



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**5 September 2024**

# **Over 20 peak groups join Arthritis Australia's call for urgent action on arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions**

Arthritis Australia and over 40 leading health stakeholders including over 20 peak bodies have issued a formal communique calling for urgent action to provide more affordable evidence based care, following the first national parliamentary summit on arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions, which recently brought together over 90 consumers, clinicians, researchers, policymakers and industry representatives.

"Implementing proven models of care, including allied health support for exercise and symptom management to support people on joint replacement waiting lists, will make an immediate difference to their quality of life. And we know that a large proportion will find their osteoarthritis so improved that they choose not to proceed with costly surgery, resulting in quickly realised savings to the health budget bottom line," said Arthritis Australia Acting CEO Louise Hardy.

"Investing in early, evidence-based care for osteoarthritic conditions is essential to reducing the incidence of orthopaedic surgery in Australia. With over \$2 billion spent annually on healthcare costs directly related to osteoarthritis, including knee and hip replacement surgery, there is an urgent need to prioritise funding for preventative measures that can delay or even prevent these surgeries. By doing so, we can improve patient outcomes and reduce the financial strain on our healthcare system," states Dr Michael Johnson, President of the Australian Orthopaedic Association, the peak professional organisation for orthopaedic surgeons in Australia.

The communique calls for action in five key areas to address arthritis and other musculoskeletal conditions such as back pain, including calling for:

- Funding and enabling delivery of cost-effective, coordinated lifestyle behavioural models of care for arthritis and other musculoskeletal conditions, with equitable access for rural and regional and priority populations
- More affordable access to allied healthcare for Australians who need it
- Support for consumer education and health system navigation
- Supporting and enabling the multidisciplinary workforce to provide better care, including addressing workforce shortages
- Funding an arthritis and musculoskeletal research Mission that is commensurate with the disease burden and economic impact of these conditions

The full communique and list of signatories can be accessed [here](#).

### **About Arthritis Australia**

Arthritis Australia is the peak national body for arthritis, advocating on behalf of almost 4 million Australians living with arthritis, and working with many other arthritis organisations to deliver information and support to people living with more than 100 types of arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions. We are a leading non-government funder of arthritis research in Australia and advocate for policies, programs and funding initiatives that will improve the health and wellbeing of people living with arthritis.

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