



## **Musculoskeletal Australia launches first ever national consumer-driven survey to better the lives of people living with musculoskeletal conditions**

**Media Release**

**Wednesday 19 August, 2020**

**Musculoskeletal Australia (MSK)** will conduct the largest and most comprehensive consumer-driven survey in Australia of people living with musculoskeletal conditions, or those caring for someone with a condition, to determine how their care can be improved.

Following a pilot survey by MSK in July, responses showed that people living with musculoskeletal conditions were impacted in a variety of ways and needed help and support to better manage their conditions and have a better quality of life.

These preliminary results show that all respondents said affordable treatment options and services (e.g. physiotherapy, exercise classes, medication) would better help them manage their conditions while three quarters backed this up by saying more government support, specifically for the ongoing costs of treatment (eg medication or extended chronic care plans), would also help them manage their condition.

While half of the pilot survey respondents were of working age (aged 25-64), only 39% of respondents were actually working (43% were retired, 9% unable to work and 5% studying).

A large number of pilot survey respondents were unable to work because of their condition and have had to either retire early, stop working, change to part-time work or seen their career plans affected by their condition.

With so many unable to work and earn as they would like, it is no surprise that those living with musculoskeletal conditions also feel a substantial amount of financial strain, with participants stating that they felt financial stress as a result of the cost of allied health appointments, private health insurance, specialist appointments and medications.

And to compound matters, three quarters of pilot survey participants were also living with another condition such as high blood pressure, heart disease, a mental health issue or gastrointestinal disease.

Over 70 per cent of pilot survey participants said that their day-to-day physical activity, like walking or climbing stairs, is affected.

Other life impacts include a decrease in social activities, with 66 per cent of pilot survey participants stating their social life has been affected.

*“The prevalence of musculoskeletal conditions in Australia is becoming exceedingly high and can have a profound impact on people’s lives, including their mental wellbeing and socio-economic circumstances. MSK is committed to representing the needs and perspectives of people living with these conditions and wants to achieve the best outcomes for them. Our national consumer survey is the first step to providing us with a broader understanding of their experiences, needs and how to best support them,”* says Rob Anderson, CEO Musculoskeletal Australia.

The second largest contributor to disability worldwide and the most common cause for early retirement, there are over 150 musculoskeletal conditions which include common conditions such as osteoarthritis, back pain, rheumatoid arthritis, gout, osteoporosis and fibromyalgia.

MSK aims to deliver the most comprehensive audit of what it is like to live with a musculoskeletal condition in Australia with this survey, as there is inadequate prioritisation of musculoskeletal health and persistent pain in the current health system.

The results, once compiled, will provide MSK with a better understanding of the needs and experiences of the 7 million Australians living with a condition and how their care can be improved.

It will also enable MSK to foster partnerships with other key stakeholders to advocate for more investment in the services and support required by those living with a musculoskeletal condition.

*“We strongly encourage everyone living with a musculoskeletal condition, or those caring for someone, to complete the survey. It takes only 15 minutes to complete and will greatly assist MSK and other organisations to better engage Australians living with these conditions and improve their quality of life,”* said Mr Anderson.

The survey will allow the voices of the one in three Australians affected by these conditions to be heard by sharing what condition/s they have and the overall effect it has on their life in order to increase the awareness of the impact of living with musculoskeletal conditions.

The survey will be launched nationally on Wednesday 19 August and will become live at 6am here: <https://mskconsumersurvey2020.questionpro.com.au/>

MSK is also working with various partner organisations to increase the reach of the survey throughout Australia. Among others, these include the Australian Pain Management Association, Chronic Illness Alliance, Dragon Claw, Painaustralia and Pain Revolution. The survey will close on Wednesday, 14<sup>th</sup> October, with findings released in late November.

For more information, and to respond to the survey, please visit [www.msk.org.au](http://www.msk.org.au)

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**About Musculoskeletal Australia**

Musculoskeletal Australia (MSK) is a consumer-driven organisation working to support people for better musculoskeletal health ([www.msk.org.au](http://www.msk.org.au)). MSK focuses solely on meeting the needs of Australians with a broad range of musculoskeletal conditions and does this by providing them with information, education and support and undertaking policy and advocacy work. MSK provides comprehensive online information, telephone support and information via its national Help Line, education via consumer-focused webinars, comprehensive resources for children with JIA, their families and teachers and a network of in-person and online peer support groups.

MSK has been supporting people with arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions for over 50 years. The organisation started in 1968, when Dr Leslie Koadlow, a rheumatologist, decided things could be better to support people living with these conditions.