

**DIVISION OF MEDICINE**

John Hunter Hospital  
Locked Bag 1  
Hunter Region Mail Centre NSW 2310

Telephone: (02) 49213540  
Fax: (02) 49213537  
E-mail: [rbatey@hunter.health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:rbatey@hunter.health.nsw.gov.au)

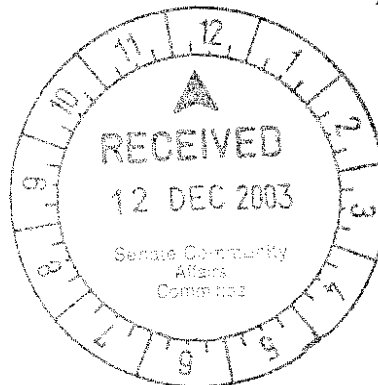


HUNTER HEALTH  
*Improving Health in the Hunter*

Our Ref: RGB:vj

8 December 2003

The Secretary of the Senate  
Community Affairs References Committee  
Suite S1 59  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600



Dear Sir / Madam

I submit a brief report on the inquiry into the Australian Red Cross Blood Transfusion Service. I believe this has been a most important review highlighting the complexity of the situation that was being dealt with in the early 90's following the discovery of the hepatitis C virus as a cause of non A / non B liver disease.

I believe the report has supported the Blood Transfusion Service in a very positive way and I wish to have my report incorporated in the inquiry process.

Yours sincerely

Robert G Batey  
Clinical Chair - Division of Medicine  
John Hunter Hospital

## SUBMISSION TO THE ENQUIRY INTO THE RED CROSS BLOOD TRANSFUSION SERVICE.

The report on the ARBTS is a timely and critically important document that provides an enormous wealth of information to those seeking to comprehend decisions made in the period February 1990 to July 1990. This period is crucial as it was a time when blood donors who were positive for HCV Ab were used to obtain blood products for use in Australia. The report seeks to clarify the reasons for these decisions and to highlight the difficulties faced by those involved in decision making at the time. Additionally the report examines the Gosford incident which highlights the ease with which systems can fail in modern medical structures

In making this submission I am seeking to support the Red Cross Transfusion service as it was faced with very difficult decisions in 1990 and data was just not available to facilitate this process.

It is pointless repeating the data provided by the committee charged with preparing the report as the report provides clear and concise evidence about the level of knowledge available at the time. The report makes it clear that even if errors of judgement might now be thought to have been made, there is no evidence that anyone has suffered as a result of the use of HCV Ab positive material in the period Feb 1990 to July 1990 when the practice changed.

I wish to state my belief that the Red Cross staff made every effort to make the correct decision for the benefit of all Australians and while it is now easy to see what risk may have been taken, that information was not available at the time.

The way in which the Australian Blood transfusion service responded to HCV was commendable and decisions re testing led the world.

The service is to be supported in this review process.