



Lung Foundation Australia

2023-2024 Pre-Budget Submission

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Key recommendations

Lung Foundation Australia understands the significant budgetary constraints that Australia is facing but we also stress the economic benefits that can be reaped by improving the health of Australians. 1 in 3 Australians live with a lung disease, and this is responsible for significant health system expenditure, at approximately \$8 Billion annually. In addition to the direct health system costs, the loss of life and inability to contribute to the workforce adds to the cost. We commend the announcement that the October budget will include a wellbeing lens, which we hope will shine a light on the benefits of keeping Australians healthy and enabling them to lead healthy and productive lives.

In light of the current economic challenges, Lung Foundation Australia make four recommendations for urgent funding in the October budget, and then note additional recommendations that we will look to raise ahead of the following budget. **We reiterate that our recommended actions will directly improve the health of Australians and see a return-on-investment in the short- and long-term.**

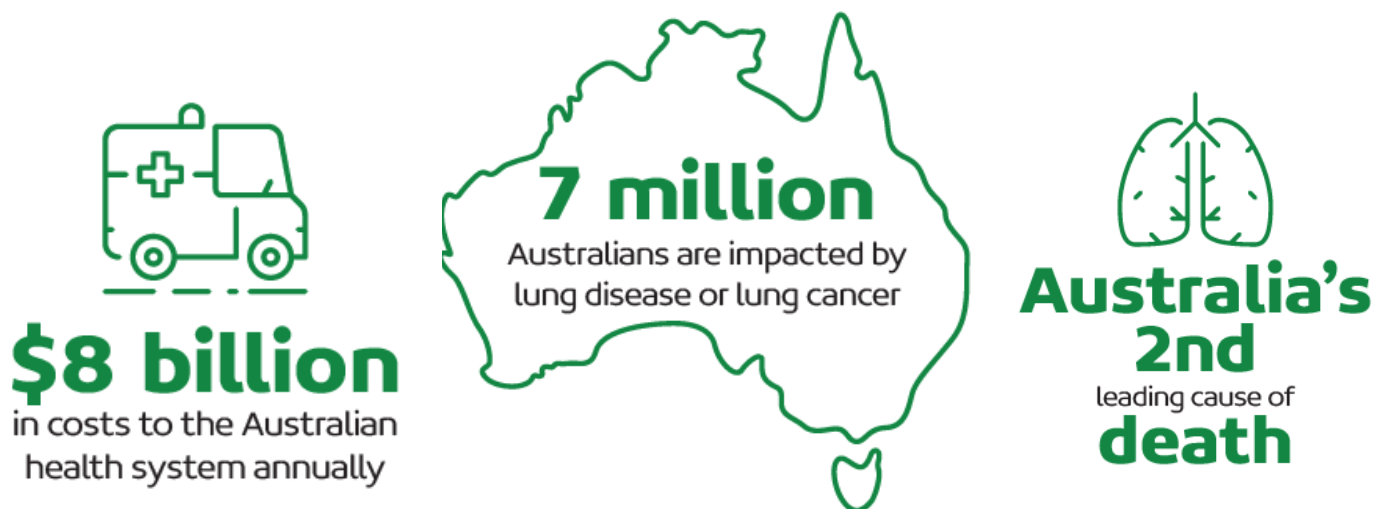
Priorities for urgent funding:

1. Implement the targeted lung cancer screening program **\$300m over 5 years**
2. Invest in dedicated specialist lung cancer nurses - **\$5million**
3. Ensure quality training for primary healthcare professionals does not stall, meets demand, and achieves sustainability - **\$700,000**
4. Essential funding for service continuation - enhancing chronic respiratory disease self-management - **\$600,000**
5. Address research inequities by establishing a dedicated MRFF Respiratory Health Mission **\$500,000**
6. Launch and fund the National Tobacco Strategy

Lung Foundation Australia's recommendations align with the Australian Government Department of Health's National Strategic Action Plan for Lung Conditions, and can drastically improve the lives of Australians, reduce the burden on the health system, and create a healthier and more productive society.

