



**Monday 2 October 2023**

***New data reveals 87% of Australian adults have experienced a work-related musculoskeletal injury with prevention the best protection.***

**WORKSPACE WEEK - 2-8 OCTOBER 2023 - Work Well Anywhere**

Today, the Australian Chiropractors Association (ACA) launched WorkSpace Week (2-8 October 2023) with the release of new data revealing the high incidences of work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMSD) in Australia and their impact on workers and have issued a warning for those most at risk of workspace spine-related injuries.

WorkSpace Week is an initiative of the Australian Chiropractors Association (ACA), dedicated to minimising workspace WMSDs which are Australia's leading work health and safety concern costing the economy over \$55 billion annually through direct health costs, lost productivity and reduced quality of life of sufferers.

In launching the national campaign on Labour Day (NSW, SA and ACT) to kick off national Safe Work Month, Dr David Cahill, President of the ACA said, "Through WorkSpace Week our aim is to help prevent the incidences of work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMSDs) by educating Australians about workspace risks and strategies to prevent WMSDs from jobs known to pose a high risk to workers.

"According to the World Health Organisation (WHO, 2019), musculoskeletal conditions account for the greatest proportion of persistent pain conditions - the second largest contributor to disability world-wide with low back pain being the single leading cause of disability, globally.

"WMSDs are a range of inflammatory and degenerative conditions affecting the muscles, tendons, ligaments, joints, peripheral nerves and supporting blood vessels that may be caused by a single workspace event, but commonly result from repeated harmful workspace activities over an extended period of time," Dr Cahill said.

"Reducing the incidences of WMSDs and minimising their impact through prevention, early diagnosis and effective treatments should be the first priority of both workers and employers alike," Dr Cahill said.

To better identify the prevalence of WMSDs and workers most at risk, ACA commissioned Pureprofile to conduct an independent survey of 1001 Australians' nationally that revealed 87% have, or have experienced a WMSD that can also impact mental health leaving no doubt as to the enormous burden WMSDs have on Australians' spinal and mental health while costing the economy billions.

"Although body stressing is the most commonly reported cause of physical injury for serious workers compensation claims as a result of poorly executed lifting, pushing, pulling or bending; the survey revealed prolonged sitting, computer usage (in an office or at home) and repetitive movements at work can also lead to chronic neck and back pain if not prevented or treated when injuries first occur," Dr Cahill said.

"With 87% of respondents reporting experiencing musculoskeletal pain or injury while at work or as a result of working, and 73% of sufferers experiencing 3 or more WMSDs, the most prevalent being low back pain (62%), neck pain (55%), mid back pain (53%) and tension/cervicogenic headaches (52%), the data demonstrates a significant need for employers and employees to practice preventative measures," he said.

"Considering the survey results and in light of the worldwide study led by the University of Sydney demonstrating low back pain is the most commonly recorded workspace injury; WorkSpace Week is

aimed at prevention and early intervention of WMSDs caused by body stressing, repetitive work, poorly set up non-ergonomic workstations and mental stress,” said Dr Cahill.

According to the Australian Bureau of Statistics (2021-22), those most vulnerable to WMSDs are community and personal service workers such as healthcare, aged care, NDIS and disability service workers; while machinery operators, drivers, labourers, technicians and tradies are also among those with the highest rates of physical work-related injuries.

However, the survey identified computer use as a leading cause of the top four WMSDs (low back, neck, mid back and tension/cervicogenic headaches) - the only trigger ranked first or second for 9 WMSDs with computer usage ranking as the third or fourth most common trigger for the remaining 3 WMSDs.

With 89% of workers who worked at a desk reporting that they suffered an WMSD (including those who do a combination of desk work with standing and/or physical work), and female desk workers reporting the highest incidence (91%) compared to men (76%); WMSD relating to computer use in non-ergonomic workspaces, poor posture and the lack of effective exercise programs to improve spinal health play a significant role in causing WMSDs.

“The survey also revealed that 84% of WMSD sufferers experienced work-related stress which can lead to tension and cervicogenic (neck related) headaches impacting workers’ concentration, productivity, social engagement and their overall wellbeing and quality of life,” said Dr Cahill.

