



WoundsAustralia
Healing Wounds Together

Pre-Budget Submission 2026-27

December 2025



Executive Summary

Australia has taken important steps to improve wound care, with the Government's Chronic Wound Consumables Scheme (CWCS) already demonstrating strong early impact in reducing cost barriers and improving access to essential care. Building on this momentum, there is now a significant opportunity to extend the Government's leadership in this area by strengthening prevention, improving early identification, and ensuring consistent, evidence-based support across the health and aged care systems.

Chronic wounds affect more than 450,000 Australians each year, causing pain, social isolation and avoidable hospitalisations. Chronic wounds disproportionately impact older Australians, people with diabetes, and those in rural and remote communities. The research shows that the right treatment in a timely manner can prevent or heal wounds sooner. By amplifying successful initiatives like the CWCS with complementary national measures, the Government can deliver even better outcomes for patients while reducing pressure on hospitals and primary care.

To achieve this, the Government should invest in three critical areas:

- **Sustained national leadership in wound prevention and management**, by providing Health Peak and Advisory Body support for Wounds Australia, the nation's not-for-profit peak body. This will expand public awareness, clinician credentialling and aged care-specific training, ensuring the CWCS is supported by robust prevention and education measures.
- **Nationwide aged care workforce training** through a national online wound education program delivered with leading universities, free to all aged care workers. This will strengthen early identification, prevent complications, and improve resident outcomes for a disease state in which ageing is a key risk factor.
- **Improved wound care advice through telehealth** by providing wound-specific training to Healthdirect and telehealth staff. This will ensure timely, accurate consumer guidance, reduce preventable hospitalisations, and deliver nationally consistent wound advice.

These targeted investments build on the Government's achievements, address key workforce and consumer gaps, and ensure Australians receive timely, compassionate and evidence-based wound care, no matter where they live.



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About Wounds Australia

Our mission is to reduce the harm caused by chronic wounds. As the nation's peak body for wound prevention, treatment, management and healing, we represent the professionals, patients and partners working together to end the silent epidemic of chronic wounds in Australia.

We lead with evidence-based education, advocacy, and collaboration, empowering clinicians and consumers to achieve better outcomes. Each year, more than 3,300 healthcare professionals participate in over 25 of our professional learning events across Australia, alongside our biannual national conference, attracting over 900 delegates.¹

Our community engagement is far-reaching. Through the Be Wound Aware campaign, we are transforming public understanding of wound prevention and management. In its first 12 months, the campaign reached millions through social media, television and digital platforms, including over 365,000 consumers via targeted social media, 3 million through TV, and 4.6 million in GP surgeries.² The campaign's education hub, woundaware.org, has attracted almost 100,000 visits, while partnerships with Aboriginal Health TV and community organisations ensure this life-changing information reaches people nationwide.

Around the world, Wounds Australia unites international wound care organisations in an approach that puts Australia, its researchers, care professionals and consumers, at the heart of global innovation. Our partnerships in the Asia-Pacific region contribute to world-leading publications such as the Pressure Injury and Venous Leg Ulcer guidelines, as well as the Australian Standards.³ Within Australia, we are the only national peak body for chronic wounds, supported by over 30 corporate partners and 15 affiliates, and a proud collaborator with the Central Australian Aboriginal Congress, ensuring culturally relevant wound care for First Nations peoples.⁴

Through strategic partnerships with government, healthcare, industry and community stakeholders, we are building a future where chronic wounds are preventable, treatable, and no longer a barrier to quality of life. Every initiative we lead, every partnership we forge, and every patient we reach brings us closer to our vision: a nation free from the burden of avoidable chronic wounds.

