



AUSTRALIAN
PHYSIOTHERAPY
ASSOCIATION

Physiotherapy: high-value care for all Western Australians

Invest in physiotherapy and put patients first.
Together, we can shape a healthier future
for Western Australia.

**Australian Physiotherapy Association
2025 Western Australia Election Priorities**

Physiotherapy in context

Physiotherapists bring value-based and evidence-based expertise to patients and the health system. They are an important part of healthcare across the life span, with general practitioners referring more patients to physiotherapists than to any other single group. As primary contact practitioners, physiotherapists have the expertise to manage the care of patients at various stages of the chronic disease continuum.

In Australia, physiotherapists rank as the fourth largest group among registered primary healthcare professionals and Western Australia has the third highest number of registered physiotherapists. They work in a number of settings, including hospitals, private practices, community health centres and universities.

Physiotherapists are highly qualified health professionals who work in partnership with their patients to help people get better and stay well. They assess, diagnose, treat and work to prevent injury, disease and disability through evidence-based interventions.

Physiotherapists work within diverse contexts of practice, including primary and community care and inpatient and outpatient services across emergency, acute, subacute and post-acute care. Their role extends to injury prevention, rehabilitation, maintenance of functional mobility, chronic disease management, health promotion, patient and carer education, and occupational health and sport settings.

Physiotherapists are clinical leaders who work both individually and across multidisciplinary teams. The skills and training of physiotherapists equip them to work across a wide variety of conditions and disabilities to improve the health status of individuals throughout their life span. Physiotherapists also work to deliver improved population health outcomes within their local areas

A physiotherapist can diagnose

Physiotherapists **diagnose** injuries and disorders associated with the musculoskeletal, cardiovascular and neurological systems.



Physiotherapists use clinical reasoning for diagnosis and treatment



Physiotherapists have clinical skills across all anatomical and neurophysiological domains and use evidence-informed **clinical reasoning** to assist and advise the patient, their medical practitioner, caregivers and their healthcare team in ongoing management.

Physiotherapists are regulated under the National Scheme

Physiotherapists must be **registered** with the Physiotherapy Board of Australia and meet the Board's registration standards to be able to practise in Australia.



Invest in physiotherapy to advance health, improve care and increase value

Physiotherapy is essential care for the close to 800,000 Western Australians who live with musculoskeletal conditions. Too many Western Australians cannot access services for prevention, early detection and quality care. This means they have to live with chronic pain. Investing in publicly funded physiotherapy will advance health, improve care and increase value.

Reform begins by improving the patient pathway and physiotherapy plays an important role in this.

The Australian Physiotherapy Association (APA) has identified priority areas and solutions that will strengthen care for all Western Australians, while also reducing inequity, through physiotherapy-led models.

We are calling on candidates for the 2025 Western Australian election to support **five policy priorities**:



Fund, support and embed **advanced practice** physiotherapists in Western Australia Health primary care settings.



Invest in physiotherapy **non-operative pathways** and keep people out of hospital.



Invest in **multidisciplinary team care** and support a sustainable workforce in rural and remote areas of Western Australia.



Optimise the **expertise of physiotherapists** at the community and hospital interface through funded support care transitions to improve patient outcomes and reduce length of stay.



Recognise the role of physiotherapy in the primary care of injured workers within **WorkCover Western Australia**.

These priorities provide solutions for the incoming Western Australia Government to **invest in physiotherapy**, so we can realise real reform through improved access to essential care, reduced out-of-pocket costs and, most importantly, a decreased need for costly and inefficient treatments.

Invest in physiotherapy and put patients first

Physiotherapy provides a path to better health for all Western Australians. Opportunities exist for the next Western Australian Government to leverage physiotherapy in leading health reform. Long wait times, fragmented services, inadequate funding, a lack of workforce sustainability and affordability factors mean that the current health system leaves too many people without access to the essential care they need. It is those most in need, our high-priority groups, who are disproportionately affected.

The Western Australian Government is at the forefront of national health reform, pioneers in bridging the gaps between acute and chronic care and in providing more equitable access. This reform leadership has set a benchmark and must be sustained. Yet the journey doesn't end here.

