



MEDIA RELEASE

Summit calls for Government action on pain

Thursday March 11, 2010

A campaign to destigmatise chronic pain and the introduction of standardised interdisciplinary pain management networks are two of the key recommendations of the National Pain Summit held today (Thursday March 11) at Parliament House, Canberra.

In a world-first, the Summit, which was opened by the Federal Minister for Health and Ageing, the Hon. Nicola Roxon, finalised a National Pain Strategy - the result of collaboration between leading authorities in pain medicine, other healthcare professionals, work safety, insurer, industry and consumer groups.

"The Federal Government's health reform plans must address the issue of chronic pain which is costing the Australian economy \$34 billion per annum, not to mention widespread human suffering," said Professor Michael Cousins, Chair of the National Pain Summit.

"The Government has a unique opportunity to capitalise on the work of more than 200 leading authorities and implement far-reaching, innovative reforms.

"Just as governments have made inroads in destigmatising depression, they must now tackle the stigma attaching to another disease afflicting Australia – chronic pain.

"The National Pain Strategy provides a roadmap for action. All that is required is for governments – Federal and state – to show leadership in this critical area."

In summary, the Summit:

- Called on the Federal Government to support the formation of national representative body, similar to Palliative Care Australia, to include all stakeholders in pain management.
- Called for the introduction of standardised national interdisciplinary pain management networks. These would ensure linkages through all stages of treatment - from prevention of chronic pain, through primary and community care to secondary and complex tertiary care.
- Called upon Federal and state governments to back a community-led program to destigmatise chronic pain in the minds of the community and the medical profession.

- Through better education, spread the message that a wider range of help - beyond painkillers - is available.
- Calls for the introduction of pain as the fifth vital sign along with blood pressure, pulse, temperature and breathing rate. This will give a much needed focus to regular assessment of pain much in the way that temperature charting helps in following the treatment of infection. This mirrors policy of both the US Veterans Administration health system and the Canadian Council on Health.
- Called for a formal coding system for pain in hospitals to allow prevalence and other data to be tracked.

The summit was led by the Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists, Faculty of Pain Medicine, the Australian Pain Society and Chronic Pain Australia in collaboration with inaugural supporters' MBF Foundation and the Pain Management Research Institute.

“Chronic pain is a significant public health issue costing this country billions. It is the nation’s third most costly healthcare problem,” Professor Cousins said.

“Much of this is preventable; which is why the National Pain summit is a call to action to recognise the management of pain as a national priority.”

- **For further information, please contact National Pain Summit media manager Clea Hincks on 0418 583 276 or see www.painsummit.org.au.**



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