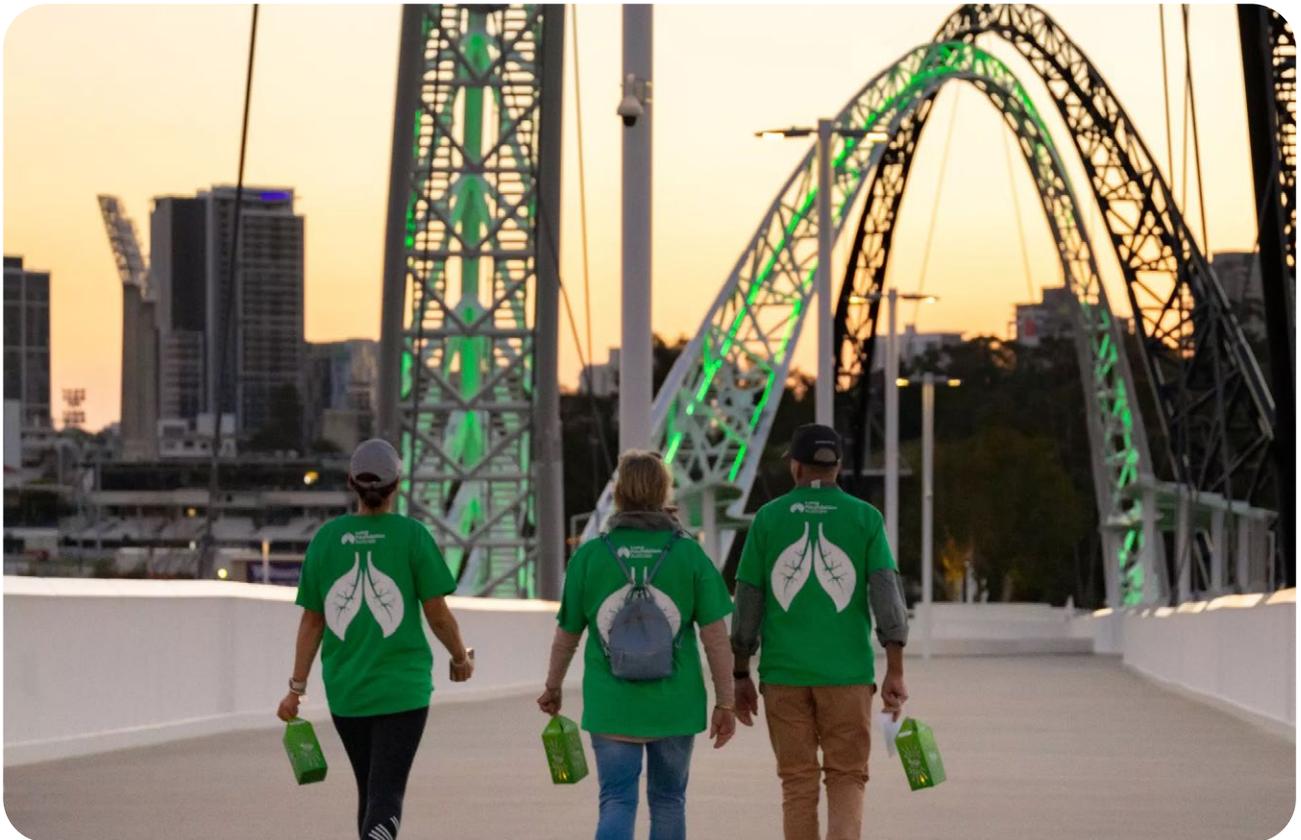




2022 Australian Federal Election Priorities

Strengthening lung health
in COVID-19 and beyond





Lung Foundation Australia is the only national charity and leading peak-body dedicated to supporting anyone with a lung disease including lung cancer. For over 31 years, we have been the trusted national point-of-call for patients, their families, carers, health professionals and the general community on lung health.

