



# The Hon Jillian Skinner MP

## Minister for Health Minister for Medical Research

---

### MEDIA RELEASE

---

18 July, 2012

#### **AN OVERHAUL FOR PAIN MANAGEMENT IN NSW**

The Minister for Health, Jillian Skinner, today unveiled a ground breaking strategy designed to overhaul pain management services across NSW.

In doing so the Minister fulfilled a key election commitment of the NSW Government.

The NSW Pain Management Plan provides a blueprint for developing pain management services across the state.

The Plan commits an additional \$26 million over the next four years to support the development of new pain management services in regional areas, to enhance existing teaching hospital services, and to support research into chronic pain.

“The investment and additional funding will improve services across NSW and provide support in regional areas where previously there has been no access to treatment,” Mrs Skinner said.

The Minister particularly acknowledged the support of the Agency for Clinical Innovation (ACI), whose expertise she said was invaluable in drafting the Plan.

“Chronic pain costs the Australian economy an estimated \$34 billion annually and is the nation’s third most costly health problem,” Mrs Skinner said.

The Minister’s commitment to addressing the impact that chronic pain has on people’s lives and wellbeing in NSW is an intensely personal one, inspired by her own experiences talking to patients, their families and carers.

“I have seen for myself the enormous benefits that clinicians specialising in pain management can provide to their patients,” Mrs Skinner said.

“All of us, at some time, suffer pain. It’s pretty much universal and all too often the response, even from the medical profession, is that we should ‘grin and bear it’ in the hope that it will somehow just go away.

“As a response to chronic severe pain, this approach is simply no longer acceptable.”

The \$26 million NSW Pain Management Plan includes:

- \$2.1 million per year towards new, dedicated medical, nursing and allied health positions to meet service and training requirements of Tier 3 (tertiary care) services
- An additional \$1.7 million per year to establish new Tier 2 pain management services at Tamworth, Orange, Port Macquarie and Port Kembla and to enhance the service at Lismore
- An additional \$620,000 per year to enhance existing services at John Hunter, Royal Prince Alfred, Prince of Wales, Royal North Shore and The Children's Hospital, Westmead to become support centres to new regional services
- \$200,000 per year to enhance regional paediatric services at John Hunter Hospital
- \$337,500 to integrate evidence-based clinical resources for pain management into primary health care information systems
- \$300,000 per year to enable systematic collection and evaluation of data on key pain outcomes across all Tier 3 and Tier 2 services
- \$70,000 to support the Concord Hospital early intervention trial for injured workers
- \$745,000 per year to establish five new Pain Medicine Specialist training positions at John Hunter, Royal Prince Alfred, Prince of Wales, Royal North Shore and The Children's Hospital, Westmead
- \$735,000 in annual funding to support the role of the Pain Management Research Institute (PMRI) at Royal North Shore Hospital in providing leadership and coordination of pain research and training across NSW.

Professor Michael Cousins, Director at the PMRI, welcomed the increased funding.

"This is by far the largest clinical initiative in breadth of clinical care and in terms of continuity of funding and will lead to enhanced care in both metropolitan and regional NSW," Prof Cousins said.

He said the emphasis on research and education will enable the development of much needed new treatments.

Minister Skinner said the beauty of the NSW Pain Management Plan is the way it harnesses the expertise in pain management that already exists in NSW.

"It takes the good work already being done in this state, translates that expertise into practical health outcomes for the people of NSW, and in doing so enhances our commitment to providing access to timely, quality health care," Mrs Skinner said.