We see a key commitment from the Western Australian Government to advancing our healthcare system. This includes enhancing hospital capacity, supporting the health workforce and improving access to essential services. With a focus on delivering more efficient and coordinated care, initiatives like the State Health Operations Centre are working effectively in streamlining the healthcare system, providing a seamless experience for patients. As the complexity of healthcare needs continues to grow, the next government needs to expand community treatment and support services to ensure that more people receive the care they need while alleviating pressure on hospitals.

The solutions that will fix healthcare lie in:

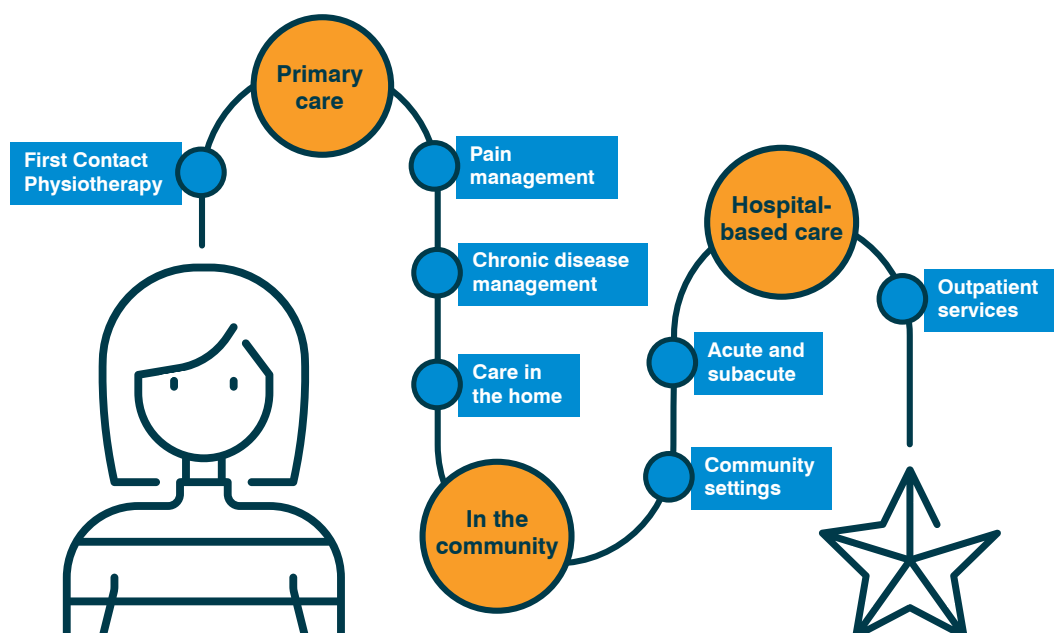
- valuing the skills of the entire health workforce
- integration
- lifting the structural barriers to strengthen access
- streamlining the patient journey.

It is through the priority areas and solutions outlined in this statement that we can begin to provide greater value to all Western Australians.

In this statement, the APA presents ways to connect and integrate care. The solutions will help deliver on the four outcomes that governments and patients want—high-value care, reduced costs, improved efficiency and enhanced patient ownership of their own healthcare.

How physiotherapy supports patient outcomes

A visual representation of the delivery of preventive care, treatment and rehabilitative physiotherapy services across the lifespan in selected populations and settings.



Our solutions will improve the patient journey, deliver cost-effective services and enhance patient care:



01 Fund, support and embed **advanced practice** physiotherapist roles in hospitals and community settings

Advanced practice physiotherapists are an integral part of our hospital system, working as key members of multidisciplinary teams in emergency, outpatient, acute care and rehabilitation.

Increased funding of primary care-based intervention through **physiotherapy-led screening clinics** will ensure that patients can be managed without surgery, including for osteoarthritis of the knee and hip, spinal and neurological conditions, continence issues, gynaecological conditions and paediatric-specific disabilities. This will rely on strong policy leadership and a collaborative partnership between health service providers and WA Primary Health Networks.



02 Invest in physiotherapy in **non-operative care** pathways and keep people out of hospital

Physiotherapy provides alternative pathways that prevent unnecessary hospitalisation and reduce readmission rates.

