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17 April 2020

The Honourable Greg Hunt MP
Minister for Health
Minister Assisting the Prime Minister for the Public Service and Cabinet
House of Representatives
Parliament House
PO Box 6022
Canberra ACT 2600

By email: Greg.Hunt.MP@aph.gov.au; Joanne.Tester@health.gov.au

Dear Minister

The Australian Orthopaedic Association (AOA) acknowledges and thanks you and your team within the Commonwealth Department of Health for the leadership and contribution to the good health of Australians at this time. You all have our respect and admiration in recognition of your contribution in managing the serious and unprecedented consequences of the COVID-19 Pandemic.

We write at this time to advocate for a graded, safe and considered return to planned elective surgery. The AOA offers its considerable expertise to contribute to decision making in this area and would take the opportunity to make a few points:

- AOA's primary concern is the safety of all healthcare workers. The stability and security of the supply chain for PPE is critical to the provision of safe surgery.
- About 10,00 joint replacements are not being performed each month in Australia, which means large numbers are going without much needed surgery. If one includes reconstructive surgery and non-arthroplasty operations on bones and joints the number is significantly larger.
- Chronic musculoskeletal pain and disability is not well measured under the current Category system. Patients can be significantly affected and not able to work or require narcotic analgesics yet are not exceptional Category 2, as defined by the Prime Ministers statement of 25 Mar 2020. Indeed, very many fall into this group and Category 3 with significant limitation in quality of life and require high levels of support from family or carers.
- Orthopaedic surgeons are receiving many calls and letters from distressed patients wanting clarity and a plan with respect to their treatment. It is clear there is a community of patients carrying a burden of pain and disability.
- Orthopaedic surgeons have been very supportive of the need to take these measures as a Nation to conserve PPE and hospital resources for this pandemic,



Australian Orthopaedic surgeons, like many of our colleagues in other disciplines of surgery and health care, worry about the unmet needs of patient's conditions. I know this is a concern of yourself and the Department and that there is active consideration before Government at this time. We would support a graduated, safe and considered return to planned elective surgery and offer our strong support in achieving this.

The AOA thanks you for your leadership, long hours and hard work, and that of the AHPPC and the Commonwealth Department of Health.

Your sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads 'Andrew Ellis'.

Andrew Ellis

AOA President

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