



ACA AUSTRALIAN CHIROPRACTORS ASSOCIATION

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WORKSPACE  
21-27 October 2024

Work Well Everywhere

WorkSpace Health is EveryBODY's Business!

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**MEDIA RELEASE 21 October 2024**

## **Data Reveals Need to Rethink Workspaces to Combat Australia's Leading Work-Related Injuries: Musculoskeletal Disorders**

**WORKSPACE WEEK 21–27 OCTOBER 2024 - *Work Well Everywhere***

**WorkSpace Health is EveryBODY's Business**

Today, the Australian Chiropractors Association (ACA) launched National WorkSpace Week (21-27 October 2024) as part of National Safe Work Month aimed at reducing the occurrence and impact of work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMSDs) - Australia's leading workplace injury.

Musculoskeletal disorders, the third largest Australian health burden behind cancer and mental health, are a range of inflammatory and degenerative conditions affecting the muscles, tendons, ligaments, joints, peripheral nerves and supporting blood vessels, WMSDs may be caused by a single workspace event, but commonly result from repeated, harmful workspace activities over an extended period of time.

WMSDs are predominantly caused by physical stress, mental stress, repetitive work and poorly set up non-ergonomic workspaces and account for the majority (57%) of workers' compensation claims for serious injuries.

Around 7.3 million (29%) Australians live with chronic musculoskeletal disorders (MSDs) with an estimated **direct health cost** in 2021-2022 of **\$14.7 billion** – almost 10% of the total annual health budget. However, according to a Deloitte Access Economics report, the real cost to the Australian economy for WMSDs exceeds **\$55 billion** annually when lost productivity, absenteeism, direct health costs and reduced quality of life for WMSD sufferers is factored in.

*'The Impact of Work-Related Musculoskeletal Disorders & Injuries in Australia'*, a national independent survey conducted by Pureprofile, commissioned by the ACA, revealed the high prevalence of WMSDs among Australian workers.

Of the 1001 respondents, **86.7% experienced a musculoskeletal disorder or injury** either while at work or because of their workspace, with 73% suffering three or more WMSDs and 84% experiencing workplace stress.

**89% of workers who use a desk reported suffering a WMSD** with 93% of workers who undertake repetitive movements; 88% who sit for prolonged periods and 87% of computer users reported experiencing WMSDs.

The most prevalent WMSDs reported were low back pain at 62%, neck pain at 55%, mid back pain at 53% and 52% reported tension/cervicogenic headaches.

"To measure the physical activity of WMSD sufferers, in September 2024 the ACA conducted a member survey which found of patients who initially present with a WMSD, the majority (50.5%) were described as having a sedentary level of physical activity compared to 34% who were only 'somewhat active'.

ACA President, Dr David Cahill said "Workplace stress is a significant contributor to WMSDs, with 96% of ACA members surveyed reporting treating patients with spinal health issues linked to workplace stress. Additionally, 42% indicated over 51% of their patients experience spinal health problems due to stress in their workplace".

"Almost half of ACA chiropractors surveyed (49%) reported seated or desk work as the primary cause of WMSD presentations caused by sedentary positioning and repeated movements; most likely due to workers not taking regular breaks or stretching during work hours" he said.

According to SafeWork Australia, the most common injuries impacting Australians that lead to WMSDs are body stressing, falls, slips and trips, with body stressing (33%) accounting for the highest percentage of WMSD workers' compensation claims. SafeWork NSW reports the cost per serious claim (requiring one or more weeks absence) averaged around \$65,000 per serious claim between 2018-2023.

Body stressing caused by poorly executed lifting, pushing, pulling or bending, using computers in non-ergonomic workspaces (in an office or at home), poor posture, driving a vehicle and repetitive strain injuries can all contribute to WMSDs including chronic neck and back pain, shoulder stiffness and headaches.

Those most at risk include community and personal service workers such as healthcare, aged care, childcare, NDIS and disability service workers. Tradies, labourers, technicians, drivers, and machinery operators, are also among those with the highest rates of physical work-related injuries while desk or computer users make up 10% of serious claims.

Mental stress in the workspace can also impact workers physically and if left unchecked, can trigger neuro-musculoskeletal disorders including migraine, tension and cervicogenic (neck related) headaches that affect workers' concentration, productivity, social engagement and their overall wellbeing and quality of life.