Our mission is to improve lung health and reduce the impact of lung disease for all Australians. We will continue working to ensure lung health is a priority for all, from promoting lung health and early diagnosis, advocating for policy change and research investment, raising awareness about the symptoms and prevalence of lung disease and championing equitable access to treatment and care.

There are over 30 different types of lung disease currently impacting 1 in 3 Australians. Lung disease is also our nation's second leading cause of death, taking more lives than dementia and diabetes, yet until COVID-19 caused a renewed focus on lung health and the necessity to breathe freely, it has consistently been underfunded compared to other prominent diseases.

Our 2020-2021 snapshot

902,944 people connected with resources, support services and programs via our website.

24,484 people accessed our online Lung Health Checklist.

3,222 health-related enquiries to our Information and Support Centre.

41 new trained consumer advocates.

The priorities outlined in this document, Strengthening lung health in COVID-19 and beyond, align with the Australian Government's Department of Health National Strategic Action Plan for Lung Conditions, and will ultimately benefit all Australians.

We recommend the next Australian Government:

- 1 Invest in Specialist Lung Cancer Nurses
- 2 Implement a national targeted lung cancer screening program
- 3 Launch and fund a national strategy for tobacco and e-cigarettes
- 4 Address the ongoing respiratory issues facing Australians from long-COVID
- 5 Invest in a MRFF Respiratory Health Mission
- 6 Ensure healthy air for workers and the broader community

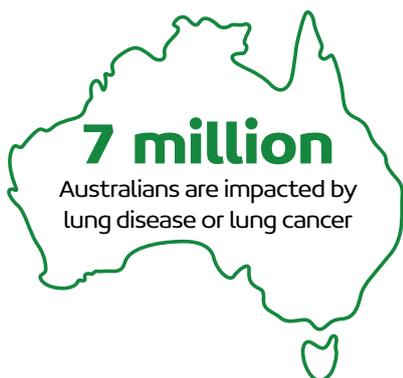
We are committed to continue working with the Australian Government to both prevent lung disease and lung cancer, as well as support the many Australians currently living with a lung disease, their families and the community.



A/Prof Lucy Morgan
Chairperson



Mark Brooke
Chief Executive Officer



Priority 1

Invest in Specialist Lung Cancer Nurses

Specialist Lung Cancer Nurses are desperately needed by the over 20,000 Australians living with lung cancer currently. We urge the Australian Government to fund 100 nurses at \$15.4 million per year over the next three years. This will support nearly half of the Australians living with lung cancer.

Specialist nurses have a critical role in coordinating and optimising care for people with lung cancer, and they also provide patients with clinical, social and emotional support. Each year over 13,000 Australians are diagnosed with lung cancer, and they need support to navigate the healthcare system and throughout their cancer journey¹.

Our nurses will ultimately aid in improving health outcomes for patients with lung cancer, including smoking cessation, and will be an invaluable part of the health system.



Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in Australia



100 of our nurses will deliver over **\$18m in health savings**



How does lung cancer compare to breast and prostate?

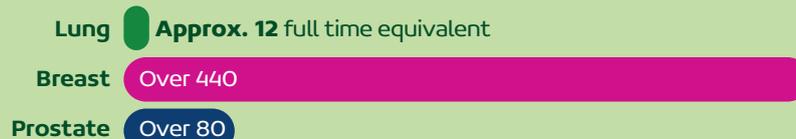
Annual mortality



5-year survivorship



Specialist nurses



“ You were really the only one I could pour out my problems to. You understood how I felt and you were my greatest support through a horrible time. ”

– Maxine, living with lung cancer.

Priority 2

Implement a national targeted lung cancer screening program

Lung cancer is often detected too late when treatment options are limited, therefore early detection is vital to improving health outcomes. We recommend that the Australian Government adopt Cancer Australia's recommendation to implement a national targeted lung cancer screening program including seven mobile screening units, within the term of the next government. This will have a particular impact in regional and remote communities where late-stage cancer diagnosis is higher.

