



## improving the foot health of people living with diabetes

2026–2027 PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION

### Diabetes-related foot disease affects 510,000 Australians and costs the healthcare system \$2.7 billion annually.

Diabetes Feet Australia (DFA) seeks **\$5 million in funding over the next four years** to combat the devastating impact of diabetes-related foot disease (DFD) and improve the foot health of people living with diabetes. DFA has a demonstrated track record of delivering policy, expert advice, evidence-based education and resources. This investment will assist DFA by driving further education, training, research, and awareness initiatives to **prevent thousands of hospitalisations** and amputations, improve patient outcomes, and accelerate the systematic implementation of evidence-based care for people living with DFD. This will contribute towards an estimated saving of **\$945 million per year** in healthcare costs. This proposal aligns with the National Diabetes Strategy, and supports DFA to deliver long-term benefits for people living with diabetes, healthcare professionals, and the Australian health system.

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# reality is confronting

Diabetes-related foot disease (DFD) is the development of loss of sensation in the feet (peripheral neuropathy), reduced blood flow to the feet (peripheral arterial disease), damage to the bones of the feet (Charcot neuro-osteoarthropathy), development of foot wounds and lower limb amputations. People with diabetes are at risk of devastating consequences to the health of their feet and lower limb. DFD negatively impacts all aspects of the quality of life of people with diabetes and mortality rates experienced by people with DFD are comparable or worse than most cancers.



## KEY STATISTICS

### ● EACH YEAR IN AUSTRALIA



**510,000** .....

people have **foot problems** because of diabetes

**47,100** .....

people go to **hospital** because of these foot problems

**6,300** .....

people will **lose part of their foot or leg** because of these foot problems



**\$2.7 billion** .....

is **spent** to treat these foot problems

If we take better care of people's feet, half of these hospital visits, amputations, and costs could be avoided.



is the largest cause of hospitalisations, amputations and disability burdens in people with diabetes in Australia.

# for feet sake



Diabetes Feet Australia (DFA) is a division of the Australian Diabetes Society and the peak national clinical and research body for foot health and disease in diabetes. Supported by an Operations Manager, DFA is led by a volunteer national steering committee comprised of a broad range of clinical and research experts from disciplines including endocrinology, vascular surgery, podiatry, nursing, infectious diseases, and clinical research.

We have a demonstrated track record of delivering policy, expert advice and information. Our **Australian Strategy for Foot Health and Disease in Diabetes 2030** details how to support Australians living with diabetes and their healthcare professionals to reduce foot complications and achieve optimal foot and health outcomes. DFA activities deliver long-term benefits for people living with diabetes, healthcare professionals, and the Australian health system. We aim to reduce hospitalisations, prevent complications through increased awareness, earlier detection, improve management, and enhance consumer engagement, aligning with the National Preventive Health Strategy's focus on reducing the prevalence of chronic conditions and improving health outcomes through prevention and early intervention.

Our objectives and activities also align with the National Diabetes Strategy 2021-2030 (Goal 3) to reduce the burden of diabetes and its complications and improve quality of life among people with diabetes, to upskill and train health professionals to address complex diabetes issues and strengthen prevention and care through research, evidence and data.

Diabetes Feet Australia (DFA) seeks **\$5 million in funding over the next four years** to combat the devastating impact of diabetes-related foot disease (DFD). By driving education, training, research, and awareness initiatives, this investment will **prevent thousands of hospitalisations** and amputations, improve patient outcomes, and accelerate the systematic implementation of evidence-based care for people living with DFD. This will contribute towards an estimated saving of **\$945 million per year** in healthcare costs. This proposal aligns with the National Diabetes Strategy, and supports DFA to deliver long-term benefits for people living with diabetes, healthcare professionals, and the Australian health system.

## Invest 5 million in **dfd** over 4 years

### Training & Upskilling

Establishment and delivery of the National Interdisciplinary Diabetes High Risk Foot (HRF) Practitioner Program. This will provide certified courses for healthcare professionals from a range of disciplines with specialised knowledge to prevent and treat DFD.

1.2M

### Clinical Guidelines

New development and continuous review of the evidence-based national 2021 DFD guidelines. The current six guidelines provide health professionals multidisciplinary best practice standards of care for the provision of DFD care within Australia.

1.2M

### Consumer Engagement

Development of culturally responsive resources, consumer education and awareness campaigns to empower individuals to take control of their health. Consumer engagement to help shape national DFD policies and initiatives.

800K

### Research & Innovation

Funding for the **DFAction initiative** to continue engagement with stakeholders to identify new, evidence-based approaches to managing and preventing DFD complications, ensuring that Australia remains at the forefront of research and development.