Dr Cahill, said, "With musculoskeletal conditions (MSDs) ranked the third highest in the Australian Burden of Disease Study (2023) before cardiovascular disease, prevention and early intervention when injured will have a significant impact on reducing the instances of WMSDs, minimise their impact to prevent the long-term burden of MSDs, and reduce workers' compensation claims and overall health costs to the Australian economy."

"If left untreated, WMSDs can lead to long-term chronic pain with possible life-limiting outcomes. Early diagnosis and treatment are key to preventing deterioration, improving recovery, reducing severity and helping to prevent long-term implications, including the reliance on medications for chronic pain that can be harmful.

"With WMSDs leading to poorer quality of life, psychological distress, bodily pain and disability, WorkSpace Week encourages people to be proactive in undertaking preventative measures in their workplace because WorkSpace health is EveryBODY's business," Dr Cahill said.

ACA chiropractors are Australia's leaders in providing holistic, evidence-based, patient centred, multi-modal and clinically proven healthcare. They offer non-surgical, low risk, drug-free therapeutic care and can provide advice on helping to prevent work-related back and neck injuries, how to set up an ergonomic workspace, how to effectively manage stress, improve posture, provide exercises to improve spinal health and stabilise core muscle groups, and guidance on rest and maintaining a healthy diet to promote overall health and wellbeing.

"By promoting prevention and minimising long-term harm through early diagnosis and effective chiropractic healthcare, we can improve the spinal health and overall wellbeing of workers while reducing the negative impact on employers and the economy," Dr Cahill said.

Held during Safe Work Month (October), WorkSpace Week aligns with Safe Work Australia's '*Australian Work Health and Safety (WHS) Strategy 2023–2033*' which aims to create safe, healthy workspaces for everybody and to lessen the long-term impact on workers, employers, and the economy by improving the spinal health and wellbeing of all workers vulnerable to work-related musculoskeletal disorders.

Workplaces are encouraged to mobilise their workforce and hold a **#StraightenUpAustralia** Challenge using ACA's **Straighten Up app** to show how simple exercises can reduce work-related musculoskeletal disorders and improve the spinal health and wellbeing of all Australian workers.

To minimise workspace injuries and reduce the impact of work-related musculoskeletal disorders, employers and workers should visit **workspaceweek.org.au** to access a range of free resources including the WorkSpace Week Checklist, exercise posters, podcasts, factsheets and the **Straighten Up App** to maximise spinal health and wellbeing, minimise injuries and improve productivity for all working Australians so they can *work well everywhere*.

- ENDS -

**workspaceweek.org.au | consultachiro.org.au**

## INTERVIEW REQUESTS

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## JOURNALIST NOTES: OVERVIEW

### Overview: **THE IMPACT OF WORK-RELATED MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS & INJURIES IN AUSTRALIA**

ACA commissioned an independent national consumer survey to gather data to better understand the prevalence, range and impact of work-related musculoskeletal disorders on Australian workers. Conducted by Pureprofile, the results were compelling with key findings as follows:

- **87% of respondents reported having experienced musculoskeletal pain or injury (MSD) while at work or as a result of working with 73% of sufferers experiencing 3 or more WMSDs.**
- The survey highlighted that **community understanding of what constitutes a “work-related injury to the neck or back (WMSD)” is lacking.**
  - When initially asked if the respondent had experienced a work-related injury to their neck or back (muscles, ligaments, tendons, joints, spine or bones) only 26% of respondents answered yes. But when asked if they had experienced 12 specific types of neck/back pain or injuries ‘while at work or as a result of working’, 87% answered that they had experienced a WMSD.
- **The most prevalent WMSDs reported by Australians are low back pain (62%), neck pain (55%), mid back pain (53%) and tension/cervicogenic headaches (52%).**
- **Workplace stress** has a direct impact on WMSD with **96% of ACA Chiropractors treating WMSD patients as a result of workplace stress with a third reporting WMSD patients also suffer poor mental health as result of their WMSD. The Pureprofile survey showed 84% of WMSD sufferers experienced workplace stress with 24% experiencing regular stress.**
- **89% of workers who use a desk reported suffering a WMSD (including those who do a combination of desk work with standing and/or physical work) with female desk workers reporting the highest incidence (91%) compared to men (76%). Only 17% of WMSD sufferers did only physical work and 9% only standing work.**
- **Workers undertaking repetitive movements and standing or sitting for prolonged periods of time reported a high rate of WMSDs.**
  - 93% of workers who undertake repetitive movements reported experiencing WMSDs
  - 88% of workers who sit for prolonged periods reported experiencing a WMSD
  - 87% of computer users reported suffering a WMSD
- **Computer usage was identified as a leading cause of the top four WMSDs (low back, neck, mid back and tension/cervicogenic) and was the only trigger ranked first or second for 9 WMSDs. Computer usage ranked as the third or fourth most common trigger for the remaining 3 WMSDs.**
- **86% of workers who regularly work at their workplace (1-2 days, 3-4 days or always) reported experiencing a WMSD compared to 34% of people working from home on a regular basis.**
  - Women who always work from their workplace reported the largest number (53%) of WMSD followed by men (47%).
  - 20% of men and 16% of women who work from home 1-2 days per week reported an WMSD