By keeping people out of hospital in the first place, we address the urgent need to alleviate the current pressures on the public hospital system. Therefore, investing in physiotherapy is a critical component of health reform.



03 Invest in **multidisciplinary team** care and support a sustainable workforce in rural WA

Including physiotherapy services in the delivery of multidisciplinary care in rural health settings is urgently needed to address vast unmet needs in rural and remote Western Australia. Stronger models of care will enable integrated care, strengthen access to care and build the capacity of health service delivery in rural areas. A sustainable physiotherapy workforce in Western Australia Health is essential to provide optimal care for rural Western Australians.



04 Increase **access to** physiotherapy in hospital and community settings

Physiotherapists play a vital role in Western Australia's hospital system and the community. They assess and treat a diverse range of patients and conditions. By investing in physiotherapy, we can improve patient flow through hospitals and emergency departments, providing more timely access to care. This will reduce the burden on the hospital system.



05 Recognise primary care physiotherapy in **workers compensation** scheme

Early and direct access to physiotherapy has been shown to reduce time off work, prevent acute problems from becoming chronic, reduce long-term pain and disability, and improve work function. Achieving commensurate recognition and remuneration for physiotherapists' expertise and skills is essential to ensuring high-value healthcare delivery within workers compensation schemes. Addressing the disparity in fee structures between physiotherapy and other allied health services will foster equity and align remuneration with the advanced scope of practice physiotherapists deliver. Inadequate fee increases over recent years have not kept pace with health reform models, placing undue strain on physiotherapists and risking the provision of lower-value care. By conducting a comprehensive review of remuneration fees, the contributions of physiotherapists can be appropriately valued, ultimately improving patient outcomes, reducing long-term costs to compensation schemes and enhancing the economic efficiency of healthcare delivery.

PRIORITY AREA ONE



Fund, support and embed **advanced practice** physiotherapist roles in hospitals and community settings

Advanced practice physiotherapists hold high levels of clinical expertise to assess and independently manage specific patient cohorts. The APA is calling on the next Western Australian Government to adopt and implement new ways for advanced practice physiotherapists to deliver care. This will reduce wait times in emergency departments, on hospital surgery waitlists and for specialist reviews.

Physiotherapy plays an important role in managing patient demand by redirecting patient admissions and lowering readmission rates. Advanced practice physiotherapists employ knowledge and skills across a wide range of musculoskeletal, cardiorespiratory and neurological conditions to improve people's health. They are highly trained and specialised professionals. Physiotherapists are a flexible and adaptable workforce and there are many who have been at the forefront of the advanced practice specialisation in Western Australia for more than 15 years.

Priority 1.1 | More recognition for advanced practice physiotherapy roles

Action: Develop advanced practice physiotherapy roles to improve the patient journey.

The APA is calling for further investment in developing advanced practice physiotherapy roles. This will ensure consistency in resourcing these roles across districts and networks, enabling the full potential of the workforce to be used. There are barriers in the current award that prevent the full recognition of skills held by advanced practice physiotherapists.

Advanced practice physiotherapists use advanced skills to assess, diagnose and manage complex medical conditions. The current award classification system fails to distinguish the unique role and responsibilities held by advanced practice physiotherapists, hindering appropriate recognition and funding allocation.

To ensure the sustainability and growth of advanced practice physiotherapy services, there is a need for a distinct classification within the tier 2 structure. By recognising the vital role of advanced practice physiotherapists and providing adequate funding mechanisms, healthcare organisations can optimise patient care delivery and promote the continued advancement of physiotherapy services within the hospital setting.

The APA calls for a new funding tier for advanced practice physiotherapy practitioners and clinics.

Priority 1.2 | Triage and management of hospital specialist waiting lists

Action: Increase investment in physiotherapy-led screening clinics in local health districts and specialty health networks.

For most musculoskeletal conditions, non-operative care is the most appropriate treatment. Advanced practice physiotherapists play a key role in the management of hospital specialist outpatient waiting lists by assessing and coordinating care pathways. Advanced practice physiotherapists have high levels of diagnostic agreement with their medical colleagues. Physiotherapy-led orthopaedic triage clinics are also seen as an effective alternative to usual care in the short, immediate and long term. These clinics are highly cost-effective and reduce the need for more hospital medical officers and specialists.

