

MEDIA RELEASE

24 October 2017

PC report nails the major cause of reduced productivity: pain!

Painaustralia welcomes the Productivity Commission report 'Shifting the Dial' released by Treasurer Scott Morrison today, which calls for better healthcare as the key to lifting productivity and supporting people to participate in work, education and training, and in their community.

The report confirms that poor health prevents many Australians from working to their full potential, affecting quality of life and earning capacity, and highlights the impact of chronic pain. It finds men living with chronic pain earn 15% less than average, while men with nervous or emotional conditions (one in five Australians with chronic pain have depression or other mood disorders) earn 35% less. It also states the economic benefits from a health system reboot alone could be worth up to \$200 billion over the next 20 years.

One in five Australians live with chronic pain and it accounts for 40% of early forced retirements in people of working age. The total cost of chronic pain is estimated at more than \$34 billion per year – with productivity costs the largest component, accounting for around \$11.7 billion (34%) – and it is estimated that half of this cost could be saved by providing effective and timely treatment.

Painaustralia CEO Carol Bennett says: **“We must do more to prevent and manage chronic pain in our workplaces. There are effective ways to address chronic pain in the workplace. Early intervention and identification of people at risk of long-term pain post injury are critical. With the right treatment and support, more injured workers make a full recovery.**

“We know that the economic burden of chronic pain increases with the level of pain disability, which suggests the enormous benefits of more widespread access to effective pain management services. Health investment and a productive workforce go hand-in-hand.”

The Pain Global Index 2017 (GPI 2017) found 68% of Australians surveyed suffered weekly body pain and workers took an average of 3.3 sick days for body pain and 1.4 sick days for head pain. Pain also impacts people's capacity in the workplace, with the GPI 2017 finding 28% of workers with body pain struggle to concentrate at work, 21% perform below standard due to pain, and 24% say their body pain has had a negative impact on career progression.

Ms Bennett says: **“Most people with chronic conditions would prefer to work, given the right opportunities and supports. If we want to improve productivity, we need to improve our response to people with chronic pain.”**

Painaustralia recommends an evidence-based national strategy that draws on the findings of the Work Injury Screening and Early Intervention study by Professor Michael Nicholas including:

- Early intervention of injured workers at risk of developing ongoing chronic pain
- Multidisciplinary pain management pathways for injured workers
- Consumer education about best-practice multidisciplinary pain management
- Workplaces making appropriate for people with chronic pain where possible

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