Click to access the full report: [bit.ly/WSW-WMSD-REPORT](https://bit.ly/WSW-WMSD-REPORT)

### ACA'S FREE PREVENTION & INTERVENTION RESOURCES – [workspaceweek.org.au](https://workspaceweek.org.au)

- **Straighten Up app** – An app containing a 3-minute exercise program to help improve posture, stabilise core muscle groups and enhance users’ overall health and wellbeing.
- **Consult A Chiro Podcast** – A resource that provides information on preventing and managing work-related musculoskeletal disorders.

- ⦿ **Factsheets** – Organisations large and small can download ACA’s free factsheets to help minimise WMSDs including, Sitting, Standing, Lifting/Bending, Headaches and Stress & MSD Factsheets, the Ergonomic Checklist and the Stand Corrected Stretching Poster.

## THE BURDEN OF WMSDs IN AUSTRALIA - KEY FACTS

Please refer to full Journalist Notes in the media centre for comprehensive details.

- ⦿ Work-related injury and illness impacts workers and their families deeply, as well as employers.
- ⦿ MSDs still account for the **majority (57%) of workers’ compensation** claims for serious injuries.
- ⦿ Around **7.3 million (29%) Australians** were estimated to be living with chronic MSDs with the prevalence unchanged since the previous survey in 2017-18 (AIHW June 2024).
- ⦿ MSDs are ranked the **third highest chronic disease** in the Australian Burden of Disease Study (2023) before cardiovascular disease.
- ⦿ Direct health costs for MSDs: \$14.7 billion – 9.8% of the total health expenditure budget (2021-2022)
- ⦿ **58% of WMSD sufferers are of working age** in peak income earning years (25-64)
- ⦿ The real cost to the Australian economy for WMSDs exceeds **\$55 billion** annually when lost productivity, absenteeism, direct health costs and reduced quality of life for WMSD sufferers is factored in (MA, 2020-2021 & Deloitte Industries).
- ⦿ MSDs account for the **greatest proportion of persistent pain** conditions (WHO, 2019).
- ⦿ MSDs are the second largest contributor to disability worldwide, with low back pain being the single leading cause of disability globally (MA, 2020-2021).
- ⦿ Back pain is usually as a result of a musculoskeletal disorder (MSD).
- ⦿ The **increase in musculoskeletal cases is projected to be 43% over the next two decades.**
- ⦿ Back problems can cause lost social and physical activity, concentration and work capacity and are a significant cause of disability and lost productivity with the economic burden on Australia, significant.
- ⦿ International guidelines provide compelling evidence that opioids have a limited role in the management of acute back and neck pain and no role in managing chronic back pain.
- ⦿ A University of Sydney study published in the Lancet medical journal (23 June 2023), found opioids (among the most commonly prescribed pain-relief for people with low back and neck pain) do not benefit people with ‘acute’ low back or neck pain (lasting up to 12 weeks) and can result in patients experiencing worse pain.
- ⦿ Prescribing opioids for low back and neck pain can also cause harms ranging from common side effects including nausea, constipation, dizziness, dependency, misuse, poisoning and death. Opioids should not be recommended for ‘acute’ low back pain or neck pain or chronic low back pain or neck pain (RACGP).
- ⦿ Chiropractic healthcare provides effective, low risk, drug-free treatment for back pain for all Australians regardless of their age, profession or lifestyle. This is particularly effective when combined with a holistic person-centred approach, addressing factors such as exercise and stress management.

