



## Media statement for immediate use

12 May 2021

### Investment in life saving research can eliminate viral hepatitis

Hepatitis Australia welcomes the Australian Government's significant investment of \$6.7 billion in medical research over the next 4 years, including \$2.6 billion for the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) and \$3.6 billion for the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC).

Carrie Fowlie, Chief Executive Officer of Hepatitis Australia said "This is a critical opportunity for the Australian Government to identify viral hepatitis as a priority in the next iteration of the Australian Medical Research and Innovation priorities, including to find a cure for hepatitis B."

"Making viral hepatitis a priority in the Medical Research Future Fund will profoundly help the Australian Government deliver on its goal of eliminating viral hepatitis as a public health concern by 2030."

"Hepatitis C has a cure but not a vaccine, conversely hepatitis B has a vaccine but not a cure. Finding a vaccine and a cure for both hepatitis B and hepatitis C would change the world."

"Experts anticipate a cure for hepatitis B could be developed within the next decade. This would be a life-saver for 230,000 Australians and 257 million people globally. The Western Pacific, our region, has the highest prevalence of hepatitis B in the world."

"A cure for hepatitis B is possible with the catalytic investment that the Medical Research Future Fund can provide."

"Hepatitis B and hepatitis C are the leading causes of liver cancer in Australia; this cancer has one of the lowest five-year survival rates. Liver cancer is one of the fastest increasing causes of cancer death in Australia," said Carrie Fowlie.

Hepatitis Australia congratulates the Australian Government for recognising that additional efforts are required to meet the targets in the National Hepatitis B Strategy and National Hepatitis C Strategy. These have included:

- the Ministerial Advisory Committee's National Roundtable on Hepatitis B
- planning in response to the Health Minister's tremendous commitment to find 50,000 people living with hepatitis C by 2022 to achieve the treatment target.

"Viral hepatitis elimination can be Australia's next major public and preventive health success story."

"The Medical Research Future Fund prioritising viral hepatitis strengthens Australia's position as global leaders and our capacity to deliver on our commitments to the community," said Carrie Fowlie.

*The National Hepatitis Infoline provides free, confidential support. Call 1800 437 222 to talk to someone in your State or Territory.*

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