

January 31, 2025,

The Hon Mark Butler  
Minister for Health and Aged Care  
Parliament House  
Canberra ACT 2600

### **Letter of support: Progressing the National Strategy for Health Practitioner Pain Management Education**

Dear Minister Butler

As representatives of key bodies within the pain management sector, we write to express our unified support for the Faculty of Pain Medicine's leadership in progressing the *National Strategy for Health Practitioner Pain Management Education*. This initiative aims to equip health practitioners at all stages of their careers with the knowledge and skills to deliver best-practice pain care, guided by nationally consistent principles and goals.

The Strategy ensures a unified approach, empowering practitioners across diverse fields - including medical, nursing, physiotherapy, psychology, occupational therapy, First Nations health, and aged care - to deliver inclusive and effective pain management.

Goal 1 of the Strategy, currently underway, focuses on developing concise national standards to act as quality markers for pain management education. These standards, created in collaboration with a diverse range of stakeholders, will establish consistency across disciplines and education sectors. They will also provide critical benchmarks for regulators assessing educational programs.

We now seek funding to progress Goals 2, 3 and 5 of the Strategy, which will further address critical gaps in education, build capacity for multidisciplinary care, and promote equitable access to pain management.

#### **The Challenge:**

Chronic pain is a significant issue in Australia, affecting one in five Australians and imposing an annual financial burden of \$139.3 billion, including healthcare costs, productivity losses, and other societal impacts. Vulnerable populations - including females, the elderly, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, and those in regional areas are disproportionately affected.

Key statistics <sup>(1)</sup>highlight the urgency:

- 70% of Australians with chronic pain are of working age, yet younger sufferers often face dismissal by health professionals.
- 48% of individuals with chronic pain report stigma from health professionals.
- Up to 80% of Australians with chronic pain lack access to best-practice treatments, often waiting years for diagnosis and care.

## The Solution

Investing in practitioner education through the progression of the National Strategy is critical to enhancing patient outcomes, reducing healthcare dependency, and mitigating the societal and economic impact of chronic pain. Its execution will ensure that all health practitioners receive high-quality, evidence-based, and contextually relevant pain education throughout their career span.

Progressing the Strategy to Goals 2 through 5 will ensure a consistent, high-quality, and multidisciplinary approach to pain education and care.

Collaboration remains at the heart of this initiative. The faculty's work with stakeholders and champions in the pain sector demonstrates the collective commitment to achieving widespread acceptance and implementation of the Strategy's goals.

We, the undersigned, represent the Australian pain sector committed to improving pain management in Australia. We urge the Federal Government to provide the necessary funding to enable the faculty to continue this vital work, ultimately reducing the burden of pain on individuals and society.

Yours sincerely,



**Dr Dilip Kapur**  
Dean, Faculty of Pain Medicine



**Nicolette Ellis**  
Chair of Chronic Pain Australia



**Monika Boogs**  
CEO of Painaustralia



**Professor Mark Hutchinson**  
Chair of Australian Pain Solutions Research Alliance

1. Chronic Pain Australia. National pain report 2024 [Internet]. Chronic Pain Australia; 2024 [cited 2025 Jan 13].

Available from: <https://www.chronicpinaustralia.org.au>