About Lung Foundation Australia

Lung disease in Australia



Don't let smoking be the first thing you think of. Other risk factors include:



Exposure to asbestos, radon and occupation materials



Air pollution



Family history



Personal history of lung disease



Genetics

What we do

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.

Through the Commonwealth's Health Peak Advisory Body Program, Lung Foundation Australia are formally recognised as the peak lung health organisation in Australia, and we will be further supporting the Commonwealth through the provision of expert advice, disseminating information to Australians, and consulting with consumers and clinicians on a range of topics.

Priorities for the Federal Budget 2023-2024

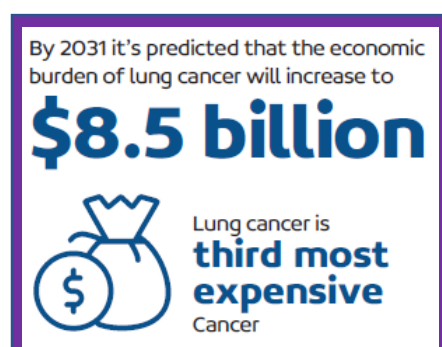
Priority 1: Implement the targeted lung cancer screening program

Lung cancer is the leading cause of cancer death in Australia, and the key to improving survival and quality of life is to diagnose lung cancer early, where more treatment options are available. A targeted lung cancer screening program will position Australia as a world leader and the benefits are far reaching.

Following the Government's independent agency's positive recommendation (by the Medical Services Advisory Committee (MSAC)) recommendation to implement a targeted National Lung Cancer Screening Program, we request funding be allocated in the 2023-2024 budget to begin formal pilot testing in various locations across Australia.

Now that lung cancer screening has been formally recommended, meaning it has been assessed to be cost effective and of benefit to the community, we urge the Australian Government to make an investment of **\$300million over 5 years in this life saving program**, with an initial investment in the 2023-2024 budget.

To put this figure into perspective, lung cancer costs the health system \$448m *each year*, which does not account for the cost to society that results from disease and death. These costs are set to soar over the next decade, placing significant burden on the economy if not addressed. Every year that investment in establishing this screening program is delayed, lives are lost, and the cost to the health system and the economy grow.



Why do we need a targeted lung cancer screening program?¹

Cancer Australia's Lung Cancer Screening Enquiry report from 2020 recommended a targeted lung cancer screening program be pursued as a priority, based on international and national evidence of clinical effectiveness and safety. What it proposed was a feasible model utilising existing infrastructure in the Australian healthcare system and included a cost-effective economic evaluation. It found that in the first 10 years, a targeted program would:

- Diagnose lung cancers earlier, with around 70% of all screen detected lung cancers diagnosed at an early stage, bringing it closer to the survival rate of the other common cancers (72% bowel, 92% breast, 95% prostate, 96% skin cancer).
- Save lives by preventing over 12,000 deaths
- Improve quality of life, with up to 50,000 quality adjusted life years (QALYs) gained
- Be cost-effective, with an incremental cost-effectiveness ratio of \$83,545 per QALY gained⁹⁸.
- Reduce lung cancer mortality in Australia by 20% in the screened population, and improve the survival, quality of life and productivity of Australians affected by lung cancer.
- Reduce inequities - lung cancer has a greater proportional impact on First Nations people, people in regional and rural areas, and those of lower socioeconomic status.

"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

Priority 2: Invest in dedicated specialist lung cancer nurses - \$5million

Specialist Lung Cancer Nurses are desperately needed by the 22,800 Australians living with lung cancer currently, who have unmet needs, lower quality of life and poorer outcomes. Current investment in Commonwealth funded nurses is **inequitable** and contributing to poor health and economic outcomes through loss of life, lower participation in the workforce and worse mental health. \$15.4m will fund 100 nurses, and support nearly half of the Australians living with lung cancer, delivering \$18m in health savings. **We acknowledge that funding 100 nurses in the 2023-2024 budget is likely not feasible, as such we request an initial commitment of \$5million* as support is needed urgently.**

*Full budget available on request

Why does Australia need specialist lung cancer nurses?