## KEY CHIROPRACTIC FACTS

- ⦿ The Australian Chiropractors Association (ACA) is the peak body representing chiropractors nationally with around 3,000 members dedicated to promoting the importance of maintaining a healthy spine to improve the health and wellbeing of all Australians.
- ⦿ ACA has invested over \$2.3 million in evidence-based research into chiropractic healthcare and wellbeing.
- ⦿ Chiropractic healthcare targets the cause, not just the symptoms, offering effective, low-risk, drug-free treatment for WMSDs for all professions. This approach is especially beneficial when combined with holistic, person-centered care, including exercise and stress management.
- ⦿ Australian chiropractors conduct over 400,000 chiropractic healthcare consultations every week.
- ⦿ With so many Australians visiting a chiropractor every week, chiropractors play an important role in treating WMSDs and improving the spinal health of everyday Australians.
- ⦿ Chiropractors use a patient-centred model of healthcare to provide a therapeutic approach incorporating a range of manual therapies to treat a range of MSDs including back pain.



- Chiropractors are university qualified healthcare professionals who undergo five years of university study encompassing a double bachelor's degree that covers a breadth of health subjects including anatomy, physiology, radiology, diagnostic techniques, and clinical training.
- Chiropractors are required to register with the Chiropractic Board of Australia under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law. Board members are appointed by the Australian Workforce Ministerial Council. The Board's role is to regulate chiropractors in Australia under the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme with chiropractors one of 16 health professions in the National Scheme.

## ACA MEDIA SPOKESPERSONS - NATIONAL & ALL STATES & TERRITORIES

*Note: Case studies are also available upon request.*

### **Dr David Cahill – President, Australian Chiropractors Association - National, NSW & Victoria**

ACA President, Dr David Cahill has been a registered, practicing chiropractor since 1991, in the Malvern East area since 1998. He loves helping people of all ages, from newborn babies and toddlers, to those in their more senior years. David has always been very active in post-graduate education, continually upskilling in many aspects of chiropractic. Since 2016 David has been the chiropractor for the Hawthorn Football Club. He enjoys taking care of the elite footballers, integrating his chiropractic care in a team with the other support disciplines, particularly physiotherapy. David's passion is to truly help people have transformative experiences through chiropractic, and to better explore their magnificent potential.

### **Dr Billy Chow – Vice President, Australian Chiropractors Association – South Australia**

Dr Billy Chow graduated as a chiropractor from RMIT University in 1998. Since graduating he has had a varied and enriching career in private practice, on boards and in business. Dr Chow is passionate about educating and inspiring people to make better choices and to live happier and healthier lives. Dr Chow believes that being on the Spinal Research Board is an honour and allows him to give back to his profession through service and provides him an avenue to promote, fund and facilitate more research faster for the chiropractic profession.

### **Dr Damian Kristof - National, NSW & Victoria**

Nutritionist, Naturopath and Chiropractor, Dr Damian Kristof is a highly sought-after presenter and speaker in the Wellness industry. With over 20 years of experience, Damian's in-depth knowledge of the body, nervous system, food functions and responses coupled with his friendly and dynamic presenting style, has him in high demand. Focusing on food as key to unlocking optimal health and wellness, Damian presents in-depth facts and concepts offering all audiences from industry experts to the general public highly valuable content as he engages, educates and inspires audiences across the globe.

### **Dr Anthony Coxon – National & Victoria**

Dr Anthony Coxon is a caring and respected chiropractor with 30 years' experience. In 2009, he completed Post Doctorate studies in Chiropractic Neurorehabilitation. This additional qualification gives Anthony skills in dealing with more complex cases, particularly patients that experience balance disorders and dizziness. He is the current Vice President of the Australian Chiropractors Association (ACA). In addition to running a busy practice, Anthony has also appeared on countless print, radio and television media spots including 'A Current Affair', 'Today Tonight', the 'Today Show' and the Evening news on all commercial television stations. Anthony sees daily how chiropractic care and a healthy lifestyle can bring vitality and wellbeing to his patients.

### **Dr Michelle Ronan - Victoria**

Michelle has been a registered chiropractor since graduating from RMIT in 2005 and has practiced in the Albert Park area since 2010. Michelle's passion lies in helping people's bodies perform better to allow them to get more out of life, whether that be to enhance sports performance, rehabilitation of chronic conditions, during pregnancy or to support general health and wellbeing. Michelle loves helping people of all ages and stages of life on their health journey. Michelle previously sat on the Victorian branch of the CAA (now the Australian Chiropractors Association) and is currently completing a masters through RMIT.