1. Wounds Australia, 2025. [Unpublished raw data].

2. Wounds Australia, 2025. [Unpublished raw data].

3. Wounds Australia. *Standards & Guidelines*. Wounds Australia.

[https://woundsaustralia.org/int/woundsaus/ocd.aspx?](https://woundsaustralia.org/int/woundsaus/ocd.aspx?code=%7b%7cprintCode%7d&action=printSnippet&snippet=contentBoxContainer&printtemplate=on&editable=no&sid=pg_30)

[code=%7b%7cprintCode%7d&action=printSnippet&snippet=contentBoxContainer&printtemplate=on&editable=no&sid=pg_30](https://woundsaustralia.org/int/woundsaus/ocd.aspx?code=%7b%7cprintCode%7d&action=printSnippet&snippet=contentBoxContainer&printtemplate=on&editable=no&sid=pg_30)

4. Wounds Australia. (2025, August 5). *Partnering with Central Australian Aboriginal Congress to support First Nations Australians*.

https://woundsaustralia.org/#action=check_bulletin&code=&showmessage=231_1754375831&bulletin_name=news_bulletin_1&category=

Background

The current state of wound care in Australia

Every year, more than 450,000 Australians live with chronic wounds, a serious and often hidden health crisis costing the nation an estimated \$6.6 billion annually.⁵ Chronic wounds can be painful, isolating, and costly to treat. They can affect anyone; a simple misstep or untreated injury can turn an acute wound into a chronic one.

The burden of chronic wounds is exacerbated by inequality. Those most affected are often those who can least afford care: older Australians on fixed incomes, people with diabetes and other comorbidities, and individuals in rural and remote areas where specialist care is harder to access. In fact, every day, 50,000 people live with diabetic foot disease (DFD), 1,000 are hospitalised, 12 undergo an amputation, and four die as a result.⁶ This is just one condition in which chronic wounds play a significant role.

These outcomes are preventable through earlier intervention and appropriate care; however, many delay treatment because they cannot afford wound care or don't recognise the warning signs.

Australians living with chronic wounds face out-of-pocket costs averaging \$4,000 per year, forcing a choice between using low-quality dressings, delaying care, or even forgoing treatment altogether.⁷ Such delays can lead to infection, complications, avoidable hospitalisations and, in severe cases, amputation or death.

What Australians really know about wound care

Key findings from the *Australian Consumer Insights into Wound Care Report*, commissioned by Wounds Australia.⁸

- 50% of Australians did not identify a recurring wound as chronic.
- 18% of people said they would not seek professional wound care due to expense.
- Search engines were the most common source of wound care information.

5. Wilkie, J., Carville, K., Fu, S. C., Kerr, R., Finlayson, K., Tuffrey, T., & Lenzo, J. C. (2023). Determining the actual cost of wound care in Australia. *Wound Practice and Research*, 31(1), 7–18. <https://doi.org/10.33235/wpr.31.1.7-18>

6. Lazzarini, Peter & Van Netten, Jaap & Fitridge, Robert & Griffiths, Ian & Kinnear, Ewan & Malone, Matthew & Perrin, Byron & Prentice, Jenny & Wraight, Paul. (2018). *Pathway to ending avoidable diabetes-related amputations in Australia*. *The Medical Journal of Australia*. 209 (7). 288-290. 10.5694/mja17.01198.

7. Wounds Australia. (2024). *5 Point Plan to solve Australia's chronic wound epidemic*. Wounds Australia.

<https://woundsaustralia.org/int/woundsaus/uploads/Publications/5%20point%20plan%202024/wounds%20australia%205%20point%20plan%202024.pdf>

8. Wounds Australia. (2025). *Australian consumer insights into wound care*. Wounds Australia.

https://woundaware.org/int/woundsaus/uploads/wound%20aware/wounds%20australia_consumer%20insights%20report_june_final.pdf

Why care is falling through the cracks

Two major challenges continue to prevent appropriate wound care in Australia.

1. Lack of consumer education about when and where to seek help.

Many Australians do not recognise when a wound has become chronic or understand the importance of seeking professional care. This lack of awareness leads to delays in treatment, which can significantly worsen outcomes and increase healthcare costs. This is despite research finding that many chronic wounds are entirely preventable or could heal quicker with the right diagnosis and treatment in a timely manner.⁹

While the Be Wound Aware campaign has already reached millions, these findings underscore the importance of sustained investment in public education to shift behaviours and attitudes. Ongoing national awareness and prevention initiatives are essential to help people identify early warning signs, seek timely professional advice, and avoid preventable complications.