With the Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) announcing the reduction of paracetamol product pack size to address acknowledged risks of overuse (May 2023); and the University of Sydney Sydney’s findings (June 2023) that opioids should not be recommended for acute neck or back pain as there’s no benefit and there is a significant risk of long-term harm; it’s vital people suffering from musculoskeletal disorders seek early treatment for spine-related conditions rather than depend on medications for pain relief.

Studies have shown WMSDs caused by physical or mental stress respond well to early, effective chiropractic healthcare that treats the injury, not just the symptoms and can help prevent deterioration, improve recovery outcomes, reduce severity and help avert long-term implications including reliance on medications to manage chronic pain and depression.

Chiropractic healthcare plays a vital role in providing 350,000 non-surgical, drug-free chiropractic consultations every week for Australians. ACA chiropractors are Australia’s leaders in providing a patient centred, multi-modal, therapeutic approach to improving the spinal health and overall wellbeing through proven relaxation methods and drug-free holistic healthcare that treats underlying conditions and not just the symptoms.

Anyone who undertakes repetitive actions, prolonged standing or sitting, lifting or pushing/pulling, computer use at home or the office, and those impacted by workplace stress can all suffer from a range of work-related spinal health issues including, back or neck pain and headaches that can develop into chronic pain.

Prevention is the best protection and there is much that can be done, so during National **WorkSpace Week 2023** the ACA is focussed on preventing work-related spinal health disorders caused by physical and mental stress, repetitive work and poorly set up non-ergonomic workspaces to help minimise workspace injuries and the long-term impact on employers, the economy and the overall health and wellbeing of injured workers.

The ACA has developed free resources available at [workspaceweek.org.au](https://workspaceweek.org.au) including the **Ergonomic Checklist** for computer users, **My Healthy WorkSpace Stretching Poster** and **Factsheets** for headache sufferers and workers who sit, lift, bend and stand for prolonged periods for display in workspaces. Workers can also listen to the **Consult A Chiro Podcast** to learn more about maintaining spinal health and download and use the free **Straighten Up app**, ‘your pocket chiropractor’ to help minimise WMSDs and maximise spinal health and wellbeing to improve productivity so all Australians can work well anywhere.

During WorkSpace Week, Australians are encouraged to host a **#StraightenUpAustralia Challenge** – a simple three-minute exercise activity using ACA’s **Straighten Up app** in their workspace to promote working well anywhere and to share video and images of their **#MyHealthyWorkspace**.

[#WorkSpaceWeek](#) - [#WorkWellAnywhere](#) - [#StraightenUpAustralia](#) - [#MyHealthyWorkspace](#) [#SafeWorkMonth](#)

- ENDS -

## WORKSPACE WEEK 2023 - MEDIA OPPORTUNITIES

**MEDIA CENTRE:** To download the full report, hi-res images, factsheets, stretching posters and vision scan the QR or visit <https://bit.ly/WSW23-Media>



**INTERVIEW REQUESTS:** For interview requests, please contact:

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### JOURNALIST NOTES

#### **“THE IMPACT OF WORK-RELATED MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS & INJURIES IN AUSTRALIA”**

#### **KEY FINDINGS**

ACA commissioned an independent national consumer survey to gather data to better understand the prevalence, range and impact of work-related musculoskeletal disorders on 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.**
- ⦿ **23 million Australians** have, or have experienced a work-related musculoskeletal injury
- ⦿ 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 **97% 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

**To access the full report: <https://bit.ly/WSW-WMSD>**

## ACA MEMBER SURVEY: KEY FINDINGS

ACA conducted a second national survey of ACA member chiropractors to gather data to better understand the prevalence, range and impact of work-related musculoskeletal disorders they see in patients.

- ⦿ 88% of ACA Chiropractors reported prolonged sitting as the leading cause or trigger for WMSDs followed by computer usage at work (75%) with computer use at home and repetitive movements equal third (71%).
- ⦿ ACA Chiropractors reported patients aged 41-50 as the most prevalent age requiring treatment for WMSDs followed by 31-40 year olds. With women aged 41-50 the most treated patients for WMSD followed by women aged 31-40 and men aged 31-50.
- ⦿ ACA Chiropractors reported the top WMSDs treated are back pain, neck pain and headaches.

