



# Hepatitis C in prison – 40% to 60% ... and growing

NCOSS conference – Scales of Justice  
Sydney 25 July 2002

Stuart Loveday – Hepatitis C Council of NSW

*The Hepatitis C Council of NSW  
is a community based,  
non-government,  
membership organisation.*

*We are primarily funded by NSW  
Health to provide information,  
support, referral and advocacy  
services for all people in NSW  
affected by hepatitis C.*

## *Topics*

- Epidemiology overview
- Current status of HCV in NSW
- Current status of HCV in NSW prisons
- *Prisons Hep C Helpline*
- Opportunities

## *Prevalence of the HCV epidemic - estimates*

- **210,000** people living with hepatitis C in Australia ... >1% NCHECR 2001
- 80% (1997) from injecting drugs (**83%**)
- 7% from receiving blood (**5%**)
- 13% from other factors (**12%**)

•Adapted from 1998 Hepatitis C Projections Working Group contained in Lowe and Cotton (1999) *Hepatitis C: a review of Australia's response* Dept of Health and Aged Care

•ANCAHRD Hepatitis C Committee – Estimates and Projections Working Group 2002 – 3<sup>rd</sup> Australasian Conference on Hepatitis C March 2002

## Hepatitis C notifications in NSW 1991 to 2000



Source: NSW Health AIDU Surveillance Section  
March 2001

## Total HCV notifications in NSW between January 1991 to December 2001:

- **70,036** people diagnosed in NSW
- > 160,000 diagnosed in Australia
- NSW approx 44%

AIDU, NSW Health  
June 2002  
ANCAHRD Hepatitis C Committee  
Estimates and Projections Working Group 2002

## *Estimates and projections of new hepatitis C infections in Australia*

- 1997 – 11,000 people pa
- 2001 – **16,000 people pa**
- **45% increase**
- 91% new infections from IDU

ANCAHRD Hepatitis C Committee – Estimates  
and Projections Working Group - 2002

(3<sup>rd</sup> Australasian Conference March 2002)

## *Hepatitis C: The Neglected Epidemic*

- ***“We are not going to control hepatitis C in the community until we control hepatitis C in the prisons.”***

Dr Nick Crofts, evidence to the Standing Committee on  
Social Issues, NSW Legislative Council inquiry into  
Hepatitis C in NSW – November 1997

*Hepatitis C: The Neglected Epidemic* November 1998

## *Correctional settings Infectious Diseases – 1996 vs. 2001*

<b>Marker</b>	<b>Males</b>	<b>Females</b>
Hepatitis B	33% vs. 28%	46% vs. 31%
<b><u>Hepatitis C</u></b>	<b>33% vs. 40%</b>	<b>66% vs. 64%</b>
HIV	0.3% vs. 0.1%	1.7% vs. 0%

Tony Butler, Corrections Health Service,  
Inmate Health Survey 2002

## *Education and management*

- Department of Corrective Services – AOD, HPU, IDS, peer based
- Corrections Health Service – clinics, public health nurses, care, treatment, management
- Community based organisations

## *Prisons Hep C Helpline*

- “World first” – opened July 2001
- DCS and CHS and HCC NSW
- Funding from DCS – 12 month trial
- Inmates, families, IDS, prison officers
- Smartcard – Arunta phone system
- 7 to 10 minute calls - freecall
- *The Hep C Review*

## *Prisoners returning to the broader community*

- ***Given the large number of people entering and leaving the corrections system each year, custodial settings pose a serious “incubator” threat to both inmates and custodial staff, and upon inmates’ release, to the broader Australian community.”***

National Hepatitis C Strategy 1999-2000 to 2003-2004,  
Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care

## *Indigenous Australians*

- ***The high levels of Indigenous people in custodial settings is a matter that places this population at particular risk of hepatitis C infection***

National Hepatitis C Strategy 1999-2000 to 2003-2004,  
Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care

## *The link with the broader community*

- ***“The failure to reduce the risk of hepatitis C and other blood-borne viral infection in prisons severely undermines the work being conducted in the community with injecting drug users”***

Australian National Council on Drugs – Needle and  
Syringe Programs position paper – March 2002

## *Opportunities ...*

- **Diversion – keep people out of prison**
- **National models for HCV Prevention and Care**
- **Bleach/detergent**
- **Methadone**
- **Tattooing?**
- **ANCD position on NSP**

## *Opportunities ...*

- ***Rec 12 “...that each jurisdictional department responsible for the management of prisons and juvenile detention centres ...develop ... policies, protocols and procedures regarding the introduction of trial needle and syringe programs within at least one of its prisons and juvenile detention centres.”***

Australian National Council on Drugs – Needle and Syringe Programs position paper – March 2002

## *Conclusion*

- **Keep people out of prison**
- **Introduce more “community equivalent” strategies**
- **Continue to work towards more coherent throughcare**