- Each year over 13,800 Australians are diagnosed with lung cancer, and they need support to navigate the healthcare system and throughout their cancer journey².
- Current care for lung cancer patients is not sufficient or equitable compared to other common cancers
- Specialist lung cancer nurses, like breast cancer and prostate cancer nurses, are proven to facilitate crucial care and support for people diagnosed with cancer.
- People living with lung cancer die earlier by an average of 11years compared to the general population. This amounted to around 137,600 years of life lost in 2018 alone.
- The economic cost due to life lost - \$6.9 billion in 2018.
- Our nurses will ultimately aid in improving health outcomes for patients with lung cancer, reduce emergency department presentations, and will be an invaluable part of the health system.

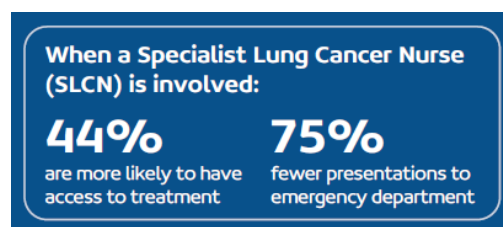


Table 1: Lung, breast, and prostate cancer comparison^{3 4 5 6 7 8}

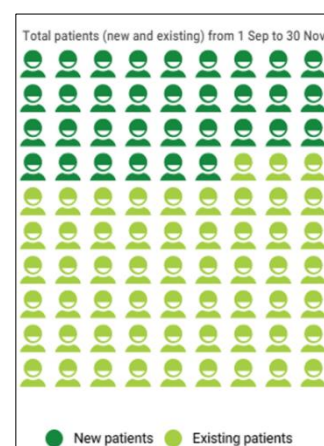
	Cancer related disease burden	No. of DALYs	5-year survivorship	Cancer related cause of death	No. of deaths	No. of nurses	Commonwealth funding for nurses since 2019
Lung Cancer	#1	159,723	20%	#1	8,739	<37	<\$1 million
Breast Cancer	#3	71, 248	92%	#4	3,243	440+	\$30 million
Prostate Cancer	#5	51,305	95%	#3	3,582	80+	\$23 million

Australian Government funded Pilot project – Progress update and need for expansion

LFA have successfully established the project framework, recruited and onboarded nurses, and 146 locals have received support from the specialist nurses in the first 12weeks. There were a total of 429 encounters with patients during the first 3 months, which is significant and has been growing - highlighting demand.

The uptake and success of this pilot to date, as well as the published evidence on effectiveness of these nurses, reiterate the need to rapidly scale up funding for further pilot sites across other locations in Australia. Following the positive recommendation for lung cancer screening it is imperative that the Australian Government rapidly scale up funding for specialist lung cancer nurses in through this model, which is so desperately needed by the community, and currently over-subscribed across Australia. A \$5million investment will form part of the preparation for the implementation of lung cancer screening, which will require the minimum of 2 years investment to ramp up and ensure the workforce is able to cope with demand.

From our initial round of recruitment and advertising for the nurse positions we know that a career progression in specialist lung cancer nursing is highly desirable, and that Lung Foundation has had no issue with the recruitment of highly skilled nurses to take up the roles.



Priority 3: Ensure quality training for primary healthcare professionals does not stall, meets demand, and achieves sustainability - \$700,000

Lung Foundation Australia was funded through the Department of Health, and successfully delivered the first two phases of our Lung Learning project. This project is focussed on workforce competency building and ensuring that primary care health professionals are provided with high quality, evidence-based training to improve patient outcomes. We are committed to ensuring that this program achieves meaningful outcomes, and we intend to reach the point of financial sustainability in maintaining the program without needing further Government investment.

With funding coming to an end, the gains made in ensuring health professionals have access to quality education and training are at risk. Lung Foundation Australia request a commitment of \$700,000* for 2023-2024. This will ensure continuation of service, meet a growing demand, support achievement of reaching sustainability, and is reflective of the amount requested in the original application for funding.