## ABOUT WORKSPACE WEEK – 2-8 OCTOBER 2023 – WORK WELL ANYWHERE

WorkSpace Week (2-8 October 2023) is the initiative of the Australian Chiropractors Association (ACA) dedicated to educating Australians about the importance of minimising workplace injuries so they can work *well* anywhere.

Held at the commencement of national Safe Work Month (October), WorkSpace Week focusses on prevention, early intervention, non-surgical and drug-free treatments for Work-Related Musculoskeletal Disorders (WMSDs) and other spinal health conditions caused by work-related stress, body stressing (lifting etc.), repetitive work and poorly set up workstations.

With WMSDs the leading Work Health and Safety (WHS) problem in Australia, both in frequency and cost; WorkSpace Week aims to inform Australians about the importance of prevention and early intervention to minimise deterioration, reduce the severity of musculoskeletal disorders and foster good spinal health habits to improve the overall health and wellbeing of working Australians.

Those workers most at risk of spine-related injury or conditions include those who undertake lifting, pulling, standing or sitting for extended periods of time, computer work at home or in an office setting, and those who may suffer from a range of spine-related symptoms including headaches, neck and back pain due to workplace stress.

Musculoskeletal disorders are estimated to cost the Australian economy over \$55 billion annually through direct health costs, lost productivity and reduced quality of life of sufferers.

Through WorkSpace Week, the ACA aims to promote safe work practices and healthier workspaces for all workers at risk of spine-related injury and musculoskeletal conditions to help improve the spinal health and overall wellbeing of Australian workers in any setting.

Organisations aiming to improve the spinal health and wellbeing of their employees to minimise injuries, and reduce WMSDs impacts on business should visit [workspaceweek.org.au](https://workspaceweek.org.au) to download a range of free resources including instructional posters, factsheets, the Straighten Up App. During WorkSpace Week, Australians are encouraged to host a *#StraightenUpAustralia* exercise initiative to improve the spinal health so employees can *work well* anywhere.

## ACA WORKSPACE WEEK PREVENTION & INTERVENTION RESOURCES

To promote the prevention of work-related musculoskeletal disorders to improve the spinal health of a wide range of workers, ACA has developed a number of helpful free resources appropriate to computer work and work that involves lifting and bending and extended sitting and standing.

ACA's resources for employers and employees can help workers learn how to prevent work-related musculoskeletal disorders to maintain a healthy spine and overall health and wellbeing in workspaces.

The following free resources are available from [workspaceweek.org](https://workspaceweek.org) so people can *work well anywhere*.

- ⦿ **Straighten Up app** – Provides workers with a user friendly spinal health stretching routine
- ⦿ **Ergonomic Checklist** – For computer users to learn how to set up an ergonomic workspace
- ⦿ **Sitting Factsheet** – For those who sit for extended periods to learn how to sit correctly
- ⦿ **Standing Factsheet** – For those who stand for extended periods to learn how to stand correctly
- ⦿ **Lifting & Bending Factsheet** – For those required to move objects to learn how to do it safely
- ⦿ **Headache Factsheet** – To learn how maintaining a healthy spine can minimise headaches
- ⦿ **My Healthy WorkSpace Stretching Poster** – To display in workspaces year round depicting exercises and instructions to help maintain a healthy spine in the workspace
- ⦿ **Consult A Chiro Podcast** – Preventing and managing work-related musculoskeletal disorders

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

### **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 Damian Kristof – Vice President, Australian Chiropractors Association - 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 that have never before been readily available to the public - 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 Billy Chow – 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 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**

**Australian chiropractors conduct 350,000 consultations every week to improve the musculoskeletal health and overall wellbeing of Australians.**

The Australian Chiropractors Association (ACA) is the peak body representing chiropractors. The ACA promotes the importance of maintaining a healthy spine to improve musculoskeletal health and offers drug-free spinal healthcare and lifestyle advice to help Australians lead and maintain healthy lives. With approximately 3,000 members, the ACA is Australia's largest chiropractic health body that's taken a leadership role in promoting the importance of maintaining a healthy spine to maintain the overall health and wellbeing of Australians at home, work or at school.

ACA chiropractors are university trained leaders in chiropractic healthcare. In treating a wide-range of musculoskeletal disorders with specialised non-surgical techniques including specific spinal adjustments, various manual therapies and soft tissue techniques and providing relaxation methods to minimise stress, chiropractors can reduce patient reliance on a range of medication that could be harmful.

