

FULL STATEMENT

17 June 2026

Pain Sector Calls for Urgent Action as Binational Outcomes Program Ends

At a time when persistent pain is one of the leading causes of disability across Australia and Aotearoa New Zealand, leading peak pain organisations are warning that the loss of the electronic Persistent Pain Outcomes Collaboration (ePPOC) risks eroding a nationally and internationally significant capability to measure, understand and improve pain care.

For more than a decade, ePPOC has enabled clinicians, researchers, health services and governments to track outcomes, benchmark performance and better understand the experiences of people living with persistent pain. Its decommissioning represents not only the loss of a dataset, but the loss of a vital lens through which pain care has been monitored, evaluated and improved.

In response, the Australian Pain Society (APS), Faculty of Pain Medicine ANZCA (FPM), Painaustralia, Chronic Pain Australia (CPA), New Zealand Pain Society (NZPS) and the Australian Pain Solutions Research Alliance (APSRA) have issued a joint statement recognising ePPOC's extraordinary contribution while calling for an urgent commitment to a contemporary, sustainable and consumer-centred approach to pain outcomes measurement.

Persistent pain affects millions of people and carries profound consequences for individuals, families, communities and economies. It influences a person's ability to work, participate in daily life, maintain relationships and manage other chronic health conditions. Yet without meaningful outcomes measurement, health systems risk losing the ability to understand whether care is improving lives, where services are succeeding, and where investment and reform are most needed.

The message from the pain sector is clear: while the ePPOC program may be ending, the need to measure, understand and improve pain outcomes has never been greater.

The signatory organisations recognise ePPOC as one of the most significant collaborative achievements in pain care across Australia and New Zealand. It has supported benchmarking, quality improvement, research, service development and policy discussions, while helping ensure that the voices and experiences of people living with pain are reflected in the evaluation of care.

Over the past 13 years, more than 145,000 people living with pain have contributed to ePPOC. Together, they have invested more than 217,500 hours completing outcome measures—the equivalent

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of almost 25 years of uninterrupted effort. This contribution has been matched by thousands of hours from healthcare professionals committed to improving pain care and ensuring that outcomes, not simply activity, remain at the centre of service delivery.

The organisations also acknowledge the University of Wollongong for its stewardship of ePPOC and its leadership in building a program that has significantly enhanced the visibility of pain within healthcare systems.

At the same time, the sector recognises that healthcare delivery, technology, consumer expectations and data standards have evolved substantially since ePPOC was established. The pain sector is not advocating for a return to the past or the preservation of systems simply because they exist. Rather, it is united in the belief that this moment presents an opportunity to design a more contemporary, integrated and sustainable model for pain outcomes measurement.

What must not be lost is the national capability itself. The ability to measure outcomes, benchmark services, support research and understand the lived experience of people with pain is too important to disappear. The future model may look different, but the commitment to making pain visible—and ensuring that people living with pain remain seen, heard and counted—must remain.

“Without a cohesive strategic approach to collecting and learning from pain outcomes data, we risk fragmenting more than a decade of progress and losing the visibility needed to improve policy, strengthen health systems and deliver better care for people living with pain.”

- Bernadette Smith, President, Australian Pain Society

“Ensuring pain remains visible within our health systems is essential if we are to improve equity, access and outcomes for people living with pain.”

- Dr Karen Joseph, President, New Zealand Pain Society

The loss of nationally coordinated outcomes measurement would have implications beyond individual services. High-quality outcomes data supports benchmarking, service improvement and clinical accountability, helping ensure people living with pain receive evidence-informed care.

“Data collection and benchmarking are fundamental to quality improvement and help ensure pain services remain accountable, evidence-informed and focused on patient outcomes.”

- Professor Michael Veltman, Dean, Faculty of Pain Medicine, ANZCA

Pain is often described as an invisible condition. Without meaningful outcomes data, pain risks becoming lost in the healthcare system and therefore more difficult to prioritise in policy planning and funding decisions.

“If pain is not measured, it risks being overlooked. Robust outcomes data is essential to ensuring pain remains visible and informing decisions about services, workforce development and system reform.”

- Monika Boogs, CEO, PainAustralia

“Consumers should be at the centre of the next generation of pain outcomes measurement—not only as contributors of data, but as partners in how it is governed, accessed and used.”

- Nicolette Ellis, Chair, Chronic Pain Australia

The signatory organisations are united in the view that the decommissioning of ePPOC must not result in the loss of binational coordinated pain outcomes measurement. Rather, this moment presents an opportunity to build on ePPOC’s legacy and create a contemporary, sustainable and fit-for-purpose model for the future.

“The opportunity before us is not simply to preserve the past, but to create a next-generation pain outcomes platform that supports research, innovation and better outcomes for people living with pain for decades to come.”

- Professor Mark Hutchinson, Chair, Australian Pain Solutions Research Alliance

The end of ePPOC should not be the end of measuring pain. It should be the beginning of building a better system.

The signatory organisations call on governments, health services, researchers, funders and consumers to work with the pain sector to create a contemporary, nationally coordinated approach to pain outcomes measurement that is sustainable, interoperable and centred on the needs of people living with pain.

Pain must remain visible. Because what is not measured is too often ignored—and millions of Australians and New Zealanders living with pain deserve better.

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