

MEDIA RELEASE

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Better pain services needed ahead of real-time prescription monitoring in Victoria

Painaustralia welcomes the passage of new laws to establish Victoria's real-time prescription monitoring system, but is calling for a review of access to pain services. Millions of Victorians living with chronic pain should not be left without treatment options when the new system comes into place.

Painaustralia CEO Carol Bennett said: **“The new system will curb doctor-shopping and reduce deaths associated with prescription drugs among people with chronic pain. We know that reliance on opioids for treatment of chronic pain is not effective and is associated with significant unwanted side effects, risk of overuse, dependence and addiction. We know many Victorians rely on opioids and they are increasingly becoming the first line treatment for chronic pain.”**

“We need to ensure people living with pain are supported with appropriate services, treatments and education about best practice pain management, particularly with diminished access to pain medications. Consumers also need timely access to pain management programs to learn how to self-manage pain and find the support and help they need.”

One in five Australians live with chronic pain and this prevalence increases to as many as one in three older Australians and up to 80% of aged care residents.

Most people are not able to access best-practice pain management and support, which uses a multi-disciplinary approach to address the complexity associated with chronic pain. This includes physical and psychological treatments such as cognitive behavioural therapy and physiotherapy.

Ms Bennett said: **“Real time monitoring is an opportunity to better identify people in pain and better meet their needs. To respond appropriately, we need a healthcare system that can better prevent, manage and support people living with pain.”**

“We must also ensure that any state-wide monitoring system is compatible with the Australia-wide reform announced by the Australian Government.”

To better meet the need of people living with pain, Painaustralia recommends monitoring systems include:

- an alert system to identify patients who have chronic pain and are at risk of addiction;
- ensuring our health workforce is skilled in best-practice assessment and treatment of pain;
- better access to public pain services, particularly for people in regional areas; and
- clear pathways for referral to both addiction specialists and programs as well as best-practice chronic pain support, utilising primary health care as much as possible.

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