



## **Inquiry into Hepatitis C Commences**

The House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health has commenced a new inquiry into hepatitis C in Australia. Roundtables with community support groups and medical experts will be held on 21 January 2015 in Melbourne and 22 January 2015 in Sydney.

In announcing the inquiry, Committee Chair Steve Irons MP said “hepatitis C is a serious health issue in Australia, with the latest data indicating that 230 000 people live with a chronic, long-lasting infection”.

Chronic hepatitis C (when the infection lasts for longer than six months) can lead to progressive liver inflammation and scarring, and if untreated, may result in liver disease and, in some cases, liver cancer and liver failure. Despite the high diagnosis rate in Australia, during 2012 it was estimated that only 1 per cent of people with a chronic infection accessed treatment.

“The roundtable hearings will be a valuable opportunity to focus on the best ways to prevent and treat this hidden disease” Mr Irons said.

The inquiry will examine the prevalence of hepatitis C in Australia and the early testing and treatment options available through primary care, acute care, Aboriginal Medical Services and in prisons.

The Committee will also examine the costs associated with treating the short- and long-term impacts of hepatitis C in the community.

Finally, the Committee will consider methods used for the prevention of new hepatitis C infections, as well as methods for reducing the stigma associated with a positive diagnosis.

Details of the Committee’s roundtable hearings are available at [www.aph.gov.au/HepatitisC](http://www.aph.gov.au/HepatitisC)

The Committee is also inviting written submissions. Submissions from interested individuals and organisations are invited by COB 27 February 2015. The preferred method of receiving submissions is by electronic format lodged [online](#) using a My Parliament account.

Further information about the Committee’s inquiry, including the full terms of reference and more details on how to lodge a submission, are available on the Committee’s website: [www.aph.gov.au/HepatitisC](http://www.aph.gov.au/HepatitisC)

**For media comment** please contact Jonathan Martin from the office of Mr Steve Irons MP, Chair on 0419 993 677. **Other enquiries:** please contact the committee secretariat on (02) 6277 4145 or visit the committee’s webpage: [www.aph.gov.au/health](http://www.aph.gov.au/health).