

MEDIA RELEASE

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Pain can't wait – national epidemic needs action!

Australia's response to our nation's pain burden is at a critical juncture and Painaustralia is calling for specific actions in its Pre-Budget Submission 2018-19 to ensure the millions of Australians with chronic pain can access relief.

Painaustralia CEO Carol Bennett says national action on pain can't come soon enough.

"Pain affects every demographic in our society and the impact of mismanaged or poorly managed pain is devastating for individuals, families and the community. People with chronic pain have high levels of depression and other mental health issues, and are at risk of suicide. They often experience reduction in income, their lifestyle is affected and they face pressures on social relationships," she said.

"Many people are still unable to access quality care for chronic pain and are not aware of alternative treatments, which can lead to dependence on less effective options, such as codeine and other opioids.

Chronic ongoing or recurrent pain affects one in five Australian adults and children and one in three aged over 65. It costs Australia at least \$34 billion per year – our third most costly health burdenⁱ and the leading cause of early retirement and absenteeism.^{ii,iii}

As our population ages and chronic conditions increase, the prevalence of chronic pain and associated costs will skyrocket.

In its submission, Painaustralia has outlined seven priority objectives and 16 key projects to effectively respond to the pain crisis:

- minimising our pain burden is a national priority;
- empowering consumers through awareness and promotion;
- preventing persistent chronic pain and reducing opioid misuse;
- minimising the impact of pain on the workforce and productivity;
- expanding pain treatment and consumer support including regional services and priority groups;
- building capacity of the health and aged care sector to integrate pain management in practice; and
- understanding pain, its impact and how we can best respond through research and evaluation.

Ms Bennett said, "By making pain a national priority for policy change, we have an opportunity for a different outcome. It's time for national action on pain."

[Download Painaustralia's Pre-Budget Submission 2018-19 for more information.](#)

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ⁱ MBF Foundation 2007 *The high price of pain: the economic impact of persistent pain in Australia*. Report conducted by Access Economics in collaboration with the Pain Management Research Institute (The University of Sydney/Royal North Shore Hospital)

ⁱⁱ Schofield et al. 2012 Quantifying the Productivity impacts of poor health and health interventions, Health Economics, University of Sydney

ⁱⁱⁱ Van Leeuwen MT, Blyth FM, Nicholas MK, Cousins MJ 2006 Chronic pain and reduced work effectiveness: the hidden cost to Australian employers, *Eur J Pain* Feb;10(2):161-6