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## **Physical inactivity costing the Australian economy \$13.8 billion a year**

New Medibank Private-commissioned research has found that physical inactivity is costing the Australian economy \$13.8 billion a year.

The research, conducted in conjunction with KPMG-Econtech and launched as part of Walktober, builds on Medibank's 2007 research which examined the healthcare costs of physical inactivity. This latest study captures the healthcare costs, economy wide productivity costs, and the mortality costs of individuals passing away prematurely as a result of physical inactivity.

Craig Bosworth, Medibank Private Industry Affairs Manager, believes that the findings further demonstrate the importance of being active and the burden that a lack of physical activity can have on the Australian economy as a whole.

"Most Australians are aware of the benefits of physical activity but this latest round of Medibank research has revealed some alarming effects of physical inactivity," Mr Bosworth said.

"An estimated 16,179 people die prematurely each year due to conditions and diseases attributable to physical inactivity and that is frightening. And whilst the majority of these are from the older population there is also a large number of people dying under 74 years of age due to physical inactivity, particularly in the male population.

"This mortality cost is often overlooked, but is an important element in considering not only the social but also financial costs of physical inactivity due to a decline in the size of the labour force."

The modelling approach used in the research also looked at the increased number of medical conditions as a result of physical inactivity and the ensuing medical costs of Coronary Heart Disease, stroke, Type 2 diabetes, breast and colon cancer, depression, and falls. The direct health cost of falls alone (attributable to physical inactivity) was found to be \$503 million/year.

"Like other health risk factors, physical inactivity can have an adverse effect on organisations as well as individuals. Specifically, physical inactivity can impact on employee productivity by causing increased absenteeism and presenteeism, which impose direct economic costs on employers.

"The Medibank research has found that productivity loss due to physical inactivity equates to 1.8 working days per worker per year," Mr Bosworth said.

Ian Kett, Co-ordinator of the Walktober campaign, welcomed the Medibank research.

"This important research highlights the need for concerted and immediate action across the nation to create an active culture," said Ian Kett,

"Walking is the simplest and most accessible form of physical activity and is fundamental to public health. If we can create a nation of walkers we will address many of the issues raised in the report."

The National Physical Activity guidelines (NPA guidelines) for Australians recommend 30 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity on most days of the week as the minimum requirement for good health. To be considered 'physically active' the National Physical Activity Survey states you should participate in at least 150 minutes of moderate-intensity physical activity over at least five sessions in a week. Any individual that does not meet this level of exercise is considered to be physically inactive.

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