



**Arthritis Australia, Chronic Pain Australia and
Consumers Health Forum of Australia Joint Statement
ABC 4 Corners “Pain Factory” episode**

Tuesday 9 April 2024

Last night’s episode of ABC 4 Corners highlighted the many adverse events people living with chronic musculoskeletal pain have experienced when undergoing spinal fusion and spinal cord stimulator surgery to manage their pain.

Arthritis Australia, Chronic Pain Australia and the Consumers Health Forum of Australia want to recognise the consumers, living with chronic pain, who came forward and bravely shared their personal experiences of how the health system has let them down.

The episode highlighted many unacceptable instances of ineffective and unsafe care being recommended to people living with pain, often at high costs to the consumer and health system, while also placing patient safety and wellbeing at risk. Chronic musculoskeletal conditions are one of the leading causes of disease burden in Australia, and the most expensive disease group, costing the health system almost \$15 billion a year. Yet current funding models are incentivising expensive and invasive interventions, while proven evidence-based models of care go unfunded.

The amount of wasted and fraudulent funding claims alleged in the episode is also unacceptable and of significant concern.

It is clear that the status quo cannot continue in the way chronic musculoskeletal pain is managed in Australia, and the issues raised last night need to be thoroughly and urgently examined. People living with chronic pain are particularly vulnerable members of our community and often desperate to find relief from their condition, which can impact their ability to work and undertake basic daily activities. While we welcome the TGA’s review, it is critical that urgent action is taken to prevent harm to patients.

We jointly call the Australian Government to launch an inquiry into the chronic pain management sector and management of musculoskeletal conditions so that all Australians can be confident that patients’ best interests and safety are prioritised when treating chronic pain. The inquiry should also examine evidence-based ways Australians can manage their pain and ensure that taxpayer money is being well spent.

Our organisations recognise that for many people living with chronic pain, last night’s episode may have been triggering, particularly for those who have experienced similar issues in their pain management. We strongly encourage anyone who feels distressed to contact Painlink Helpline on 1300 340 357.

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