400K

### Education & Community

Delivering continuous professional development opportunities for those working with people with DFD, through webinars, in-person events and our conference. To learn from experts, exchange knowledge, and collaborate on evidence-based best practices.

600K

### Advocacy & Policy

Funding to support organisational growth to develop policy infrastructure, partnership developments, project implementation sustainability, support professional best practices and national advocacy efforts.

800K

**to help accelerate an estimated \$945 million saving per year in DFD healthcare costs**

## Training & Upskilling

Establishment and delivery of the National Interdisciplinary Diabetes High Risk Foot Practitioner Program. This will provide certified courses for healthcare professionals from a range of disciplines with specialised knowledge to prevent and treat DFD.

1.2M

To enhance the capacity and expertise of healthcare professionals in managing high-risk foot conditions, DFA proposes the establishment of a national interdisciplinary diabetes HRF (high-risk foot) practitioner course. This certification program will offer healthcare professionals from a range of disciplines the specialised knowledge required to prevent and treat DFD.

Designed and delivered as both an intense face-to-face and online course the core objectives are to enhance the knowledge and ensure that participants are abreast of the latest cutting edge clinical care.

By equipping clinicians with the tools to deliver high-quality, multidisciplinary care, we aim to significantly reduce the incidence of amputations and improve patient outcomes.

## Understanding the savings

The below table uses Australian health economic evidence to forecast the health gains and cost savings available if guideline-based care is systematically implemented across the nation for all Australians with DFD. These forecasts suggest that every year in Australia we could prevent 188,400 people from being in a hospital bed, 20,250 new hospital admissions, 2,840 amputation procedures, 1,125 deaths and \$0.94 Billion dollars in costs by systematically implementing guideline-based care for people with DFD across Australia (or 698 hospital beds, 75 new hospital admissions, 10 amputations and \$3.48 Million every year for each average region of per 100,000 Australian residents). **This is the equivalent of freeing up an entire 500+ bed hospital in Australia each year.**

**Forecasted DAILY SAVINGS if evidence-based care for people living with DFD is systematically implemented across Australia and per average 100,000 Australian residents.**

Characteristic	Australia <sup>a</sup>	Per 100,000 <sup>b</sup>
<b>Morbidity savings</b>		
People prevented from being in a hospital bed <sup>c</sup>	188,400	698
People prevented from being admitted to hospital <sup>d</sup>	20,250	75
People prevented from undergoing an amputation <sup>e</sup>	2,840	10.5
<b>Mortality savings</b>		
People prevented from dying <sup>f</sup>	1,125	4.2
<b>Cost savings</b>		
Costs prevented to health system <sup>g</sup>	\$0.94 Billion	\$3.48 Million

Please refer to the *Australian strategy for foot health and disease in diabetes 2030* provided as a supplementary document for further information and explanation of citations in table.

## Clinical Guidelines

New development and continuous review of the evidence-based national 2021 DFD guidelines. The current six guidelines provide health professionals multidisciplinary best practice standards of care for the provision of DFD care within Australia.

1.2M

In 2021, DFA released new [Australian Guidelines for diabetes-related foot disease](#) for the first time since 2011. Thirty national experts voluntarily developed a suite of six guidelines to provide health professionals multidisciplinary best practice standards of care for the provision of DFD care within Australia. These evidence-based guidelines have been published in the Journal of Foot and Ankle Research and then further developed into a free digital guideline platform for clinicians with 10 interactive clinical pathways to help support practical implementation of evidence-based care. The guidelines have also been downloaded in over 30 countries.

The continuous review of national DFD guidelines, and future development on new guidelines is essential to ensuring that healthcare providers across Australia adopt a standardised and evidence-based approach to DFD care. Funding will be used to establish a formal process for the development, strengthening implementation in practice, and ongoing refinement of these guidelines. This will ensure consistency in clinical practice and improve the quality of care for individuals living with DFD.



# Consumer Engagement

Development of culturally responsive resources, consumer education and awareness campaigns to empower individuals to take control of their health. Consumer engagement to help shape national DFD policies and initiatives.

800K

Up to 85% of non-traumatic lower limb amputations in people living with diabetes in Australia can be prevented with management and best practice clinical treatment. Culturally responsive consumer engagement is central to improving outcomes for people living with DFD, and at risk of developing DFD.

In 2024, DFA commenced the [first national awareness day](#) focused on foot health, awareness and prevention. This digital campaign targeted both consumers and health professionals with engaging education and resources. This successful campaign was supported by multiple peak bodies involved in DFD, organisations, hospitals, those working independently and by consumers. Our 2025 campaign continued to grow awareness with future yearly goals to expand targeted consumer education activities plus develop a growing database of evidence-based practical resources and materials to support those at risk of and living with DFD.