Lung cancer is Australia's leading cause of death in both men and women, and the majority (85%) of lung cancers are diagnosed at a late stage². Cancer Australia's 2021 report from the enquiry into lung cancer screening recommended the program as a priority, finding that **a targeted program will not only be cost-effective but can also save over 12,000 lives in the first 10 years of the program³.**

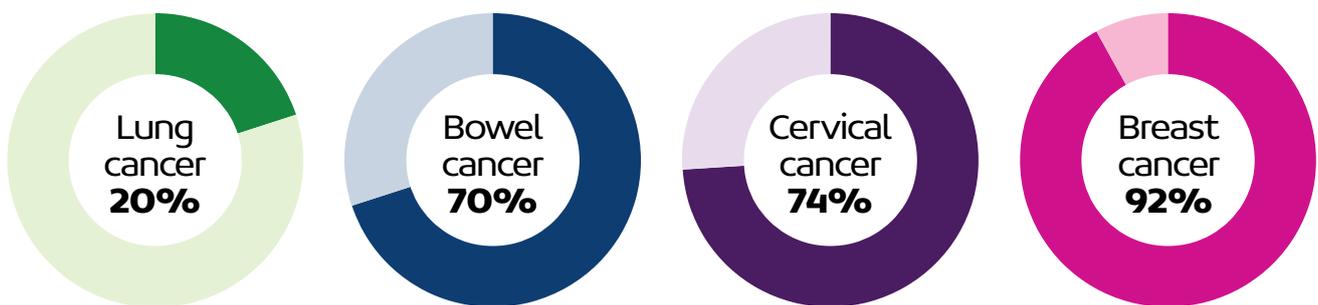
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In 2017 I was diagnosed with two primary cancers; breast cancer and lung cancer. I was not experiencing symptoms of either cancer. The breast cancer was picked up early, through screening, and was cured through two surgeries. A devastating diagnosis but an excellent outcome. Unfortunately the lung cancer was only found by accident, it had already spread, and it will most likely kill me. I wish there had been a lung cancer screening program in place to find my cancer early, just like the breast cancer.

– Lorraine, living with lung cancer.

”

5-year survival rate compared to cancers with national screening programs



Our proposed specialist lung cancer nurses will be integral to the success of the targeted lung cancer screening program, in particular the rapid referral into treating centres. Our nurses can work with the mobile screening units to increase their access and support to regional and remote Australians.

The key to improving survival and quality of life of Australians affected by lung cancer is to diagnose it early. **We urge the Australian Government to implement lung cancer screening in full during the term of government.**

Priority 3

Launch and fund a national strategy for tobacco and e-cigarettes

Tobacco is the leading cause of death and disease in Australia. While Australia has been successful in reducing smoking rates through implementation of a range of world-leading policy levers, public awareness campaigns and program supports, a renewed focus is needed.

Australia is a signatory to the World Health Organisation Framework Convention on Tobacco Control and has set the goal of reducing smoking rates to under 5% by 2030.

To achieve this Lung Foundation Australia recommend the prompt revitalisation of the previously drafted National Tobacco Strategy, which must be amended to include an amplified focus on e-cigarettes and flavoured e-liquid vaping.

We urge the Australian Government to review, strengthen and launch the National Tobacco Strategy in 2022, with clear actions and appropriate investment to support implementation.



We are committed to supporting the Australian Government in this important work. Lung Foundation Australia is best placed to provide advice and support to ensure smokers are not demonised for their addiction to a product strategically developed by the Tobacco Industry.



Smoking costs Australia around **\$137 billion annually** in direct and indirect costs⁴.

The virulent uptake of e-cigarettes among youth

E-cigarette use by Australians aged 14 or older has more than doubled from 2016 to 2019, and is most common among smokers aged 18–24 at 18.7%⁵. E-cigarettes can serve as a “gateway” to nicotine addiction and tobacco cigarette smoking, and critically they involve inhaling dangerous chemicals which serve no therapeutic benefit.

