

# MEDIA RELEASE

18 August 2020

## CHRONIC WOUNDS COST AUSTRALIA \$3 BILLION A YEAR

The massive cost of treating chronic wounds is burdening governments and individuals, leading to a hidden health crisis in Australia.

Each year over \$3 billion from the health and aged care budgets is used to treat chronic wounds of about 420,000 Australians. The average out of pocket expense to patients can be about \$4,000 a year.

But Wounds Australia, the nation's peak body for wound prevention and management says the costs and cases can be dramatically reduced with new approaches to treatment, prevention, policies, and programs.

Wounds Australia is using *Wound Awareness Week 2020* to highlight the high financial and emotional cost of chronic wounds.

Running from 17 to 23 August, *Wound Awareness Week* will feature a number of events for health care specialists and activities that call on governments to take action and reduce the out of pocket costs of wound care.

As Australia's population continues to age, the number of sufferers and associated costs are expected to soar because people aged 65 or older are most at risk of developing chronic wounds.

"The average individual cost to Australians with a chronic wound can be as much as \$340 a month. Some wounds take months or even years to heal, and often people facing these costs are pensioners or on fixed incomes," Wounds Australia CEO Blake Wilson said

Without access to the proper treatment and wound care products, a wound takes longer to heal and the risk of complications increases. This means people suffer needlessly for longer and may place an unnecessary burden on our hospital or aged care systems.

While the financial cost of chronic wounds is massive, the good news is small changes to how the government manages out of pocket costs will deliver results.

Wounds Australia will use *Wound Awareness Week* to urge the Government to address issues such as out of pocket costs and investing in better resources and programs for health care professionals treating wounds.

For more information on Wounds Australia, visit [www.woundaware.com.au](http://www.woundaware.com.au).

**ENDS**

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**Spokespersons for the *Wound Awareness Week 2020*** campaign include Dr Nicoletta Frescos (Chair, Wounds Australia Board) and Blake Wilson (Wounds Australia CEO).

### **Dr Nicoletta Frescos – Chair, Wounds Australia Board**

Chair of Wounds Australia Dr Nicoletta Frescos is one of Australia's most respected chronic wound management experts. She has over 15 years in clinical practice, research, and clinical teaching. Dr Frescos is:

- a lecturer and clinical educator at La Trobe University, Victoria
- Clinical Research coordinator and podiatry wound consultant at the Austin Health Wound Clinic
- Health Adviser for the Department of Veterans' Affairs.

Dr Frescos has expertise in chronic wound pain, diabetes foot related ulcers and the psychosocial impact of lower limb wounds.

She is a strong advocate of an interdisciplinary team approach to wound care and a passionate teacher on lower extremity wound prevention and management.

### **Blake Wilson – Chief Executive Officer**

Blake's reputation as a reformist CEO has been enhanced by his first year's work with Wounds Australia.

While initially appointed for his business expertise, Blake has built partnerships to make Wounds Australia a force in shaping a more efficient and effective health care system.

Blake has expanded the reach of *Wound Awareness Week* this year. In addition to the usual strong public awareness campaign, the *Week* now connects with wound care's commercial sector and other advocacy organisations.

Blake understands the key to reducing the incidence and impact of chronic wounds is a more knowledgeable, skilled, and coordinated health care workforce. That is why he is expanding the resources and professional development opportunities available during *Wound Awareness Week 2020*.

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