

Media Release

August 27, 2013

Arthritis and other musculoskeletal conditions cost Australia \$55.1 billion – study shows

A groundbreaking report into the impact of arthritis and other musculoskeletal (MSK) conditions has revealed a \$55.1 billion cost to the Australian community.

The report by Arthritis and Osteoporosis Victoria (A&OV) - *A Problem Worth Solving* - identified that these conditions impact many young lives. 58% of those affected are aged between 25 and 64 years, which are peak income earning years. The cost of lost productivity in Australia was \$7.4 billion.

A&OV, the peak body representing Victorians living with arthritis and other MSK conditions, commissioned Deloitte Access Economics to undertake the analysis in the report.

A&OV CEO Linda Martin said the statistics show 6.1 million people (26.9% of the population) live with MSK conditions – more Australians than any other National Health Priority Area such as heart disease, cancer or diabetes.

“It’s easy to misunderstand MSK conditions as just sore knees and aching muscles and joints, and because you don’t usually die directly from them, their impact is understated,” Ms Martin said.

“The reality is that people with these conditions often suffer shocking and persistent pain which impacts their ability to work and socialise, their mental health, and often leads to abuse of pain killers. If the conditions are not identified and treated, they can become substantially more disabling over time,” she added.

“From a productivity perspective, it’s vital that employers work with employees to find ways to adapt their roles to retain skills and experience. It can often be as simple as providing a little more flexibility.”

The rising cost of MSK conditions threatens to escalate as the population ages. *A Problem Worth Solving* projects the number of cases of arthritis and other MSK conditions will increase by 43% by 2032.

“A significant investment in musculoskeletal health is required. Plus, we urgently need a multi disciplinary approach from industry whereby health professionals such as physiotherapists, nurses, rheumatologists, orthopaedic surgeons and endocrinologists work together with consumers and policy makers to appropriately address these conditions. The time to act is now.” Ms Martin said.

Minister for Health and Ageing David Davis said it was a pleasure to launch *A Problem Worth Solving*, which explores an important issue for many Victorians.

“Major chronic musculoskeletal conditions such as osteoarthritis, osteoporosis, rheumatoid arthritis and back pain affect almost one third of the Victorian population,” Mr Davis said.

“This report provides an insight into the breadth and impact of the issue and the need for all relevant stakeholders to work together with patients and their families to deliver effective and sustainable solutions.”

----ENDS----