Chiropractic healthcare treats the cause, not just the symptoms of a range of painful spinal-health conditions and injuries. In applying clinically proven, effective, drug-free, low risk techniques while offering holistic health and lifestyle advice, chiropractic healthcare helps Australians lead and maintain healthier, happier lives.

## **CHIROPRACTIC - KEY FACTS**

- ⦿ Australian educated chiropractors share a common tertiary education pathway with physiotherapists and osteopaths requiring undergraduate and/or masters-level university training over five years.
- ⦿ Chiropractors are not only trained to treat musculoskeletal pain patients, chiropractors are also trained to facilitate health promotion and lifestyle advice, rehabilitation and patient education in health and wellbeing.
- ⦿ All chiropractors must be registered with the national Chiropractic Board of Australia and meet the Board's registration standards in order to practice in Australia.
- ⦿ All Australian registered chiropractors complete mandatory continuing education annually to maintain registration and practice as a non-pharmacological, non-surgical spine care and musculoskeletal-allied healthcare professional.
- ⦿ Australian chiropractors see over 350,000 people each week.
- ⦿ Chiropractors play an important role in the spinal health of everyday Australians by using a range of non-surgical techniques including specific spinal adjustments, manual therapy and low-force intervention.
- ⦿ Chiropractors offer a drug-free, hands-on approach to spinal healthcare.
- ⦿ Growing evidence supports early referral and assessment of patients experiencing musculoskeletal pain to an appropriately qualified musculoskeletal clinician such as a chiropractor.
- ⦿ Chiropractors use a patient centred, multi-modal model of healthcare to provide a therapeutic approach incorporating a range of manual therapies to treat a range of musculoskeletal conditions.

### THE HEALTH BURDEN OF MUSCULOSKELETAL DISORDERS ON AUSTRALIANS

- ⊙ **Musculoskeletal conditions** are the second largest contributor to disability worldwide, with low back pain being the single leading cause of disability globally (MA, 2020-2021).
- ⊙ **Musculoskeletal conditions** account for the greatest proportion of persistent pain conditions (WHO, 2019).
- ⊙ **Almost 1 in 3 (29%) Australians** had a musculoskeletal condition in 2017–18, around 7 million people according to the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW, 2019).
- ⊙ **Musculoskeletal conditions** cost the Australian economy \$55.1 billion in direct health costs, lost productivity and reduced quality of life (MA, 2020-21).
- ⊙ **The Australian Work Health & Safety Strategy 2012–2022** identifies work-related musculoskeletal disorders (WMSDs) as the first of its six priority disorders (Safe Work Australia, 2018b).
- ⊙ **WMSDs** include a range of inflammatory and degenerative conditions affecting muscles, tendons, ligaments, joints, peripheral nerves and supporting blood vessels (Oakman, Clune & Stuckey, 2019).
- ⊙ **WMSDs** are the leading WHS problem, both in frequency and cost (Oakman, Clune & Stuckey, 2019).
- ⊙ **WMSDs** relating to computer use include increased neck and shoulder stiffness due to poor ergonomic workspaces, poor posture and lack of an effective exercise program designed to improve spinal health and stabilise core muscle groups.
- ⊙ **The total accepted workers compensation injury claims** (National Data Set for Compensation-based Statistics) for WMSDs in 2015–16 were almost 125,000 (Oakman, Clune & Stuckey, 2019).
- ⊙ **Of these, 62,420 (50 per cent) were serious claims for WMSDs** (Oakman, Clune & Stuckey, 2019).
- ⊙ **Serious claims for WMSD diseases and injuries** comprised 58 per cent of all serious claims (Oakman, Clune & Stuckey, 2019).

