

MEDIA RELEASE

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WOUNDS AUSTRALIA CALLS FOR INCLUSION OF CHRONIC WOUND DRESSINGS IN MBS

Wounds Australia, the peak body for chronic wound prevention and management, welcomes yesterday's decision by the Federal Government to rule out a fee for dressings during GP visits.

However, Wounds Australia CEO Blake Wilson said the Government must now go further to prevent the cost of wound dressings becoming a financial burden on doctors or patients.

"To ensure a co-payment is not revisited and GPs are not forced to absorb the cost, essential products for chronic wound patients must be added to the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS).

"The inclusion of chronic wound dressings in the MBS would lead to long term savings as fewer people delayed initial treatment. The incidence and severity of chronic wounds would also fall."

Wounds Australia said adding dressings to the MBS was vital to removing and preventing further financial barriers for treatment.

"Chronic wounds are a hidden epidemic. They make everyday life a massive physical and emotional challenge for over 420,000 people," Blake Wilson said.

"The majority of people suffering from chronic wounds are over 65 and often already struggle with other afflictions, such as diabetes.

"We know chronic wound patients face average out-of-pocket costs of \$340 per month. That's already an overwhelming amount from a pensioner or retiree's income.

"That's why Wounds Australia has written to the Government, the Opposition and Cross Benchers seeking support for chronic wound dressings in the MBS. We are also seeking support from state Health Ministers as it will also prevent cost shifting to state governments."

The proposal for the fee was made to the Federal Government by the Medicare Benefits Schedule Review Taskforce. Wounds Australia has expressed frustration that the fee was even proposed, saying chronic wounds were not properly considered in the Taskforce's review of the MBS.

"However, this means the door has now been opened for Wounds Australia to advocate for major reform of how chronic wounds are managed in the health and aged care sectors. A top to bottom overhaul of wound care is needed, including how funding, education, training and professional pathways are structured.

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“Wounds Australia welcomes Federal Health Minister Greg Hunt’s decision to rule out a co-payment, but he should now support Wounds Australia’s plan to build a wound care system that delivers better and more affordable care for both patients and clinicians,” Blake Wilson said.

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About Wounds Australia

Wounds Australia is the peak body for chronic wound prevention and management.

The Wounds Australia membership comprises thousands of doctors, nurses, podiatrists, diabetes educators, scientists, Indigenous Healthcare Workers, Aged Care workers and other professionals vital to treating chronic wounds and caring for patients.

Wounds Australia works to reduce the harm caused by wounds, by supporting members with resources and continuous education.

Wounds Australia works with governments and industry organisations to improve access to appropriate wound management, knowledge and resources.

About Chronic Wounds

Chronic wounds are wounds that have not progressed through normal healing stages. They may heal at a much slower rate, heal only partially or reoccur after partial or complete healing.

Chronic wounds are usually associated with underlying diseases that affect blood supply or cell function at the wound site. Chronic wounds can lead to amputation.

Leg ulcers and pressure sores (such as “bed sores”) are common chronic wounds.

The warning signs of chronic wounds include:

- Pain and Heat
- Odour
- Excess Fluid
- Taking longer than a month to heal

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