

PROFESSOR FIONA WOOD CALLS ON GOVERNMENT TO SUPPORT 5 POINT PLAN

Australian of the Year Professor Fiona Wood AM has joined with the nation's peak body for wound prevention and treatment to call on the federal government to fund and support action to treat wounds.

Wound Awareness Week 2019 Ambassador Professor Wood said government support for Wounds Australia's 5 Point Plan has the potential to save the Budget millions and improve hundreds of thousands of lives.

Speaking at the launch of 2019 Wound Awareness Week Professor Wood said chronic wounds were Australia's hidden affliction.

"Wounds treatment in aged care facilities and hospitals costs almost \$3 billion annually. In addition, the average chronic wound sufferer spends \$340 per month on things like dressings and pain killers," Professor Wood said.

"Around 500,000 Australians suffer from chronic wounds each year. Sadly, they don't need to be, but a number of barriers are stopping wound prevention, treatment and avoidance.

"Supporting Wounds Australia's 5 Point Plan based on significant consultation and analysis, aims to remove those obstacles and help the government achieve its goals of delivering better and more affordable healthcare.

"For example, independent economic analysis found that a massive \$166 million could be saved each year alone by giving patients with venous leg ulceration appropriate compression therapy. Imagine what a broader and systematic approach would deliver."

Wound Australia's 5 Point Plan is:

1. Raise awareness of chronic wounds through a public health campaign

A government investing in a national prevention strategy focusing on community education on the warning signs of chronic wounds and available treatment.

2. Wound Care training for primary health care and aged care workforces, particularly in rural and remote areas

Inconsistent and outdated wound management is costly and ineffective. Evidence based wound care training will deliver savings by keeping people out of hospital and reducing healing time. Investing in a comprehensive education and training program is essential.

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3. Map care pathways for chronic wound care

Wounds Australia is proposing to conduct a national mapping exercise to identify pathways between primary health care and specialist services for chronic wound care. This would improve service planning, address access issues and reduce costly delays in referrals to specialist services

4. Medicare funding for treatment of chronic wounds in primary health care

Provide a dedicated MBS item for chronic wounds. There are potential savings of \$166 million annually for venous leg ulcer treatment alone.

5. Subsidised dressings and related products for people aged 65+ at risk of venous leg ulcers and diabetic foot ulcers

Modern wound dressings enables some patients to be treated out of hospital. Funding access to the most appropriate products delivers considerable savings.

“Our Plan is simple, with a modest investment such that it is affordable and achievable. It is an investment that will free up millions of dollars of taxpayer dollars each year by keeping people out of hospital and deliver better treatment.

“We look forward to building partnerships and working with government, community and industry groups to drive towards our shared goal of delivering better health and wellbeing for Australians,” Professor Wood said.

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More information on Wounds Australia is at www.woundsaustralia.com.au

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