### **Dr Kim Lie Jom – NSW**

Dr Kim Lie Jom is a caring, dynamic and talented chiropractor with over 20 years' experience that has earned the respect and trust of his professional colleagues and patients alike. Kim's knowledge of chiropractic grew as did his interest within the profession. Paediatric chiropractic, sports chiropractic and the concept of wellness chiropractic are of particular interest to him. With three young children of his own he is very aware of how making healthy lifestyle choices from a young age will serve you later in life. He is passionate about chiropractic

and feels that the profession has enormous health benefits to offer the community at large and his goal is to educate and adjust as many families as possible toward optimal health through natural chiropractic care.

### **Dr Ashley Dent – Tasmania**

Dr Dent graduated from Macquarie University in Sydney in 2010 where he was awarded the Ed Devereaux Award for Services to the Student Body. He is active within the Australian Chiropractors Association at a state and national level chairing the public engagement committee and being a member of two other committees. He volunteers his time with St Vincent de Paul to bring chiropractic care to the homeless and vulnerable in Hobart. Dr Dent has a keen passion for helping people improve their long standing (chronic) back and neck pain and then progressing their spinal health through exercise and rehabilitation so that they are stronger and healthier than they've ever been.

### **Dr Adam Smith – Queensland**

Dr Adam Smith (Chiropractor) has nearly 20 years' experience in family based chiropractic care. He has experience working in many communities around Australia and internationally, including regularly serving on committees that guide health policy on a state and Australian federal level, as well as in the UK.

With a special interest in family health and wellness, Dr Adam works with local community groups, charities, workplaces and schools to improve access to chiropractic care for those who want it. He believes that all Australians should have access to quality chiropractic services, so he is currently working with a group that is expanding chiropractic access in regional and rural areas of Australia across six states and territories.

### **Dr Joshua Tymms – Western Australia**

Dr Joshua Tymms discovered chiropractic as a child and has been fascinated with its application ever since. He graduated from Murdoch University with a Double Degree in 2006 and is registered as a chiropractor. He finished his International Chiropractic Sports Science Diploma in 2007 and has worked at many international level sports events. He is studying a double masters in public health and business administration to help build skills in these areas.

### **Dr Ali Young – Western Australia**

Dr Ali Young is a Chiropractor with over 20 years' experience working specifically with families, children and women. She has owned practices & worked in both Western Australia and Queensland, and loves taking care of those children that love that extra jolt of frivolity, playfulness and joy in their healthcare. She is an advocate for Working Mothers, with her book, *Work. Mama. Life* widely received upon its publication in 2022. She is a mother of two, and now works with women in her Holistic Health Business space, combining these two great loves with her chiropractic work. She is a sought after speaker, MC, and strategist for working mothers in the allied health space who both own businesses, & want to live large whilst avoiding burnout. She has written for most major newspapers around Australia, has a podcast "Work Mama Life" with nearly 20,000 downloads, and provides support in the online space for women and mothers. She has been a chiropractic patient since 15 years of age, and thinks there is no greater gift that providing the support families need to allow their health to shine.

## **THE AUSTRALIAN CHIROPRACTORS ASSOCIATION**

Established in 1938, the Australian Chiropractors Association (ACA) is the peak body representing chiropractors. The ACA promotes the importance of maintaining spinal health to improve musculoskeletal health through non-invasive, drug-free spinal health and lifestyle advice to help Australians of all ages lead and maintain healthy lives.

The ACA is the premier association for chiropractic in Australia. With around 3,000 members, the ACA is Australia's largest chiropractic health body and has taken a leadership role in promoting the importance of maintaining a healthy spine to improve the overall health and wellbeing of every Australian. ACA develops and promotes professional standards for chiropractors, has invested \$2.2 million to advance research in musculoskeletal health, builds evidence-based practice for chiropractic healthcare and actively promotes the importance of spinal health through its annual flagship campaign, national Spinal Health Week.

Every week 400,000 chiropractic healthcare consultations are creating well-adjusted Australians. With so many Australians visiting a chiropractor every week, chiropractors play an important role in improving the spinal health of everyday Australians.

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