<http://www.lunglearninghub.com.au>

What is the Lung Learning project?

Aligned to the Australian Government's National Strategic Action Plan for Lung Conditions, the purpose of this program is to develop a national lung health training and education framework for Primary Healthcare Professionals to improve awareness, knowledge and understanding in the identification, diagnosis, and management of lung conditions.

The program has been designed with similar principles that underpin the National Strategic Framework for Chronic Conditions (2017 -2025):

- Moves away from a disease-specific approach
- Supports a stronger emphasis on coordinated, multidisciplinary care
- Acknowledges and builds on work already in place that supports chronic conditions
- Provides flexibility and responsive action towards future and emerging priorities
- Allows innovative approaches in prevention, earlier diagnosis and management of chronic conditions

Further funding will:

- Increase the interactive functions of the program Hub to strengthen user experience and support growth in the number of primary care health professionals accessing education and training
- Deliver robust monitoring and evaluation to support outcome-based learning, contribute to best-practice respiratory healthcare, and work towards sustainability
- Enhancing third-party education and training courses via a strong quality assurance process
- Address gaps by developing and delivering new education programs and materials

[The Lung Learning Framework](#) is a world-first in respiratory healthcare, and one of Australia's most innovative approaches to improving outcomes for patients. In collaboration with Australia's leading peak health bodies including RACGP, PSA, ACCRM and NACCHO, the Framework, if fully funded and implemented, will substantially transform the early diagnosis of lung diseases and lung cancer which overwhelmingly impact people from low socio-economic areas, First Nations peoples, and those living in rural areas.

The next phase of the program sees the implementation and scale up of the Framework, with collaborating partners in every State and Territory, to advance nine of the 24 recommendations from the National Strategic Action Plan for Lung Conditions. Building on partnerships with Primary Health Networks, the additional funding will enable Lung Foundation Australia and its consortium partners at Asthma Australia and the Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand to realise the program outcomes. With the current uncertainty around funding continuing through individual strategic action plans for chronic conditions, we request that this funding is considered as a high priority for bridging funding for 12 months.

*Full budget available on request

Priority 4: Essential funding for service continuation - enhancing chronic respiratory disease self-management - \$600,000

Lung Foundation Australia are currently funded to deliver services to the community that enhance chronic respiratory disease self-management, and are proven to reduce the burden of these diseases on the health system. The highly skilled team deliver a range of services that enhance health literacy, provide valid referral pathways, enable people to manage their condition more effectively, and link with appropriate information and resources. **With funding coming to an end, and the service currently not able to keep up with demand, if service delivery stalls there will be an additional strain on the already burdened primary care and hospital system. Lung Foundation Australia seek a budget commitment of \$600,000*. This will ensure continuation of service, meet a growing demand, and ultimately ensure that the Australians living with chronic lung disease are able to be effectively managed within the community.**

*Full budget available on request

The service LFA provides is considered complimentary care, and is an essential adjunct to local care services, by helping patients navigate all aspects of their disease management. The service is integral for strong primary care, and we note that currently the service is oversubscribed and there is a long wait list, which was made worse through COVID-19 as there was limited access to healthcare services for patients with chronic respiratory diseases. Lung Foundation Australia have established a community of practice and are trusted to deliver this essential service. We remain committed to providing this service with the goal of helping Australians to live well with chronic respiratory disease.

About the service: This service offers a series of interactions for people with chronic lung disease to engage in essential self-management strategies. This nurse-led intervention supports people to identify gaps in their care according to evidence based guidelines for management. Via the provision of information and education the nurse motivates them to work, in collaboration with their treating healthcare team, to achieve evidence-based care, including physical activity, medication adherence and management of exacerbations.