2. Lack of professional education and consistent best-practice training.

Gaps in professional education remain one of the most significant barriers to effective wound care in Australia. Limited coverage of wound management in tertiary health training means that many medical, nursing, and allied health graduates enter the workforce with minimal or outdated knowledge of best-practice care. As a result, acute wounds are often mismanaged in primary care settings, increasing the likelihood of them becoming chronic and requiring more complex, long-term intervention.

Chronic wounds typically demand multidisciplinary management, yet access to this level of coordinated care remains inconsistent, particularly in aged care and community environments. The Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety recognised these deficiencies and recommended the establishment of a national scheme to support training and continuing professional development in wound management and pressure injury prevention (Recommendation 114).¹⁰ Despite this, systemic reform has been slow, and wound care remains undervalued in health and aged care education.

9. Bui, U. T., Tehan, P. E., Barakat-Johnson, M., Carville, K., Haesler, E., Lazzarini, P. A., Twigg, S. M., Parker, C., & Finlayson, K. (2023). *Assessment, management and prevention of chronic wounds in the Australian context: a scoping review*. *Wound Practice and Research*, 31(3), 120–145. <https://doi.org/10.33235/wpr.31.3.120-145>

10. Royal Commission into Aged Care Quality and Safety. (2021). *Final report: Care, dignity and respect* (Vol. 1–8). Australian Government. <https://www.royalcommission.gov.au/publications/final-report>

Economic and human cost

Due to the lack of effective prevention and early intervention, chronic wounds place a heavy burden on Australia's hospitals, primary care services, and aged care facilities. Hospitalisations for wound-related conditions are lengthy, averaging one month per stay, and costly. A lower limb amputation costs approximately \$23,555 initially, with ongoing annual expenses exceeding \$6,000.¹¹ These costs reflect not only a strain on health budgets, but also the personal toll on individuals and families coping with prolonged pain, disability, and social isolation. Chronic wounds are one of the few areas in healthcare where modest investments in access and education can deliver large-scale savings and better outcomes almost immediately.

Alignment with national health priorities

The Australian Government's CWCS represents a significant step forward in addressing inequities in wound care access. The scheme's strong early uptake has demonstrated the demand for affordable treatment and the potential for national programs to drive better outcomes. It is also helping to expand the scope of practice for nurses, ensuring their expertise is fully utilised in the management and prevention of wounds.

Why acting now matters

As Australia continues to grapple with the increasing burden of chronic wounds amid an ageing population, this is a critical moment for national action. Now is the time to introduce complementary measures that strengthen and extend the impact of the CWCS. By ensuring the program is supported by activations focusing on prevention, education, and equitable access to care, we can deliver measurable savings to the health system, reduce suffering for hundreds of thousands of Australians, and create generational change through a more "wound aware" nation.

11. Lazzarini, P., Gurr, J., Rogers, J., Schox, A., & Bergin, S. (2012). Diabetes foot disease: The Cinderella of Australian diabetes management? *Journal of Foot and Ankle Research*, 5(1), 24. <https://doi.org/10.1186/1757-1146-5-24>

Priority 1: Health Peak and Advisory Body support

Recommendation: Ensure national leadership in wound prevention and management through sustainable funding for Wounds Australia.

Sustained funding will enable Wounds Australia to continue its vital role as the nation's peak body for wound care, educating clinicians, empowering consumers, and informing policy to reduce the harm caused by chronic wounds.

Targeted investment would fund a dedicated nurse-educator to deliver aged care-specific wound care training in residential settings, expand public awareness initiatives such as Be Wound Aware, and enhance credentialling programs to ensure clinicians are equipped with current, evidence-based practice.

With health peak and advisory body support, Wounds Australia can:

- **Equip clinicians and carers** with practical skills in wound prevention and management.
- **Educate people living with wounds, and their carers and families**, helping them recognise warning signs and respond early to prevent complications.
- **Drive public awareness** of wound care best practice through national initiatives such as Be Wound Aware, which has already reached millions of Australians.
- **Deliver measurable savings to the health system** by preventing chronic wounds before they start, the single most effective way to improve outcomes and reduce costs.

