinated national approach to the problem. A Shorten Labor Government will work with the States and Territories on this issue.

Thank you again for your letter.

Yours sincerely,

ALP Information Services Unit

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