DFA will also use the requested funding to support consumer representatives who will help shape national policies and initiatives. Consumer engagement will facilitate consumer partnerships to inform and guide DFA future DFA activities. This aligns with the **National Preventive Health Strategy's** focus on reducing the prevalence of chronic conditions and improving health outcomes through prevention and early intervention. By increasing awareness of DFD, the proposal supports objectives to reduce hospitalisations and prevent complications through earlier detection, improved management, and enhanced consumer engagement.



# Research & Innovation

Funding for the **DFAction initiative** to continue engagement with stakeholders to identify new, evidence-based approaches to managing and preventing DFD complications, ensuring that Australia remains at the forefront of research and development.

400K

High quality research into diabetes and diabetes-related complications is critical to improving outcomes for all Australian people living with diabetes. However, funding investment for diabetes research in Australia is inadequate, declining by 35% over the past ten years, despite a 32% increase in the number of people living with diabetes over the same time period.

A thriving and sustainable Australian DFD research community is central to achieving improved outcomes for people living with DFD. A recent bibliometric study of Australian DFD research outputs and funding sources from 1970 to 2023 revealed that although there was a steady increase in publications, most Australian DFD published research received no dedicated funding and predominantly investigated aetiology, existing treatments and health service delivery. The Australian DFD research community appears to be resilient with a recent increase in publications despite minimal funding. However, to conduct research that has potential to greatly improve the lives of people living with, or at risk of DFD, a marked increase in funding, research training and research activity is required.

DFA seeks funding to support the **DFAction initiative**, where DFA is uniting researchers, clinicians and consumers to explore and establish the preferred model for the DFD Clinical Research Network. It is absolutely critical that Australia continues to conduct research in DFD so that outcomes can be implemented and embedded into policy. DFAction will continue to engage with stakeholders to identify new, evidence-based approaches to managing and preventing DFD complications, ensuring that Australia remains at the forefront of research, fosters next generation leaders and drives development in this vital area of healthcare.



## Education & Community

Delivering continuous professional development opportunities for those working with individuals at risk of or living with DFD through webinars, in-person events and our conference. To learn from experts, exchange knowledge, and collaborate on evidence-based best practices.

600K

DFA optimises reach and impact with open access to education, training and resources through a free membership model with 2350 email subscribers and over 5030 combined social media followers. DFA hosts a biennial conference which plays an integral role in establishing and developing a collaborative national clinician DFD network. As the largest conference in the Southern Hemisphere, our multi-disciplinary delegates from around Australia, New Zealand and internationally gain access to leading global experts. Additionally, we host targeted digital events and in-person educational events for health professionals.

DFA's focus on leveraging digital platforms for education, such as webinars and the DFD decision-making app, aligns with the **Australian Digital Health Strategy's** goals of enabling healthcare innovation through technology. Funding to expand and develop a suite of new digital tools will improve care delivery and support healthcare professionals in adopting evidence-based practices, and provide upskilling to increase work force capacity across the country in regional and remote areas.

## Conclusion

DFD is a leading cause of morbidity and mortality in Australia, with significant costs to the healthcare system and individuals living with the condition. The requested funding of \$5 million over four years will enable DFA to continue its critical work in improving DFD outcomes. By focusing on education, training, research, guideline development, and consumer engagement, DFA is uniquely positioned to drive impactful change and reduce the burden of DFD in Australia. Supporting this proposal also aligns with the National Diabetes Strategy and will deliver long-term benefits for individuals, healthcare professionals, and the Australian health system.

### National Diabetes Strategy Alignment

#### Goal 3

Reduce the burden of diabetes and its complications and improve quality of life.

#### Goal 5

Reduce the impact of diabetes among Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples.

#### Goal 7

Strengthen prevention and care through research, evidence and data.

## Advocacy & Policy

Funding to support organisational growth to develop policy infrastructure, partnership developments, project implementation sustainability, support professional best practices and national advocacy efforts.

800K

DFA was established in 2015 and in a short period of time has made a substantial contribution to improving outcomes for Australian people living with DFD. To date, DFA has been led by a steering committee of volunteers, supported by a part-time Operations Manager.

To expand the work of the organisation, targeted funding is required for organisational growth to establish policy infrastructure, strategic partnerships, and bolster national advocacy efforts required by a peak national body to ultimately drive improvements to the foot health outcomes for people living with diabetes. These targeted additions focus on organisational longevity and on-going sustainability of national projects, outputs and principles. Ensuring that limited resources are maximised and long-term goals are met.

for  
feet  
sake



Up to 85% of non-traumatic lower limb amputations in people living with diabetes can be prevented with management and best practice clinical treatment.

Investing \$5 million over 4 years will accelerate the implementation of evidence-based care for people living with DFD, contributing towards an estimated saving of **\$945 million per year** in healthcare costs in Australia.