The Virtual Fracture clinic at Fiona Stanley Hospital is an advanced practice physiotherapy-led model of care developed initially to address overburdened specialist orthopaedic outpatient public hospital services across Western Australia. The APA calls for sustained funding for these innovative service delivery models, which address the rising demands on health services, ensuring people receive the right care, at the right time, in the right place, with the right resources and by the right person.

PRIORITY AREA TWO



Invest in physiotherapy **non-operative pathways** and keep people out of hospital

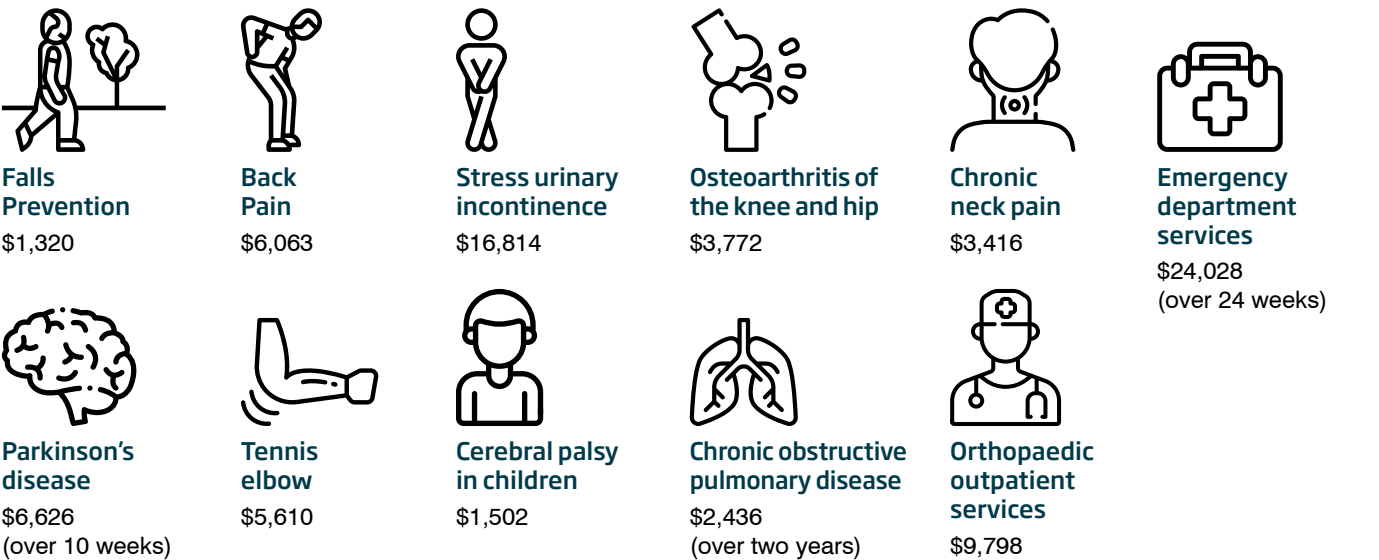
Physiotherapy provides value to Western Australian residents at all stages of life and in response to many different life events. However, physiotherapy is often underused, despite strong evidence suggesting that integrated care models that include physiotherapy services reduce the rates of hospitalisation and surgery. We need to instigate solutions beyond outdated medical-centric models to get the best health and efficiency outcomes.

Physiotherapists can make a greater contribution to primary healthcare to help prevent unnecessary hospitalisations. This will enable more timely and appropriate intervention.

Physiotherapists have the skills and knowledge to embed health promotion and prevention activities into routine care. The cost-effectiveness of physiotherapy interventions is proven in literature and through the cost-benefit analysis (Nous Group 2020), which builds a robust picture of the high-level impacts and value that physiotherapy provides to the healthcare sector. Diagram below: is 'Diagram 6' in title confusing?

Value of physiotherapy in Australia

Physiotherapy delivers an average net-benefit for a range of life events and stages.



