

## MEDIA RELEASE

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### Prevention critical to reducing chronic disease burden

Painaustralia has welcomed Health Minister Greg Hunt's commitment to the development of a National Preventive Health Strategy - an important announcement given the significant new data from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare on the burden of chronic disease in Australia.

"The announcement of a preventative health strategy recognises the common risk factors that cause many painful chronic conditions such as cancer, arthritis, asthma, back pain, cardiovascular disease, chronic obstructive pulmonary disease, and mental health conditions. Tackling these risk factors through prevention and early intervention is a vital step in reducing the growing prevalence and cost of chronic conditions including chronic pain" Painaustralia CEO Carol Bennett said.

New data released yesterday by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) shows the leading causes of the total disease burden in Disability Adjusted Life Years (DALY) in 2015 were cancer (18% of total burden), cardiovascular diseases (14%), musculoskeletal conditions (13%), mental health and substance use disorders (12%) and injuries (8.5%). Together, these disease groups caused around two-thirds of the burden in Australia and have been consistently the main contributors for over a decade.

This data confirms what a lot of people living in the community already know: living with chronic diseases like cancer, heart disease, low back pain and mental health conditions is a long and often painful journey that takes a significant toll on quality of life.

Chronic pain affects more than 3.24 million Australians. Chronic pain (also called persistent pain) is pain that continues for more than three months and often has its inception in surgery, an injury, or as a result of disease or chronic condition like arthritis or lower back pain.

AIHW's data also supports the findings from the recently released Deloitte Access Economics report on the [Cost of Pain in Australia](#), which also highlighted that chronic pain goes hand in hand with other chronic conditions. Forty four per cent of people with chronic pain are also living with depression and anxiety, 29.3% with arthritis and 25% with high blood pressure. These comorbidities often contribute to worse health, societal and financial outcomes – for example; major depression in patients with chronic pain is associated with reduced functioning, poorer treatment response, and increased health care costs. In 2018, this figure was \$73.2 billion in direct health, productivity and related costs and \$66.1 billion in quality of life costs totalling \$139 billion.

"The Minister's commitment to a national preventive health strategy, as well as his support for a National Strategic Action Plan on Pain Management are vital steps that will play a very important role in reducing the burden of chronic disease" Ms Bennett said.

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