



CASE STUDY

Healthy Ageing in Port Macquarie

Practice Name: Port Macquarie Wound Care Clinic • **Location:** Port Macquarie, NSW • **MM:** 2

Context

Mel Freeman (RN) is a Clinical Nurse Specialist who founded the Port Macquarie Wound Care Clinic after identifying a key gap in the transition from acute to primary health care. This clinic is an entirely nurse-led service providing specialised wound care and primary health care across the Mid North Coast of New South Wales.

Mel is determined to improve access to wound care, wound prevention, and healthy ageing support in her community. Mel believes nobody should be denied care due to their location, particularly in rural areas. The team at Port Macquarie Wound Care Clinic look after patients within a 450km radius of the mid-north coast, including farmers and people with transport or mobility challenges that make travelling to the clinic problematic.

In 2024, Mel participated in APNA's Building Nurse Capacity Program to establish a healthy ageing clinic within her organisation.

A clear plan

Mel's goal is to encourage home-based patient self-care with skin health, wound care, safe mobility, and injury and illness prevention. Mel educates older patients on these topics, as well as skin cancer prevention and screening, and diabetes control.

Funding

Alongside funding from her participation in the Building Nurse Capacity Program, Mel receives funding support from Healthy North Coast Primary Health Network, NDIS, DVA, Aged Care Brokerage, and paying clients.

Location and facilities

Mel's clinic is highly accessible for the local community as it is located in central Port Macquarie. For patients who are unable to visit the clinic in-person – due to distance or decreased mobility, an in-home service is available.

Staffing and HR

Mel leads a team of 20 staff, including community nurses, RNs, ENs, a Practice Manager, and administration support staff.

Best-practice care

Mel educates patients about managing skin integrity, nutrition to support optimal wound healing, maintaining moisture balance, pressure area care, skin protection, and self-massage techniques. Mel's team have upskilled to learn dermoscopy, suturing, catheter and continence care, and advanced wound care within their scope of practice. Additionally, Mel provides diabetes care, monitoring, and education.



We acknowledge the Birpai people as the traditional owners of the lands featured in this story and pay our respects to Elders past and present.



Patient engagement

Mel takes a holistic approach to care, tailoring her clinic's services to meet the unique needs of each patient. Due to its location, the clinic provides care to people living in MM3, MM4, and MM5 areas, and has an extensive waiting list. To share information about her clinic in the community, Mel has relied on word of mouth, as well as radio ads, brochures to GPs, pharmacists, and aged care facilities, letterbox drops, and promotion via allied health connections. Mel ensures that home visits are available for patients who are unable to attend the consulting rooms, including farmers, and community members with mobility or transport challenges. Mel passionately believes:



No one should miss out on health care because of where they live.

Supporting systems and processes

Appointment booked



Client appointment

- Consultant rooms
- NDIS, DVA and Aged Care clients – home visits available

Evaluation and improvement

Quality improvement activities submitted during the project indicate the need to provide education to patients receiving wound care services and to provide them with self-management tools to improve skin integrity. In this model, patient education is enhanced through continuity of nursing care and development of trusted relationships.

Australia's primary health care system relies heavily on Medicare (MBS) funding which is linked to GP-led care. Mel says:



[...] it's just been really, really hard because we have no access to MBS [...] we have to make huge business changes which only affects patients negatively in the end.

Aligning with APNA's vision, Mel advocates for the expansion of funding mechanisms to directly support nurse-led services - enabling nurses to work to their full scope of practice to deliver sustainable, accessible and equitable person-centred care. Mel's Wound Care Nurse Clinic is a prime example of a nursing service that is meeting patient need and delivering positive impacts to the community.



Scan the QR code to watch the video about **Port Macquarie's Wound Care Nurse Clinic**.

APNA's Building Nurse Capacity Program is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health, Disability and Ageing under the Nursing in Primary Health Care Program.