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MEDIA RELEASE

## Over 7million Australians bear ‘burden of invisibility’

One in three Australians lives with a debilitating musculoskeletal condition like back pain, arthritis or one of 150 other painful muscle, bone and joint conditions. A 2020 survey of 3453 consumers by peak health body Musculoskeletal Australia (MSK) found the majority suffer in silence because their conditions are not physically visible.

Musculoskeletal Australia CEO Helen Jentz said a new survey opening on 31 October will lift the “cloak of invisibility” and give those impacted a stronger voice on the issues that affect them.

“The 2020 survey painted a very clear and confronting picture of the painful reality of life with a musculoskeletal condition,” Ms Jentz said. “Because these conditions and their impacts are not always seen or discussed, those living with them feel completely invisible.

“Musculoskeletal Australia exists to improve the lives of Australians who are negatively impacted by these conditions, and this survey is just one of the ways we do this.”

### Survey opens 31 October

The 2023 National Musculoskeletal Consumer Survey will build on findings from 2020 – when Musculoskeletal Australia conducted then, Australia's largest national survey of people living with musculoskeletal conditions. The 2023 survey will assist in mapping changes over time and explore the new dimension of the personal financial burden of musculoskeletal conditions.

The new survey launches on 31 October as part of the organisation's annual day of action, Rattle Ya Bones Day, and closes on 31 December.

Musculoskeletal conditions are the third highest contributor to the national non-fatal burden of disease in the country, according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). The conditions do not discriminate and can have a significant impact across the course of a person's life.



## **Making the invisible visible**

Musculoskeletal Australia has partnered with the Australian Rheumatology Association and PainAustralia.

"We're committed to shedding light on the experiences, challenges and needs of these consumers and to fostering understanding and advocacy," Australian Rheumatology Association CEO Tracey Rudd said. "Over the next eight weeks, our goal is to gather over 5000 responses.

"Together, let's unite, empower, and shape a brighter future for people of all ages grappling with musculoskeletal and inflammatory conditions."

PainAustralia CEO Giulia Jones welcomed the national survey.

"We are always really keen to learn all we can from people living with chronic pain conditions, including musculoskeletal conditions, and we will be very interested to see the results of this survey," Ms Jones said.

Musculoskeletal Australia CEO Ms Jentz said the collaboration would help to refocus musculoskeletal conditions as a national health priority.

"It is time we pulled off the 'cloak of invisibility' to get a clear picture of the impact musculoskeletal conditions have so we can deliver real, systemic change and life-altering solutions for these invisible Australians," Ms Jentz said.

The 2023 National Musculoskeletal Consumer Survey is open 31 October–31 December 2023 and can be accessed from the [Musculoskeletal Australia website](#) from that date.

## **ENDS**

### **Notes to Editors:**

- [2020 Survey Results](#)
- [Rattle Ya Bones Day](#)
- [About Musculoskeletal Australia](#)
- [About the Australian Rheumatology Association](#)
- [About PainAustralia](#)

## QUICK FACTS ON MUSCULOSKELETAL CONDITIONS IN AUSTRALIA

- Musculoskeletal conditions are the leading contributor to disability worldwide, with low back pain being the single leading cause of disability.
- Conditions include back pain, osteoarthritis, rheumatoid arthritis, osteoporosis, fibromyalgia and gout.
- Musculoskeletal conditions are the third highest contributor to Australia's burden of disease at 4.2%<sup>1</sup>
- Musculoskeletal Australia is a national, for-impact, consumer-focused organisation committed to delivering quality services and support to Australians living with musculoskeletal conditions.
- Contact the nurse-led National Arthritis and Back Pain+ Help Line on 1800 263 265 or email [helpline@msk.org.au](mailto:helpline@msk.org.au)

### Media contact:

For further information or to arrange an interview with:

- Helen Jentz, CEO – Musculoskeletal Australia
- Guilia Jones CEO – Painaustralia
- Professor Peter Choong, Orthopaedic Surgeon - Director Emeritus Musculoskeletal Australia
- Angela Brown, Chair – Musculoskeletal Australia Consumer Advisory Committee

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<sup>1</sup> Australian Institute of Health and Welfare *Australia Burden of Disease Study 2022*