Source: Nous (2020)
Approach and methodology: Net-benefits were calculated accounting for quality of life improvements, the cost of service delivery, patient-time opportunity costs, the avoided costs of alternative or usual treatment, and calculated over a period of time. Please refer to full report for details. Nous Group. (2020). Value of Physiotherapy in Australia. Australian Physiotherapy Association. https://australian.physio/sites/default/files/Report_FA_WEB.pdf

Priority 2.1 | Invest in physiotherapy-led early intervention and prevention strategies

Action: Invest in publicly funded physiotherapy to increase the coverage of preventive health services in Western Australia.

The APA is calling for improved access to physiotherapy services so all people in Western Australia, particularly priority populations that stand to benefit the most from physiotherapy, can receive support for the prevention and maintenance of chronic conditions. This will reduce the number of people on waitlists for unnecessary procedures. Physiotherapists have a unique skill set and the knowledge to embed health promotion and prevention activities into routine care, including for musculoskeletal conditions, spinal pain and osteoarthritis.

Birth trauma and incontinence

Pelvic floor physiotherapy in an outpatient setting can help prevent and treat incontinence through pelvic floor assessment and teaching appropriate pelvic floor exercises. This can reduce the likelihood of birth trauma, incontinence, lower back pain and other complications post-delivery, which decreases surgical intervention rates and increases the quality of life for many patients.

Falls, fall-related fractures and hospitalisation prevention

Physiotherapy and fall-prevention strategies can keep people active and independent for longer. Publicly funded physiotherapy-led fall prevention programs keep older Australians out of hospital.

Osteoarthritis treatment and prevention

Physiotherapy is a key part of managing osteoarthritis in primary care. Physiotherapy-led programs can help relieve pain, improve joint function and improve quality of life.

Priority 2.2 | Optimise patient outcomes during care transitions

Action: Prioritise physiotherapy-led in-home care funding and packages.

Physiotherapy improves patient physical function to facilitate a timely and safe discharge from hospital. It also reduces readmission rates by providing treatment and at-home rehabilitation for people with stroke, fall injuries, long hospital stays, traumatic brain injury, post-surgical conditions and chronic disease.

Hospital in the home

Physiotherapy-led models of care deliver acute clinical intervention and support to children in their homes, avoiding the need for prolonged hospital stays and bridging the gap between hospital and home while minimising the physical and emotional burden of hospitalisation on families.

The APA strongly advocates for sustained funding of the Hospital in the Home pilot program to address the growing demand for healthcare services. These innovative delivery models demonstrate how acute care can be effectively provided outside traditional hospital settings to reduce pressure on hospital resources, aligning with national priorities for accessible, equitable and cost-effective service provision.

Priority 2.3 | Improve access to care pathways for chronic conditions

Action: Prioritise access to physiotherapy for people with chronic conditions.

Physiotherapy plays a vital role in the management of chronic musculoskeletal, pain, cardiorespiratory and neurological conditions. Current funding arrangements provide extremely limited access to allied health services for patients with chronic conditions. This is insufficient to address their complex needs, particularly given the growing demand for services and the challenges posed by Western Australians' geographic spread.

Outpatient physiotherapy-led pulmonary rehabilitation programs provide education and exercise, empower chronic obstructive pulmonary disease and respiratory patients to self-manage, and reduce the risk of hospitalisation and complications while in hospital.

Access to these programs is restricted due to funding limitations, especially in regional and remote areas of the state. The incoming Western Australian Government needs to invest in expanding physiotherapy-led programs for chronic conditions, particularly in rural and remote areas. Increased funding and support are essential to improve access, reduce healthcare burdens and enhance patient outcomes across the state.

PRIORITY AREA THREE



Invest in **multidisciplinary team care** and support a sustainable workforce in rural Western Australia

Every community across Western Australia deserves access to vital health services. However, many rural and remote communities have no access to physiotherapy services. This contributes to inequities in healthcare and adverse health outcomes. To address this, we need greater investment in publicly funded rural physiotherapy and prevention strategies integrated into the management and delivery of care.

There is a need to fund new opportunities to leverage the physiotherapy workforce to support healthier lives and drive system-level change to advance health, improve care and increase value. Workforce solutions must focus on facilitating wider scopes of practice and ensuring a greater emphasis on multidisciplinary care in the healthcare system. This cannot be achieved through continued reliance on the current payment models and traditional structures, which disincentivise integration. Current workforce models remain disjointed and suboptimal for the complex needs of our population and continue to add costs to the healthcare system. We call on the new government to consider workforce optimisation and planning to strengthen the healthcare system and health outcomes.