High-impact, patient-focused investment

Sustained government investment in Wounds Australia will consolidate progress achieved through the Australian Government's CWCS and support national priorities under the Government's Strengthening Medicare agenda.

Through secured base funding, Wounds Australia can expand advocacy and work towards a future where chronic wounds are preventable, treatable, and no longer a burden on Australians or the health system.

Funding sought	Duration
\$0.5 million per annum (\$1.5 million total)	3 years

Priority 2: Aged Care Wound Training Program

Recommendation: Deliver a national Aged Care Wound Training Program to improve standards of wound care across the aged care workforce.

Supporting this engagement will enable the development of a national online wound-care training program for aged care workers, delivered free of charge across the sector. The program will equip workers with practical skills to recognise and respond to wounds early, reducing avoidable complications and hospitalisations.

Given that ageing is a major risk factor for chronic wounds, strengthening the capability of personal care workers, who have the most frequent contact with residents, to identify early warning signs will significantly enhance prevention and improve health outcomes. The program will be developed in partnership with a leading Australian university to ensure it meets the highest standards of evidence-based education.

Through this commitment from Government, Wounds Australia can:

- **Deliver a comprehensive wound care training program** accessible to all aged care workers.
- **Equip frontline workers** with the skills to recognise and manage early signs of wounds before they become chronic.
- **Maximise workforce productivity** by upskilling an existing workforce, enhancing capability, retention, and quality of care.
- **Uphold the dignity of aged care work** by providing meaningful professional development and growth opportunities.

Rationale

This program will reduce hospital admissions and complications from chronic wounds, delivering measurable savings and better outcomes for aged care residents. With this investment, Wounds Australia will deliver a practical, scalable, and sustainable solution that empowers aged care workers to prevent chronic wounds before they start, improving the health of residents and easing pressure on the broader health system.

Funding sought	Duration
\$1 million	1 year

Priority 3: Wound training for consumer health hotline staff

Recommendation: Build on Australia's strong telehealth foundations by providing wound-specific training for frontline health advice staff.

This initiative will strengthen the capacity of national and state-funded consumer health hotlines, including Healthdirect and other government-funded telehealth services, by equipping staff with specialised wound care knowledge to improve the quality and consistency of advice provided to consumers.

Funding will support the development and delivery of a wound-specific telehealth training program, provided free of charge to participating organisations. The program will be designed in partnership with a leading Australian University, ensuring evidence-based, best-practice content that integrates seamlessly into existing telehealth training frameworks.

Through this commitment from Government, Wounds Australia can:

- **Enhance the skills of telehealth and hotline staff** to provide accurate, timely wound care advice and referral guidance.
- **Build on existing government investments in telehealth**, complementing the strong foundations already established by Healthdirect.
- **Ensure consumers receive the right advice at the right time**, thus improving early intervention and reducing preventable complications.
- **Maximise workforce productivity** by upskilling an existing, government-funded workforce with practical, targeted education.
- **Strengthen collaboration** between government, universities and peak bodies to drive consistent national standards in wound care advice.

Rationale

By leveraging existing telehealth infrastructure, this program will deliver immediate and measurable benefits for both consumers and the health system. Improving wound-related advice at the first point of contact will reduce treatment delays, prevent complications, and alleviate downstream pressure on hospitals and primary care.

Funding sought	Duration
\$1 million	1 year

Recommendation summary table

Initiative	Purpose & outcome	Funding sought	Duration	Lead agency
Health Peak and Advisory Body Support	Ongoing core funding to support Wounds Australia's national leadership in wound prevention and management, including nurse-educator delivery in aged care, public awareness campaigns, clinician credentialling, and policy advisory functions.	\$0.5 million per annum (\$1.5 million in total)	3 years	Department of Health and Aged Care
Aged Care Wound Training Program	Funds a national training program to improve wound care standards in aged care, delivered free of charge to all aged care workers. Developed in collaboration with leading Australian universities, the program will upskill existing workers, improve early wound identification, prevent complications, and strengthen workforce capability.	\$1 million	1 year	Department of Health and Aged Care
Wound-Specific Training for Staff in National, State and Territory Consumer Health Hotlines	Builds on the Government's strong telehealth foundations by training hotline and telehealth staff (e.g. Healthdirect and state-funded services) in wound-specific care. Ensures accurate, timely consumer advice, earlier intervention, and reduced hospital admissions through collaboration between government, universities and Wounds Australia.	\$1 million	1 year	Department of Health and Aged Care