Research of flavoured e-liquids available for purchase over the counter in Australia found 1 in 5 contain nicotine which is illegal without a prescription, among a concoction of other toxic chemicals⁶. With the inclusion of fruit, alcohol and confectionary flavours, e-cigarettes are designed to appeal to young people. Experts are concerned these products will create another generation of nicotine addiction and a rise in serious health issues including lung disease and cancer.

Lungs are there to breathe clean air – we urge coordinated action by the Australian Government with States and Territories to enact and enforce a ban on these dangerous products, as the lung health of Australians is at risk.



Priority 4

Address the ongoing respiratory issues facing Australians from long-COVID

Australians understand, now more than ever, that our respiratory health determines how we live and work. As Australia transitions to the new 'COVID normal' there is a growing population of Australians who will experience long-COVID and ongoing respiratory health impacts. We are the peak lung health organisation and are best placed to deliver a comprehensive program of work and research to support Australians over these challenging years.

Specifically, we recommend an investment of \$700,000 per year for three years which will fund a range of activities to support Australians experiencing long-COVID, and Australians who have concerns or need support managing their pre-existing lung disease in a COVID-19 world.

Lung Foundation Australia has experienced:



62% increase in website traffic during the peak of the pandemic.



134,000+ visits to our digital COVID-19 resources and information.

COVID-19 has presented a significant challenge for all Australians, and it is vital that Lung Foundation Australia is enabled to provide a broad range of information and support to the growing number of Australians who will experience lung health issues.

1 in 3 Australians have a respiratory disease

Australians with a pre-existing condition may experience worse symptoms if they contract COVID-19. Lung Foundation Australia has received an increase in calls and requests for information on COVID-19 and their disease, and a surge in reports of distress among both patients and carers.

Over 200,000 Australians have had COVID-19⁷

The extent and severity of the long-term respiratory complications from COVID-19 infection remain to be seen, but emerging data indicates that many patients experience persistent respiratory symptoms months after their initial illness.



Priority 5

Invest in a MRFF Respiratory Health Mission

We recommend the Australian Government commit to tackling the growing burden of respiratory disease by investing \$200 million over 10 years in a dedicated Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) Respiratory Health Mission.

Respiratory diseases have a major impact in Australia, both in terms of healthcare utilisation, and lost quality of life and productivity for individuals, communities, and governments. As part of the Lung Health Alliance, alongside The Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand, National Asthma Council Australia, Cystic Fibrosis Australia and Asthma Australia, we urge funding of a dedicated MRFF Respiratory Health Mission. Our collective vision is to provide hope of a cure for all Australians living with lung disease and lung cancer.

Lung disease accounts for **9%** of total disease burden in Australia, yet only receives **2%** of research investment. **The time to change is now.**

“

Research to us means the world. It gives families such as ours and all families caring for someone with lung disease hope.

- Georgie, Eve's Mother (pictured)

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What would a MRFF Respiratory Health Mission achieve?

Missions challenge current ways of thinking. They allow researchers to be bold and change the face of medicine. They also:

- Enable key players to work together and exchange insights that lead to better research
- Position Australia as a global research leader
- Promote new evidence-based approaches to disease management
- Create new jobs and business growth.

With 1 in 3 Australians impacted by lung disease, this type of investment and improvement is desperately needed as evidenced by the disease burden, mortality rate, as well as social and economic costs.

Eve and her mother Georgie.

Priority 6

Ensure healthy air for workers and the broader community

Lungs are made to breathe clean air, and the environment that we work, live, and play in can have a significant short- and long-term impact on health.

Evidence shows that air quality greatly influences lung function, and there are over 7 million Australians of all ages currently living with a lung condition which can be worsened or caused by poor air quality.



Reducing occupational exposures

All Australians should be able to work in an environment free from harm. With over 13 million workers in Australia, and occupational lung disease typically under-recognised, we need to ensure that the health of those at risk are protected and supported. The resurgence of silicosis, an entirely preventable and life limiting lung condition, has shone a light on occupational disease and the importance of effective prevention, early detection, monitoring and reporting.

