

Osteoporosis Australia looks forward to working with the Government to improve Bone Health

Australia's leading osteoporosis advocacy body, Osteoporosis Australia (OA), today welcomed the re-election of the Government and congratulated the Hon Greg Hunt MP on his reappointment to the Health portfolio, as well as Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck on his new appointment as Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians and Minister for Youth and Sport.

OA CEO, Mr Greg Lyubomirsky, urged Minister Hunt and Minister Colbeck to make planning for the 4.7 million Australians over the age of 50 with poor bone health a national priority. Mr Lyubomirsky said, "OA calls on the Government to deliver on their \$17.2 million Federal Budget commitment to implement the National Strategic Action Plans for chronic diseases, including osteoporosis."

"We were delighted to see the National Heart Foundation secure \$4 million for their National Strategic Action Plan and look forward to working with Minister Hunt and Minister Colbeck to secure funding to implement the Australian Government approved National Strategic Action Plan for Osteoporosis, which was submitted to the Federal Department of Health."

Mr Lyubomirsky said the reappointment of Minister Hunt to the Health portfolio reaffirmed the Government's commitment to health care and addressing the significant underdiagnosis and undertreatment of chronic illnesses such as osteoporosis. "Minister Hunt's focus on addressing chronic illness will enable the Government to further explore the mutual benefits of preventative health for Australian patients and the health care budget".

"OA is grateful for the opportunity to work closely with Minister Hunt and his team in working towards finding a tangible solution to assist the 4.7 million Australians over the age of 50 who currently live with poor bone health." Mr Lyubomirsky said.

"To that end, OA looks forward to continuing to work with Minister Hunt to take their proposal for a *National Secondary Fracture Prevention Program* (NSFPP) pilot to the next meeting of the COAG Health Council, expected around July 2019," Mr Lyubomirsky said.

As part of a concerted education campaign on osteoporosis and fracture liaison series, OA has secured the support of several state health ministers to have the NSFPP discussed at the next COAG Health Council meeting.

The Hon Brad Hazzard MP, New South Wales Minister for Health; the Hon Stephen Wade MLC, South Australian Minister for Health and Wellbeing; the Hon Dr Stephen Miles MP, Queensland Minister for Health and Minister for Ambulance Services; the Tasmanian Department of Health and Human Services (DHHS) under the Hon Michael Ferguson MP, Minister for Health; and the Western Australian Department of Health, under the Hon Roger Cook MLA, have all agreed to support the inclusion of the NSFPP on the next COAG Health Council meeting agenda.

OA has met with the Northern Territory Minister for Health, the Hon Natasha Kate Fyles MLA, and with the Office of the ACT Minister for Health and Wellbeing, the Hon Meegan Fitzharris MLA, who have both been briefed on OA's proposal to have the NSFPP discussed at the next COAG Health Council meeting.

OA's proposed NSFPP was developed in conjunction with PriceWaterhouseCoopers (PWC) Health Economics and Policy and found that Australia's state and federal governments could save up to \$48.1 million in direct health costs with the implementation of an NSFPP pilot.

In the 46th Parliament, OA will urgently work towards lodging a third Federal Budget submission to implement the three key priority areas of the *National Strategic Action Plan for Osteoporosis*, including:

1. Increasing osteoporosis awareness and education with a focus on early prevention
2. Improving osteoporosis diagnosis, management and care; and
3. Establishing an Osteoporosis Information Technology Strategy to improve patient outcomes through data collection and monitoring and strategic research.

OA congratulated the incoming Minister for Aged Care and Senior Australians, Senator the Hon Richard Colbeck, "Congratulations to the new Minister for being appointed to what is one of the most critical portfolios in the second Morrison Ministry. There are substantial challenges, but OA firmly believes there is also an enormous opportunity to reduce the estimated \$2.1 billion burden to the Australian health system associated with osteoporosis, and improve the quality of life for many Australians, both young and old," Mr Lyubomirsky said. "As a non-for-profit organisation in the health and aged care sector we are looking forward building upon our collaborative and constructive relationship with the Government and with Minister Colbeck and Minister Hunt."

OA also congratulates the Hon Ken Wyatt AM MP, on his appointment to the Minister for Indigenous Affairs. In his previous role Minister Wyatt was a strong advocate of improving the bone health of Senior Australians and was instrumental in supporting OA's initial budget submission for a NSFPP. OA wishes Minister Wyatt well in his new role.

About Osteoporosis Australia

Osteoporosis Australia (OA) is a national not-for-profit organisation responsible for providing osteoporosis information and services to the community and health professionals.

Osteoporosis is a common disease affecting 1.2 million Australians. A staggering 6.3 million Australians have low bone density.

At OA, our aim is to improve bone health for all Australians through education and awareness. Our task is to communicate the positive and easy steps people can take to improve their bone health and prevent osteoporosis. Think calcium, vitamin D and exercise. When osteoporosis is diagnosed, there are treatments available to prevent bone loss. Our vision is to build strong bones for a life without fractures.

Learn more about our work at: www.osteoporosis.org.au or take our free online bone health assessment at: www.knowyourbones.org.au