Monash Faculty of Law has joined together with Hepatitis Victoria to offer two students a unique opportunity to gain valuable work experience, and to undertake valuable research with real-world impact. The opportunity will ultimately be able to be credited towards your degree.

The organisation:

Hepatitis Victoria is the peak not-for-profit community organisation working across Victoria for people affected by, or at risk of, viral hepatitis. We offer a number of programs and support facilities for individuals and organisations, for both those affected by viral hepatitis and those providing services to people living with viral hepatitis.

Almost 500,000 people in Australia, or 2% of the population, live with chronic viral hepatitis (hepatitis B and C). 15,000 Australians are diagnosed with viral hepatitis each year - around the same number diagnosed with breast cancer. As such viral hepatitis is a significant health issue in Australia, as well as globally. Many new infections (for example of hepatitis C) are associated with injecting drug use.

Hepatitis Victoria has a vision of a Victorian community where there are no new infections of viral hepatitis and where those with hepatitis maximise their health and wellbeing. Hepatitis Victoria believes that it is impossible to achieve this vision, where stigmatising and discriminating attitudes and behaviours are enacted towards people with viral hepatitis.

Hepatitis, stigma, discrimination and the law:

For people living with viral hepatitis, experiences of stigma and discrimination are common and can impact upon many areas of an individual’s life.

Those who have hepatitis (B or C) are sometimes required to disclose their status in certain situations (e.g healthcare workers performing exposure prone procedures or when applying for health insurance) and can be excluded from certain activities (e.g donating blood).

In Victoria, having hepatitis is considered a disability and the rights of people living with the virus are protected under the Equal Opportunity Act 2010 (VIC). However, many continue to report instances of discrimination in healthcare, employment, and education settings that can negatively influence health and wellbeing.

In recent years, the advent of highly tolerable, highly effective, and widely available direct acting anti-viral medicines means that significantly more people are being cured from hepatitis C than ever before. While those who have been successfully treated will no longer have the virus present in their system, they will always test positive for hepatitis C antibodies - indicating the person has been
exposed to the virus at some time in their life. Individuals may also continue to be associated with hepatitis (by themselves and others) long after being cured. Given the novel influx of people who have been cured of hepatitis C, little is understood about the legal rights and options that may apply to this population.

This project will involve the student undertaking research into legislation relevant to individuals post-cure that may enable discriminatory behaviour or unnecessary disclosure or restrictions. This information will then be compiled into website content and guides for consumers and sector workers. Findings may also be used in a public campaign led by Hepatitis Victoria or communicated to policymakers. Ultimately, the aim of this project is to identify legal mechanisms for reducing stigma and discrimination among people living with hepatitis and those who have achieved a cure.

**The opportunity:**

Hepatitis Victoria is seeking two students to complete this project. The placement will consist of 80 hours, at one 8 hour day a week, for 10 weeks, commencing on the 23rd of April and finishing on the 28th of June 2017. There is some flexibility, too, for students who wish to complete their work in a shorter timeframe (i.e. Hepatitis Victoria can accommodate students who wish to do 2 days per week for 5 weeks).

Successful applicants should be able to attend the offices of Hepatitis Victoria in Brunswick on either Tuesday or Wednesday approx. 9-5pm, to complete the placement. Students will be provided with an appropriate workspace, an orientation to the sector, and regular supervision. Hepatitis Victoria is open to an arrangement in which students conduct research from an external location (e.g. at their home). This is an opportunity to gain professional experience in the not for profit sector, and do work that will improve people’s lives.

For more information about Hepatitis Victoria and viral hepatitis, please visit https://www.hepvic.org.au

**Assessment:**

Students selected for this opportunity must subsequently apply to enrol in LAW4173 “Research Unit A”. More information about this unit can be found in the Law Handbook:

http://www.monash.edu/pubs/2018handbooks/units/LAW4173.html

In consultation with Associate Professor Kate Seear (Monash), students must develop a research topic that emerges out of their work at Hepatitis Victoria. The student’s topic might address some area of drug law reform, public health law, anti-discrimination legislation or similar. The student will complete and submit a 5000-6000 word research paper for assessment.

**How to apply:**

Students should apply through email addressed to: Associate Professor Kate Seear:

Kate.Seear@monash.edu

Students should send a copy of their CV and academic transcript, together with a short cover letter outlining the reasons for their interest in the placement, and details of any relevant professional experience.

Applications are due to Dr Seear by 5pm on Friday 6th April 2017. All queries regarding the placement opportunity should be sent to Associate Professor Kate Seear.