



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

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### **Plain packaged cigarettes will help save legs**

People at risk of debilitating lower leg ulcers will be among the beneficiaries of the Federal Government's tobacco plain packaging laws that come into effect from 1 December, according to the Australian Wound Management Association (AWMA), the peak body for 3,000 nurses, doctors and allied health professionals in this field.

Welcoming the decision to remove some of the glamour from cigarette smoking, AWMA's Medical Representative, Dr Stephen Yelland, said tobacco use is the single most preventable cause of death and serious illness in Australia and closely linked with circulatory problems that contribute to lower leg problems.

"Establishing a patient's smoking history is a crucial part of every consultation relating to the treatment of lower leg ulcers. Patients experiencing this painful and intransigent condition tend to be elderly people with a range of health issues, some related to being former smokers.

"In addition, there is a connection with smoking among many younger sufferers. Tobacco smoke, which includes a range of toxic chemicals, impedes blood circulation in the body and makes it very hard for wounds such as venous leg ulcers to heal naturally."

According to Dr Yelland, a Gold Coast GP with expertise in leg wound management, "At any time around 300,000 Australians suffer leg wounds requiring medical and nursing care. Wound care is one of the most frequently performed GP procedures and accounts for up to 80 per cent of community nursing treatments.

"Yet the impact of smoking is entirely avoidable and the Government's efforts to reduce tobacco consumption are to be welcomed. Of course this battle can't be just government-led, but requires the full support of the community.

"It is gratifying to see that smoking rates have generally been dropping in recent times, but they remain dangerously high in certain segments of the population.

"The more you smoke, the harder it becomes to quit and the greater the long-term risk to your health. Believe me, there is nothing glamorous about having weeping leg ulcers, whatever your age, so anything that could help reduce the desirability and acceptability of smoking deserves to be encouraged."

[www.awma.com.au](http://www.awma.com.au)

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