The report from the National Dust Disease Taskforce provides evidence-based recommendations, and we encourage the Australian Government to implement the recommendations as a matter of urgency and commit to a ban on high content silica products within 2 years.



Clean air for the community

Air pollution is responsible for \$16 billion in costs annually, as well as more than 3000 premature deaths.⁸ Lung conditions have a marked effect on people's ability to enjoy life, be productive and realise their full potential. To address the many health risks posed by air quality we encourage the Australian Government to develop a National Strategic Action Plan for Air Quality. This is the first step in addressing air quality issues and will require input from a variety of stakeholders. Lung Foundation Australia is well placed to lead the development of this Action Plan, which will complement the Australian Government's National Strategic Action Plan for Lung Conditions. **To deliver this important Action Plan and to support related activities we suggest an investment of \$500,000.**



What is air pollution and how does it impact our health?^{9,10}

Air pollution is the presence of one or more contaminants in the atmosphere, such as dust, fumes, gas, mist, odour, smoke or vapour, in quantities and duration that can damage human health. The main pathway for exposure to air pollution is inhalation – breathing in these pollutants can cause lung cancer, pneumonia, Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease, heart disease, stroke, worsen asthma and other respiratory conditions, and has even been linked

to diabetes, adverse pregnancy outcomes and neurological diseases. Air quality can be impacted by natural or seasonal events like bushfires, wood fires, road traffic, construction, mining, transportation, agriculture and other occupational and manufacturing processes. Air pollutants are often invisible, so it is important Australia does not become complacent and instead should take a more proactive approach to protecting health and ensuring good air quality.

Georgia, 50, is a mother of two. She was told she would be dead in six months. She was told she would never see her children graduate.

Georgia was fatigued, had low iron levels and had been battling what seemed a terrible cold for about four weeks but never suspected the news that was to come.

“I’d been going to my GP for two years saying I was tired, and we just put it down to work and looking after children,” Georgia says.

“I mentioned to my GP that I’d blown my nose and there was a tiny bit of blood.

I didn’t think anything of it ... I had basically been at a spin class, and I was running around and doing lots of long-haul flights.

“My GP said ‘you’d better go next door and have an X-ray’ ...”

Georgia found herself booked in for a CT scan ... and received the shattering diagnosis of metastatic Stage 4 non-small cell lung cancer.

“My treatment so far has involved chemotherapy, a lobectomy, immunotherapy, 30 radiation sessions and I’m now on a daily targeted therapy tablet,” she says.

Life-changing research from genomic testing carried out overseas was a game changer for Georgia.



Front cover: Georgia and her daughter Bonnie, brother Patrick, and father Stephen. Image credit: Izzy Dalliston.
Pictured: Georgia and her daughter Bonnie. Image credit: Izzy Dalliston

"I hope research will give everyone in Australia access to the same level of amazing care I had with my specialised nurses and oncologists, which enabled me to access cutting-edge testing from the United States of America.

"My hope for the future from gathering research is that lung cancer survivorship for five years is at 90 per cent, in line with all the other cancers."

For Georgia, research into lung cancer means more treatment options to allow her, and other Australians in a similar situation, to spend more time with their children and family.

Research has dramatically changed the prognosis for Georgia. It can improve the lives of other Australians with lung conditions too.

Georgia is also incredibly passionate about prevention, early detection, support and specialist care, as she doesn't want other families to have to go through what hers has.

"I am really excited at the prospect of a national lung cancer screening program. There is no denying that the earlier cancer is detected, the more treatment options are available and better outcomes."

"My hope for the future is that lung cancer will be managed and treated as a chronic illness," she says.

“ My hope for the future from gathering research is that lung cancer survivorship for five years is at 90 per cent, in line with all the other cancers. ”

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Voice Project Workplace
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