Recent evaluation of the program demonstrated the following outcomes:

- ✓ Improved patient health
- ✓ Improved patient health-related quality of life
- ✓ Cost-effective
- ✓ Reduced healthcare utilisation
- ✓ 50% reduction in ED presentations
- ✓ 30% reduction in hospitalisations

“I was taught about my condition and how to cope with it with confidence. My nurse was efficient, compassionate and always listened to me. It’s difficult to ask questions when you don’t know what to ask. The Respiratory Nurse anticipated this.” – LFA patient

“I have made a number of changes since speaking to the Lung Foundation these include; airway clearance routine, breathing exercises with the assistance of a physiotherapist, pneumonia and flu injections, seeing a respiratory specialist and booking a sputum test, drinking more water and doing more exercise”. – LFA patient

“Having someone whom I trusted in my corner, motivated me to be proactive and use the resources I have available. I am sure that without the encouragement and motivation from [LFA’s nurse] I would have sat back and withdrawn and be in a far worse position that I am now.” – LFA patient

“Personalised care and advice over the phone, doctors and specialists visits can be rushed at times so these three appointments on the phone over one year helped me track my progress in detail an excellent service providing a lot of support and information” – LFA patient

Priority 5: Address research inequities by establishing a dedicated 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, with establishment costs amounting to \$500,000.**

Why does Australia need a dedicated MRFF Respiratory Health Mission?

- Lung disease accounts for 9% of total disease burden in Australia , yet only receives 2% of research investment
- The NGO sector has been trying to fill this gap in Government funding by supporting Fellowships and other research positions where possible, but this cannot continue.
- 1 in 3 Australians are impacted by lung disease, with research being critical if we are to reduce disease burden, mortality rate as well as social and economic costs.
- COVID has highlighted the importance of healthy lungs and a strong research sector, and as respiratory conditions and viruses grow a dedicated Mission can enable Australia to take a leading role globally.

A MRFF Mission allows researchers to think big and are programs of work with ambitious objectives that are only possible through significant investment, leadership and collaboration. Missions bring together researchers, health professionals, stakeholders, industry partners and patients as part of a joint effort to support the discovery of new techniques and treatments, leading to healthier Australians.

Lung conditions pose a substantial burden on individuals, their families, the healthcare system, and the broader economy. Not being able to breathe is a health challenge that is without parallel. Recent catastrophic bushfires and pandemics have forced Australians to turn towards respiratory experts for their research and clinical care. We need to respond to this momentum and invest in discoveries in medical research and innovations, in optimising health service delivery, in supporting our people in their holistic form, in their community and family unit, by ensuring robust evidence translation. The most impactful approach will be through a Respiratory Health Mission, which will result in world class collaborations from across sector and industry to extract answers and solutions to these real challenges. The goal of the mission would be to reduce the avoidable burden of respiratory disease in Australia: reduce deaths, reduce hospital presentations, increase quality of life and reduce the burden, and reduce the onset of respiratory disease.

In order to ensure no further delays to the funding and effectiveness of this vital MRFF mission, we suggest an initial investment of \$500,000 which would be used to complete pre-requisite steps, including:

- Establishment of the governance structures to support this initiative
- Appointment of the project implementing team to execute this 'startup' phase and establish the base for the remainder of the 10 year mission
- Coordination of the local and international consultation processes to validate and establish the pillars and phases of the Respiratory Health research mission
- Establishment of the platforms, databases, tools and resources necessary for the effective collaboration of stakeholders engagement in the mission.

The resulting MRFF mission amounts to \$200million over 10 years, which would then be ready for funding in the 2023-2024 budget. This mission has been developed by the Lung Health Alliance and details have been provided to the Australian Medical Research Advisory Board, with recommended investment at the same level of funding as the current Cardiovascular Health Mission.

Priority 6: Launch and fund the National Tobacco Strategy

We urge the Australian Government to ensure the National Tobacco Strategy is launched as a matter of urgency in 2023, and appropriate funding is allocated in the 2023-2024 budget to begin implementation of this important national strategy.