Measuring impact and accountability

A clear and transparent evaluation framework will ensure that Government investment delivers measurable improvements in wound prevention, early intervention, and workforce capability across aged care, telehealth and the broader health system. Wounds Australia will monitor program performance through consistent national metrics, demonstrating year-on-year growth in reach, engagement, training outcomes and adoption of evidence-based practice. Data will be captured through digital analytics, training platform reporting, and pre- and post-program assessments, enabling annual reporting against agreed KPIs and ensuring accountability for public funding.

Specific indicators will be applied across the three funded priorities to demonstrate impact on clinicians, aged care workers, telehealth staff and consumer outcomes, particularly for priority populations such as First Nations, CALD and rural/remote communities.

Key measures of impact will include:

- Growth in public awareness metrics (Be Wound Aware reach, engagement, resource downloads, mailing list expansion).
- Increasing participation in evidence-based training programs.
- Registration and completion numbers for aged care wound training modules and residential-based nurse-educator sessions.
- Feedback from participants who have undertaken the training programs.
- Improvements in workforce confidence and competency across aged care and telehealth sectors.
- Number of telehealth and hotline staff registering and completing wound-specific training.
- Engagement and reach into priority populations, including First Nations, CALD and rural/remote communities.
- Improvements in early wound identification and reduced preventable complications or escalations, as reported by Department of Health data.

Conclusion

Chronic wounds carry a profound human cost. Behind every statistic is someone whose life, independence and wellbeing depend on timely, affordable and evidence-based care.

Frank, a 72-year-old retired bus driver living with diabetes, developed a small blister on his foot, an injury he could not feel due to neuropathy. Without access to affordable dressings, he was forced to ration care, reusing products and delaying changes. What began as a preventable blister became a severe infection, a prolonged hospital stay and ultimately a lower-limb amputation. His experience reflects what thousands of Australians face each year: the avoidable loss of mobility, dignity and, too often, limbs.

These outcomes are not inevitable. The Government's Chronic Wound Consumables Scheme has already demonstrated leadership in reducing cost barriers and supporting earlier intervention. The measures proposed in this submission build on that success, expanding awareness, strengthening the workforce and ensuring consistent, evidence-based advice across care settings. This work is backed by leading clinical expertise. Professor Fiona Wood AO, a world-leading burns specialist and researcher, has endorsed these initiatives and recognises the need for national action. Her letter of support is provided at Appendix A.

With targeted investment, Australia can prevent stories like this from repeating. We can save limbs and reduce avoidable suffering by ensuring every person, regardless of age, income or postcode, receives the right wound care at the right time. Ultimately, this submission is about one overarching purpose: delivering better outcomes for patients, now and into the future.

Appendix A: Letter of support from Professor Fiona Wood AO



Fiona Wood
Foundation

11 November 2025

To whom it may concern

I have been pleased to support Wounds Australia – the country's only national peak body for chronic wound advocacy, education and awareness – for many years, and in various capacities. Currently, I'm a Board Director and Ambassador for its major annual advocacy event Wound Awareness Week.

Innovation is my passion and I am excited by the incredible opportunities that new technologies like AI afford us. But technological advances can only take us so far. After many years at the frontline of burns care – a common and often devastating type of chronic wound – I am aware that we are still too often failing to get the basics right. Prevention. Diagnosis. The right treatment. Consistent, ongoing management within a multidisciplinary framework. There is still a huge amount of work to be done at wound care's most fundamental levels.

The good news is that the skills and knowledge necessary to improving wound care for more people already exist. Australia's highly skilled clinicians and world-leading healthcare system are ready to level up.

We are aware that there are many competing demands on a limited healthcare budget. The solutions Wounds Australia proposes aim to bolster existing services, bridge significant gaps between education and service provision, and capitalise on its successes so far, maximising the potential impact of a relatively small investment.

Yours sincerely

Professor Fiona Wood AO