We call on the government to invest in education and training programs that foster skill development to ensure that the health workforce is equipped to provide high-quality, culturally safe, patient-centred care to our communities. To address the rural and remote workforce crisis, policy solutions must focus on workforce distribution beyond general practice workforce planning. Strategies to mobilise the physiotherapy workforce must extend to expanding access for First Nations people.

It is important that the WA Aboriginal Health and Wellbeing Framework 2015–2030 be refreshed to better align with the evolving needs of our First Nations communities. With Aboriginal people in Western Australia making up 3.8 per cent of the population but experiencing 3.8 times higher hospitalisation rates than non-Indigenous people, targeted strategies are essential. The remoteness of many Aboriginal communities compounds the challenge in providing equitable access to healthcare and services including physiotherapy. With limited infrastructure and workforce availability in these areas, addressing such disparities is critical to improving health outcomes for First Nations communities.

Rural health reform beyond medicine has been slow and fragmented. By embedding physiotherapy into multidisciplinary models we can reduce preventable hospital presentations and improve long-term wellbeing, ensuring that culturally safe, accessible and sustainable services are available to those in rural and remote areas.

Priority 3.1 | Strengthen access to rural physiotherapy

Action: Provide funding for physiotherapy and allied health services to enable more integrated care, strengthen access and build the capacity of rural Western Australia's health service.

We must ensure that people who need physiotherapy the most can access it. Providing equitable access to care continues to be a fundamental challenge for rural physiotherapists working within private and public settings. A rural health strategy is needed to address the challenges of delivering services in rural communities and to ensure care can be tailored to the specific needs of locals.

New rural funding models are needed to drive fully integrated care that encompasses telehealth. There also needs to be more investment in incentivised team-based care arrangements to increase access for patients. These factors will lead to the success and sustainability of physiotherapy as a service. The results of our 2023 APA Workforce Census showed that one-third of the participants are willing to work rurally, especially those in the early stages of their career—but require financial assistance to relocate.

It is vital that we can scale up and replicate successful models of care but it is reliant on ongoing access to funds beyond grant rounds. It is also important that we expand the capacity for primary health networks and fund physiotherapy solutions that will address the challenges faced by rural health services. The solutions need to support existing providers as well as set up opportunities for workforce growth.

Priority 3.2 | Build a sustainable rural physiotherapy workforce

Action: Provide incentives to attract more physiotherapists to rural Western Australia and address vast unmet needs for care.

The APA is calling on the next Western Australian Government to provide support and initiatives that will grow Western Australia's rural and remote physiotherapy workforce. There needs to be a focus on improving policies, programs and infrastructure so we can attract allied health professionals to rural and remote areas and encourage them to stay.

Physiotherapists need to be incentivised to apply for these roles in the same way that general practitioners are. There should be recognition that physiotherapists are a highly skilled, supported and valued resource. We also need to commit to improving income streams and positioning physiotherapy in rural areas as a viable career choice.

Federal strategies, including the Workforce Incentive Program, have failed due to a flawed design that directs funding through general practitioner clinics.

Priority 3.3 | Expand access to telehealth for rural and remote communities

Action: Invest in telehealth infrastructure to improve access to physiotherapy services in rural and remote Western Australia.

Telehealth is a key solution to overcoming geographic barriers to physiotherapy care in rural areas. By investing in telehealth technologies, training and reimbursement models, we can expand access to services, reduce travel costs and improve patient outcomes. This will support the sustainability of physiotherapy services, enhance multidisciplinary care and ensure culturally safe, accessible healthcare for vulnerable populations including First Nations communities. Integrating telehealth into rural care models is essential for delivering efficient, patient-centred physiotherapy services.

Priority 3.4 | Strengthen access to publicly funded first contact physiotherapy

Action: Focus on new funding models that formalise public physiotherapy in an integrated health system.

Reform success is reliant on how we strategically prioritise access and outcomes and this will be achieved only through a much stronger focus on equity.

Most of all, it will require our leaders to find the policy courage to fund fully integrated models of care with innovative funding models.