Tobacco is the leading cause of death and disease in Australia. Tobacco use is responsible for around \$137 billion annually in direct and indirect costs.⁹ In addition to the burden of tobacco smoking products, e-cigarettes are presenting an emerging challenge in Australia, with use among youth being particularly problematic. Use of e-cigarettes has become widespread and despite nicotine-containing e-cigarettes being illegal without a prescription we know Australians, including children, are accessing these harmful devices. The evidence is clear that these products are dangerous, and we are putting the health of future generations at severe risk if we continue to delay any action. A coordinated multi-strategy and multi-agency approach is needed for Australia to further reduce smoking rates and address the e-cigarette crisis, and the National Tobacco Strategy is an important guiding document for this action, which will be in alignment with the National Preventive Health Strategy.

Our request for launch of the National Tobacco Strategy and an accompanying investment follows the recent announcement of the Albanese Government's *Reignite the Fight Against Tobacco Addiction* reforms, which aim to bring together all of Australia's current tobacco measures along with 11 new measures, into a single streamlined and effective Act of Parliament that will reignite the fight against tobacco and e-cigarettes. We commend the proposed reforms and encourage the Albanese Government to include budget for 2023-2024 to address tobacco and e-cigarettes from a national perspective, which can for example include a comprehensive revitalised national tobacco campaign. We do however note that previous national anti-tobacco campaigns, while successful at the time, have resulted in lung disease and lung cancer becoming highly stigmatised. New campaigns must be conscious of perpetuating stigma, as the unintended consequences can be severe and solidify smoking behaviours as a means of rebellion. As the peak lung health organisation Lung Foundation Australia welcome the opportunity to support the development of a national tobacco strategy in thorough consultation with the community.

Why do we need a National Tobacco Strategy and what should it include?

- Smoking costs Australia around \$137 billion annually in direct and indirect costs
- Smoking is responsible for a huge disease burden
 - In 2015, tobacco use contributed to approximately 21,000 deaths in Australia (13% of all deaths) and 9.3% of the total burden of disease.
 - Smoking remains the leading cause of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD), which is responsible for the 4th highest disease burden in Australia, and lung cancer which is responsible for the 5th highest disease burden.
- Second-hand smoke can significantly impact people with pre-existing respiratory conditions, and with approximately 7 million Australians experiencing a respiratory condition this is a significant issue
- E-cigarettes are now a significant challenge in Australia, with youth use being particularly problematic

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. A coordinated multi-strategy and multi-agency approach is needed for Australia to further reduce smoking rates, and the National Tobacco Strategy is an important guiding document for this action, which will be in alignment with the National Preventive Health Strategy. We are committed to supporting the Australian Government in this important work.

¹ Cancer Australia 2020. *Report on the Lung Cancer Screening enquiry*. <https://www.canceraustralia.gov.au/publications-and-resources/cancer-australia-publications/report-lung-cancer-screening-enquiry>

² Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, 2021. *Cancer data in Australia*. Cat. No: CAN122, Canberra.

³ Ibid, *Cancer data in Australia*. 2021.

⁴ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare AIHW 2021, *Health System Expenditure on cancer and other neoplasms in Australia, 2015-16*. Cat. No: CAN142. Canberra.

⁵ Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2021, *Australian Burden of Disease Study: Impact and causes of illness and death in Australia 2018*. Cat. No: BOD29, Canberra.

⁶ Minister for Health Media Release, 2020. \$23 million investment for prostate cancer nurse program. Available at: <https://www.health.gov.au/ministers/the-hon-greg-hunt-mp/media/23-million-investment-for-prostate-cancer-nurse-program>

⁷ Minister for Health Media Release, 2021. \$3 million for McGrath Breast Care Nurses. Available at: <https://www.health.gov.au/ministers/the-hon-greg-hunt-mp/media/3-million-for-mcgrath-breast-care-nurses>

⁸ Australian Government Budget factsheet, 2019. *Budget 2019-20: Fighting Cancer – McGrath Foundation breast care nurses*. Available at: <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/budget-2019-20-fighting-cancer-mcgrath-foundation-breast-care-nurses>

⁹ National Drug Research Institute, 2019. *Identifying the Social Costs of Tobacco Use to Australia in 2015/16*. Curtin University.