### WORK-RELATED INJURIES IN AUSTRALIA

- ⊙ A worldwide study led by the University of Sydney has proven that lower back pain is the most commonly recorded workplace injury, ranking higher than any other condition (JobFit, 2020).
- ⊙ Between 2008-2018, 6.9 million work-related injuries and illnesses occurred - averaging 623,663 annually leading to a 2.2 million FTE productivity loss and incurring \$37.6 billion in costs to the health system. (Safe Work Australia 2022).
- ⊙ Body stressing, is the most commonly reported cause of injury for serious WMSD claims, arising from handling, lifting, carrying or putting down of objects; followed by slips, trips and falls (Oakman, Clune & Stuckey, 2019).
- ⊙ Physical stress may involve workplace repetitive strain injuries including sore necks and backs caused by long hours at a desk or behind the wheel of a vehicle (Oakman, Clune & Stuckey, 2019).
- ⊙ Mental stress may be the result of overwork, conflict with colleagues or bosses (Safe Work Australia 2022).
- ⊙ Mental stress can also trigger many other health issues if left unchecked (Safe Work Australia 2022)
- ⊙ Stress is the single biggest headache trigger for 70% of Australians suffering headaches followed by poor sleep (59%), neck pain (52%) and sleep position (32%) (ACA, 2023)
- ⊙ Most work-related injuries occurred in the workplace (91%) (ABS, 2021-22).
- ⊙ 66% had time off as a result of the injury or illness (ABS, 2021-22).
- ⊙ More than half of people who experienced a work-related injury or illness were men (58%) (ABS, 2021-22).
- ⊙ The occupational groups with the highest rates of work-related injuries are Community and personal service workers, machinery operators and drivers, labourers, technicians and trades workers (ABS, 2021-22).
- ⊙ The most common work-related injury types are sprains, strains or dislocations (29%) followed by chronic joint or muscle conditions (20%) (ABS, 2021-22).
- ⊙ Most common causes of work-related injuries are lifting, pushing, pulling or bending - 24% (ABS, 2021-22).
- ⊙ The injuries or illnesses that had the highest average number of days off work due to work-related injury were stress or other mental health conditions (44 days), fractures or broken bones (29 days) and chronic joint or muscle conditions (22 days) (ABS, 2021-22).
- ⊙ It's common for people with back pain to feel distressed about their recovery. (Better Health Channel 2023)
- ⊙ People with persistent back pain can develop fear of movement and activity (including work), worrying that it will make things worse or increase their pain.
- ⊙ Living with persistent back pain may also lead to mood issues, such as anxiety, irritability, frustration and depression.

### ECONOMIC BURDEN OF WORKPLACE INJURIES & ILLNESS ON AUSTRALIA - KEY FACTS

- ⊙ The economic burden of WMSDs is significant and the impacts on individuals and society are extensive (Safe Work Australia, 2018b).
- ⊙ Health care and compensation costs are substantial, along with loss of income and early retirement.
- ⊙ It is estimated that the economic impact of work-related injuries and illness costs the Australian economy \$28.6 billion annually (Safe Work Australia, 2022).

- These work-related injuries lead to a 2.2 million FTE productivity loss and incurred \$37.6 billion in costs to the health system.
- In that time, health expenditure costs as a result were \$37.6 billion.
- Employers felt an even bigger burden to the tune of \$49.5 billion.
- WMSDs account for the majority of workers' compensation costs (Safe Work Australia, 2018b).
- Employer overheads from workers' compensation claims and the costs incurred from hiring and training new staff were estimated to cost \$49.5 billion over the reference period, or an average of \$4.5 billion per year.
- Average annual employer overheads were highest for the Health industry (\$513.8 million), followed by Public Administration (\$430.2 million) and Construction services (\$388.3 million) (Safe Work Australia, 2022).

## PREVENTION & EARLY INTERVENTION TO MINIMISE WORKPLACE INJURIES & ILLNESS

Prevention is better than cure - Early intervention can prevent injuries, ailments or illnesses from deteriorating and reduce severity while early chiropractic healthcare can help minimise the long-term impact spine-related injuries and conditions have on workers and employers.

- Stress, both physical and mental, tends to respond well to early intervention.
- Early intervention has been found to have positive effects for employees, including recovery outcomes, capacity to remain at work, the length of time away from work, the likelihood of further absence due to sickness and how they view the workplace.
- Implementing positive spinal health habits when working with computers includes using an ergonomic office chair, adjusting laptops to eye level; and positioning knees slightly below the hips when sitting can help prevent spinal injuries when using computers.
- Early intervention provides benefits for the employer and the workplace, including fostering a productive and supportive work environment, demonstrating that management is committed to employees, increasing the likelihood of return to work, reducing the cost of incapacity in the long term, premiums, and reducing indirect costs such as lost productivity, recruitment and training costs for replacement staff (Comcare, 2022).

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