

Media Release

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Local Physiotherapist Driving Change for State's Injured Road Victims

Gippsland physiotherapist and director of Through Life Physiotherapy, Mrs. Helen Lowe, is the elected state voice for helping bring insufficient Transport Accident Commission (TAC) physiotherapy fees in line with current market rates; a change which would significantly improve the therapeutic outcomes of road trauma patients across Victoria.

Committed to optimum results for her own and other disabled and disadvantaged patients across the state, Mrs. Lowe is passionate about the cause. "The current TAC scheduled fee for a standard physiotherapy appointment falls a significant 24% short of the state's market rate," she explains. "The resultant inadequate remuneration is a disincentive for many highly qualified and experienced physiotherapists to treat injured road users. This ultimately compromises patients' best possible outcome and recovery."

Currently lobbying the TAC as well as members of parliament for a change in these fees, Australian Physiotherapy Association (APA) Victorian branch manager Cindy Higgins recruited Mrs. Lowe to be the association's state voice for the media. "In this capacity, my role is to assist in explaining the issues and demonstrating that the deficient TAC fees have a direct impact on the outcomes of people who have endured life changing injuries on the road," says Mrs. Lowe.

"Any involvement I can have in bringing TAC fees in line with market rates is satisfying for me in terms of its potential impact on my road accident patients, but also for their counterparts across the entire state."

Mrs. Lowe's direct work with TAC patients involves finding out what the patient used to do prior to the accident, what they can do now, and discovering ways to bridge the gap. "Typically, the patient is referred to Through Life Physiotherapy following a period in intensive care in one of the trauma centres in Melbourne, and two to 12 months of rehabilitation. My goal is to continue to assist the patient in regaining as much independence as possible once they return home."

Working with a team of health professionals including an occupational therapist, neurological psychologist and GP, Mrs. Lowe finds creative ways to meet the patients' goals. Herein lies much of the satisfaction for Mrs. Lowe in her work, "Finding new ways to put someone's life back together is really exciting and very rewarding to be a part of," she says.

"The most effective community based rehabilitation involves the physiotherapist to be in the patient's real world; at their shops, in their pool and their gym," explains Mrs. Lowe. "Unfortunately the costs associated with visiting clients in the community are insufficiently covered by the TAC. I am left with the choice of transferring this additional cost to my clients, or bearing the costs myself."

The ultimate goal is for a fair and reasonable fee structure to be introduced for TAC patients in Victoria. This will mean those living with injuries sustained on the road will have access to the most experienced and qualified physiotherapists, producing the best possible outcomes.”

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