Publicly funded physiotherapy means more than just access; it means empowerment, prevention and the opportunity for everyone to reach their highest level of health and wellbeing. First contact physiotherapy practitioners can manage musculoskeletal conditions effectively to reduce the load on general practitioners in primary care.

Importantly, as first contact professionals, physiotherapists have the experience, skills and clinical reasoning abilities to diagnose musculoskeletal conditions and determine appropriate care pathways.

Access to care, along with the patient journey through a complex health system funded by the Commonwealth, states and territories, urgently needs structural reform. In building workforce capability, we need a focus on both workforce planning and service redesign in order to deliver contemporary care models and clinical excellence.

Funding multidisciplinary teams allows for comprehensive care that addresses all aspects of a patient's health, improving outcomes through collaborative expertise. These essential shifts represent a more integrated, accessible and effective approach to healthcare.

Priority 3.5 | Fund student clinical placements

Action: Support funded clinical placement positions such as those we have recently seen for teachers, nurses and social workers.

Prioritising sustainable training pipelines, including investment in new graduates and teaching capacity, is key to ensuring that the future workforce is resourced based on community need. Changes in population and reforms towards more integrated models of care will also affect demand, distribution and scope of practice.

Funding for student placements is needed to help build a sustainable workforce and to overcome placement poverty.

PRIORITY AREA FOUR



Optimise the **expertise of physiotherapists** at the community and hospital interface through funded support care transitions to improve patient outcomes and reduce length of stay.

Faster treatment, better health outcomes and lower costs are required to meet current and future healthcare needs in Western Australia. The solutions that will fix healthcare lie in valuing the skills of the entire health workforce. Spending on physiotherapy will bring more value for money by reducing the need for costly secondary care.

Through Medicare Urgent Care Clinics and Minor Injury and Illness Clinics at satellite hospitals, we can test a new and more efficient pathway by having advanced practice physiotherapists work as primary care providers and first contact practitioners. This will provide faster access to diagnosis, treatment and care for patients with musculoskeletal pain and other conditions.

Priority 4.1 | Put physiotherapy services in Urgent Care Clinics

Action: Prioritise a publicly funded first contact physiotherapy service in Urgent Care Clinics and Minor Injury and Illness Clinics.

Physiotherapy is key to ensuring continuity of care across the primary and acute care interface. The practice can help alleviate the workloads of general practitioners by diverting non-life-threatening emergencies and keeping these types of patients out of the emergency department. Rolling out first contact physiotherapy in primary care settings will benefit patients and the health system. It will lead to cost savings and free up the time of health workers.

Supporting physiotherapists to work at the top of their scope can address current inefficiencies in primary care and in the hospital sector

Advanced practice emergency department physiotherapists are already well embedded in the public healthcare system nationally, providing a sustainable and highly skilled workforce base from which to expand services at state level.

Expanding this workforce can help meet unmet patient need at the primary and acute care interface, including in the implementation of Medicare Urgent Care Clinics nationally. A significant proportion of the likely patient load in these clinics will be people with musculoskeletal conditions such as sprains, strains and spinal pain—conditions best managed by physiotherapists.

Advanced Practice physiotherapy roles require high levels of clinical expertise

AP physiotherapists have the **ABILITY TO REFER** to public hospital medical specialist-led clinics.

AP physiotherapists are able to **REQUEST CT SCANS, MRI AND ULTRASOUND**

AP physiotherapists are able to **INDEPENDENTLY ORDER AND INTERPRET X-RAYS** in EDs

In some states and territories, AP physiotherapists are able to request **PATHOLOGY TESTS**

Trials of **PHYSIOTHERAPY PRESCRIBING** have occurred in QLD and WA where it was found AP physios with appropriate training can safely prescribe pain medication.

Priority 4.2 | Create a more sustainable workforce by prioritising physiotherapy in hospitals and the community

Action: Prioritise physiotherapy in the public hospital system.

Physiotherapists play an important role in patient recovery. They facilitate a safe hospital discharge, reduce the length of a patient's stay and prevent hospital readmission. This frees up valuable health resources.

