

## **Government's proud record of subsidising medicines must apply to new hep C cures**

Twenty-seven leading medical associations and health advocacy groups have published an Open Letter to the Federal Health Minister urging the immediate inclusion of breakthrough hepatitis C cures on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme.

Hepatitis Australia CEO Helen Tyrrell said that pricing negotiations with pharmaceutical companies appear to have become protracted and that the time had come for the Minister to intervene and expedite the process.

"This Government is proud of its record of subsidising new medicines for conditions ranging from cancer to eye disease, citing 798 new and amended PBS listings since coming to office. We trust that the PBS listing of new hepatitis C cures will be added to this impressive list of achievements before the end of 2015," Ms Tyrrell said.

"Each month approximately 250 people with hepatitis C develop serious and potentially life-threatening liver disease. Progressive liver disease can be prevented quite simply – we just need new hepatitis C treatments added to the PBS," she said.

Ms Tyrrell said an historic opportunity was available to the Federal Health Minister, Australia's new Prime Minister and their Cabinet colleagues which is simply "too good to miss".

"To be the Government that makes history by transforming hepatitis C into a rare condition would be an impressive legacy," she said.

New generation hepatitis C medicines offer a cure to nine out of ten people thereby preventing escalating rates of liver cirrhosis, liver cancer and liver failure. Yet many of the 230,500 Australians living with hepatitis C are still waiting on a government decision despite the new therapies being recommended for PBS listing in April.

"We are confident that the Federal Health Minister recognises the urgency of making new hepatitis C cures available. We urge her to intervene and bring the Department, the pharmaceutical companies and the Cabinet together to deliver the new hepatitis C medicines for which so many Australians are desperately waiting," Ms Tyrrell concluded.

**For further information or to arrange an interview, please contact Fiona Beveridge at Ethical Strategies – 02 8904 7335 / 0405 902 826.**