

Arthritis Australia

Invest in game-changing arthritis and musculoskeletal research to transform lives and generate health system savings

For every Australian living with arthritis and MSK, the government spent just \$6 on research through the NHMRC in 2023. This compares to \$108 per person living with dementia, and \$72 per person with a cardiovascular condition.

By establishing a Medical Research Future Fund Arthritis and MSK Mission, we could transform quality of life for people of all ages living with pain and disability, saving the health system billions and giving the hope of a cure for these debilitating conditions.

Response:

Australia has a strong history of groundbreaking scientific and innovative advancements. People all across the world have benefited from discoveries made by Australia's outstanding researchers, including during the pandemic. The Greens believe we need to invest in a strong research sector in Australia to help move away from the polluting industries of the past, support cutting-edge medical research to improve the lives of people living with chronic and acute illnesses, and deliver the jobs of the future.

The Greens' plan includes:

- Fund cutting-edge research and development by investing \$2 billion over nine years in the CSIRO and other national science organisations.
- Strengthen university research by providing \$2.5 billion in block grants over ten years to support curiosity-driven projects and improve researchers' job security.
- Build Australia's scientific capacity by increasing ongoing funding for the Research Infrastructure Investment Strategy by \$175 million.

Take action on out-of-pocket healthcare costs by reforming safety nets, and providing timely relief from fees when it is needed most

Too many people are struggling with the cost of living and face the awful dilemma of choosing between buying basics like food or being able to afford their healthcare. We are calling for reforms including introducing a single, automated Health Safety Net covering both the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and Medicare, changing the expenditure qualifying periods to a 12 month rolling period to ensure people get equitable access to concessions, and provide additional fee relief during arthritis flares when healthcare costs skyrocket.

Response:

The Australian Greens believe that a person's bank balance or postcode should not impact their ability to access healthcare. In a cost of living crisis, the Greens want to ensure that people across Australia can access high-quality healthcare without worrying whether they can still make their rent.

In recognition of this, the Greens will:

- **Increase access to bulk-billing GP appointments**

The Greens will triple the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) bulk billing incentive payments for all Medicare card holders, this will enable more GPs to bulk-bill appointments.

Additionally, the Greens will support GPs to spend more time with patients by implementing a 20% increase to Medicare patient rebates for longer appointments. This will incentivise GPs to offer longer appointments to those who need them.

- **Establish 1000 free healthcare clinics**

The Greens will establish 6 free local healthcare clinics in each federal electorate. At these clinics, people will be able to access a GP, psychologist, nurse, or dentist for free. These clinics will ensure that people do not have to worry about an out-of-pocket cost to access healthcare.

- **Provide free/affordable Pharmaceutical Benefit Scheme (PBS) medicines to anyone with a Medicare card**

The Greens would make PBS medicines free for concession care holders, and would reduce the cost of PBS medicines for everyone else to \$7.70 (the current concessional rate).

Fund affordable and accessible care for people with arthritis and MSK conditions, including exercise and rehabilitation through allied health and social prescribing programs

People with arthritis and MSK put up with the pain with little care or support, often languishing on elective surgical waiting lists that can exceed 500 days. Allied health services such as those provided by physiotherapists and dieticians are critical but simply unaffordable for many people without more government support. Meanwhile, community arthritis organisations are desperate for more funding to continue their support programs.

Response:

The Australian Greens recognise that, currently, the healthcare system doesn't support the treatment and management of people with chronic health conditions. Multidisciplinary care

isn't sufficiently prioritised within primary care, and allied health isn't subsidised enough to make it genuinely affordable for many people who need it.

To address the lack of currently available affordable and accessible care and support, the Greens will:

- **Expand Chronic Disease Management Plan to provide unlimited and affordable services to people living with chronic health conditions**

The Greens will remove the cap on the number of services that are able to be claimed under a Chronic Disease Management Plan. Additionally, The Australian Greens would raise the rebates to match the average out-of-pocket cost for those services. This will support more people to access allied health practitioners at an affordable rate.

- **Fund advocacy organisations to support and advocate for disabled people**

For the people with arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions who identify as disabled, the Greens will invest in advocacy organisations to enable them to effectively do their job to support and advocate for people who need it.

This includes supporting people through the NDIS, health systems, legal systems and other areas of their lives.