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FINDING VOICES FOR HEPATITIS B IN AUSTRALIA

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For many years people living with HIV and AIDS have had a role in education and care, as well as advocacy and policy. Their role has been acknowledged as a central tenet to a successful response to HIV/AIDS. There are currently positive speakers' bureaus in many states of Australia for people living with HIV and people living with hepatitis C, however currently only the Queensland Positive Speakers Bureau have built any capacity to expand into hepatitis B.

Two people living with hepatitis B will explore the impact that sharing their story publicly has had on their lives and the lives of family, friends and co-workers. They will consider the barriers for people speaking publicly about living with hepatitis B, including those of culture and language; and how these can instead be made into strength. They will also discuss how employing people living with hepatitis B as pro-active public speakers in both community and medical education programs, as outreach workers, peer educators and treatments' advocates, has the potential to positively affect the response to hepatitis B in Australia.

For too long, the lack of a voice of their own made people with living with chronic hepatitis B feel forgotten amidst the large amount of information and messages that focused solely on HIV/AIDS and hepatitis C. Their stories will add new insight and diversity to the current understanding of what it means to live with chronic viral hepatitis.