

15 February 2021

The Hon. Martin Foley
Minister for Health
Level 22, 50 Lonsdale Street, Melbourne, VIC 3000
martin.foley@parliament.vic.gov.au

Dear Minister

On behalf of the Australian Podiatry Association, I wish to also express our concern for many of the patients of podiatrists that have been affected during the current five-day circuit breaker that has been imposed on all Victorians. Whilst we appreciate the importance of keeping Victorians COVID safe and offer our support in communicating the circuit breaker restrictions to our 3000 members, we are concerned that potential extension of the circuit breaker restrictions beyond five days will have a significant impact on the condition of many chronic condition and surgical podiatry patients that would ordinarily see their private practice podiatrists for face-to-face care.

The potential impact on podiatry and many other allied health patients, should the restrictions extend beyond the proposed five days, has the potential to be devastating for many and we believe there is an opportunity to avoid such unintended consequences through enabling private practice podiatrists to treat emergency patients and patients requiring urgent care.

Under the current stage 4 restrictions in Victoria, private practice podiatrists are unable to provide any face-to-face treatment. We appreciate that some podiatry treatments are not essential, and some are able to be delivered via telehealth. However, the face-to-face treatment of many conditions treated by podiatrists such as diabetic wounds, high risk foot care and the treatment of conditions involving potential infection and rehabilitation should be identified as essential and we are seeking some relaxation of the current restrictions, should they extend beyond February 16, to enable such serious conditions to be treated by private practice podiatrists.

We are concerned that the current restrictions, should they continue beyond Wednesday 16 February 2021, are likely to place many patients at risk and may result in the unintended consequence of unplanned presentation to hospital emergency departments, or worse still, undue deferral of treatment resulting in exacerbation of conditions that would otherwise have been safely and suitably managed by their regular podiatrist. These are clearly poor outcomes which we believe can be avoided.

The direct treatment of such conditions by private practice podiatrists will certainly result in better patient outcomes through consistency of care. The inclusion of private practice podiatry services for conditions which are emergency or urgent will provide significant benefit in both the short term whilst COVID-19 takes priority, and long term through the prevention of amputations and other unintended

Australian Podiatry Association Offices

Suite 20, Level 1, 450 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills, NSW, 2010 **(02) 9698 3751**
Unit 135, Level 13 Morris Towers, 149 Wickham Terrace, Spring Hill, QLD, 4000 **(07) 3832 4704**
50 Hutt Street, Adelaide, SA, 5000 **(08) 8210 9408**
89 Nicholson Street, Brunswick East, VIC, 3057 **(03) 9416 3111**
121 Eric Street, Cottesloe, WA, 6011 **(08) 8463 1176**

consequences such as mental health deterioration resulting from conditions associated with diabetic foot disease and chronic conditions.

As AHPRA registered professionals, podiatrists are very capable of employing their clinical judgement in determining the urgency and severity of a condition, this is not a skill which is exclusive to the medical profession. The health system would be far better served by podiatrists and other allied health professionals continuing to provide face to face treatment to these patients rather than burdening GP clinics and acute hospital services during this challenging period.

We urge you to enable Victorians to more efficiently receive healthcare through enabling face to face treatment by private practice podiatrists and other allied health professionals during any extension of the current five-day circuit breaker, and during future potential restriction periods.

Yours Sincerely



Nello Marino
Chief Executive Officer

Australian Podiatry Association Offices

Suite 20, Level 1, 450 Elizabeth Street, Surry Hills, NSW, 2010 **(02) 9698 3751**
Unit 135, Level 13 Morris Towers, 149 Wickham Terrace, Spring Hill, QLD, 4000 **(07) 3832 4704**
50 Hutt Street, Adelaide, SA, 5000 **(08) 8210 9408**
89 Nicholson Street, Brunswick East, VIC, 3057 **(03) 9416 3111**
121 Eric Street, Cottesloe, WA, 6011 **(08) 8463 1176**