To address the urgent public health workforce challenges faced by WA Health, there is a need to focus on supporting and retaining the current physiotherapy workforce, attracting and building new pipelines for talent, and adapting and innovating to find new ways of delivering care. A continued investment will allow WA Health to build a sustainable and supported physiotherapy workforce, resulting in the delivery of high-quality healthcare across Western Australia.



PRIORITY AREA FIVE



Recognise **primary care physiotherapy** in workers compensation schemes

The APA supports the continuing development of healthy and viable compensable schemes that enable physiotherapists to deliver timely, cost-effective and high-value healthcare, thus achieving mutually beneficial scheme outcomes. The APA believes that ensuring adequate remuneration, as well as supporting and streamlining service provision for injured people across all state-based compensation schemes, is integral.

Physiotherapists are used regularly by workers compensation insurers because musculoskeletal injuries account for the majority of work-related injuries.

Priority 5.1 | Commensurate recognition and remuneration for experience and skill

Action: Conduct a review of remuneration fees for the delivery of physiotherapy services within compensable schemes

There have been inequities in fee increases over recent years. The increases have not kept up with health reform models, particularly considering the significant demands placed on physiotherapists to assist with the continued delivery of essential and advanced scope practice roles. The APA has significant concerns that if this continues, it will result in lower value healthcare delivery, which will ultimately cost the schemes more due to poorer health outcomes.

There is a noticeable disparity between the valuation of physiotherapy and other allied health services, with physiotherapy appearing to be undervalued. This highlights a concerning imbalance in the recognition and remuneration of the skills and expertise of physiotherapists in comparison to their allied health counterparts.

Physiotherapists are adept at diagnosing and managing conditions across the musculoskeletal, neurological, cardiovascular and respiratory systems.

Achieving parity in fee structure is crucial in recognising the expertise and skill set of physiotherapists, who provide high-quality, evidence-based, patient-centred care that benefits the patient and the health system and delivers overall economic benefits. It is essential for aligning their contributions with other allied health professionals, fostering a more equitable healthcare landscape.

Priority 5.2 | Enable streamlined physiotherapy service provision

Action: Conduct a review of the *Western Australian Workers Compensation and Injury Management Act 2023*, giving Western Australian physiotherapists the authority to sign work capacity certificates.

Under the *Western Australian Workers Compensation and Injury Management Act 2023*, an application for compensation must be accompanied by a certificate given by a doctor, a nurse practitioner (for a minor injury) or a registered dentist (for an oral injury). There is increasing evidence to suggest that providing physiotherapists with the authority to sign work capacity certificates will benefit Western Australians. This is because it will reduce waiting times, improve access to timely and effective rehabilitation and lead to a faster return to suitable work duties.

Physiotherapists are first contact practitioners in the private practice setting. They also provide first contact services within emergency departments and Minor Injury and Illness Clinics at satellite hospitals. Current legislation restricts physiotherapists from issuing work capacity certificates. This is a significant limitation. Giving workers with musculoskeletal injuries direct access to physiotherapists can reduce time off work, prevent acute problems from becoming chronic, reduce long-term pain and disability, and improve work function.

The Western Australian Government has previously assured us that it is committed to ensuring that rehabilitation and return-to-work strategies remain a priority for workers and employers. However, it has not shown the appetite to review current legislation to allow physiotherapists to issue work capacity certificates.

The APA calls on the Western Australian Government to address the barriers preventing these changes—for example, by pursuing legislative change, persuading medical practitioners to relinquish the role of certification and addressing concerns about misdiagnosis.

About the Australian Physiotherapy Association

The Australian Physiotherapy Association's (APA) vision is for all Australians to have access to quality physiotherapy, when and where required, to optimise health and wellbeing and for the community to recognise the benefit of choosing physiotherapy.

The APA represents more than **33,000 members**. We are the peak body representing the interests of Australian physiotherapists and their patients and a national organisation with state and territory branches and specialty subgroups.

The APA corporate structure is one of a company limited by guarantee. The APA is governed by a Board of Directors elected by representatives of all stakeholder groups within the Association.

We are committed to professional excellence and career success for our members, which translates into better patient outcomes and improved health conditions for all Australians. Through our national groups we offer advanced training and collegial support from physiotherapists working in similar areas.