Australian Leaders Issue Joint Statement on ME/CFS and PEM

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MELBOURNE, VICTORIA, AUSTRALIA, May 6, 2026 /EINPresswire.com/ -- More than 20 clinicians, researchers, and community leaders have signed a formal communique calling for urgent action on post-exertional malaise (PEM) in ME/CFS and long COVID. Released by Emerge Australia during ME/CFS Awareness Week (May 11-17), the statement is direct: ”Fatigue is not the same as post-exertional malaise (PEM)."

Signatories include Emeritus Professor Paul Fisher (La Trobe University), Emeritus Professor Lawrence Cram AM (Australian National University), Professor David Putrino (Icahn School of Medicine, Mount Sinai), Dr Bernard Shiu (Geelong Long COVID Clinic), Adjunct Professor Sophie Scott OAM and Tracey Spicer AM.

PEM is a clinically significant worsening of symptoms after physical, cognitive, emotional, or orthostatic activity. It can cause serious symptom exacerbation, functional decline, and lasting health deterioration. When PEM is missed, patients may receive advice that worsens their condition and causes avoidable harm. The communique calls on healthcare providers, educators, employers, and policymakers to adopt PEM-aware approaches to care.

"Post-exertional malaise is not a complaint. It is a clinical reality. Every time a patient with ME/CFS is told to exercise through their symptoms, we risk making them profoundly worse. The path forward is not effort. It is validation, proper diagnosis, and properly designed care."
— Anne Wilson, Chief Executive Officer, Emerge Australia

An estimated 250,000 Australians live with ME/CFS, and up to one million may be affected by ME/CFS, long COVID, and related post-infectious conditions. The economic cost of ME/CFS alone is estimated between $10 billion and $18 billion annually. Seventy-five percent of ME/CFS patients are women. A quarter are housebound or bedbound. The average time to diagnosis is nearly four years.

ME/CFS Awareness Week (May 11-17) includes a daily podcast series featuring seven guests sharing their personal and professional experiences with PEM, Excellence in ME/CFS Journalism Awards, and an online symposium on World ME/CFS Day, May 12. Podcast guests include a retired physiotherapist with four decades of clinical experience, a 16-year-old patient advocate, two Registered Nurses expert in ME/CFS, and a social worker with 25 years of lived experience. The week is designed to reach patients, clinicians, employers, and policymakers with one message: PEM is real. It is not the same as fatigue.

"Our ability to objectively test for these conditions has really been suboptimal to date. Once we have proper objective biomarkers, we can aggressively engage in therapeutic development to provide a new generation of solutions for people living with these conditions."
— Professor David Putrino, Signatory; Emerge Australia Ambassador, Director of Rehabilitation Innovation, Mount Sinai Health System

The communique's release marks year one of a three-year Emerge Australia program to establish PEM recognition as standard clinical practice across Australia. The organisation is calling on the government to fund GP clinical education on PEM, invest in specialist ME/CFS and long COVID clinics, expand support for the AusME Registry and Biobank (currently backing 25 research projects), and ensure equitable patient access to effective medications.

The full communique and complete list of signatories are available at emerge.org.au. Spokespeople available for interview include Anne Wilson (CEO), Dr Bernard Shiu, and patient advocates living with ME/CFS and long COVID.

About Emerge Australia
Emerge Australia is the lead patient organisation supporting people living with ME/CFS and long COVID in Australia. It works across four areas: GP education, advocacy, biomedical research, and patient support and information. emerge.org.au

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