



# 2024 Queensland State Election Priorities

# Executive summary and recommendations

There are over 30 different types of lung disease currently impacting 1 in 3 Australians.

Lung disease and lung cancer is a **leading cause of death** in Queensland but it has consistently been underfunded compared to other prominent diseases.

Lung Foundation Australia is proudly headquartered in Brisbane, delivering vital services to Queenslanders. It is the only national charity and leading peak body dedicated to supporting anyone with a lung disease including lung cancer. For over 33 years, we have been the trusted national point-of-call for patients, their families, carers, health professionals and the general community on lung health.

Good health and the ability to breathe freely is paramount to every person's wellbeing. Cost of living pressures and pressures on the healthcare system post COVID-19 are impacting Queenslanders' ability to prioritise their health, making it vital to invest in cost effective services and programs to help every Queenslanders breathe easily.

## We recommend that the Queensland Government invest in:

**1** Expand access to Specialist Lung Cancer Nurses across QLD - \$2.5 million per year

**2** Respiratory care program - connecting Queenslanders to evidence-based information and support while easing pressure on hospitals - \$950,000 per year

**3** Addressing gaps in e-cigarette resources and information for young people - \$500,000

**4** Support for COVID recovery - \$450,000 over two years

**5** Free pneumococcal vaccination for Queenslanders who are recommended to receive it

**6** Increase funding for system preparedness for lung cancer screening

Lung Foundation Australia is committed to improving lung health and reducing 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.



**Mark Brooke**  
Chief Executive Officer



**Professor Lucy Morgan**  
Chair, Lung Foundation Australia

## Expand access to Specialist Lung Cancer Nurses across QLD - \$2.5 million per year

Specialist Lung Cancer Nurses (SLCNs) are desperately needed by the thousands of Queenslanders currently living with lung cancer. We commend the Queensland Government on the investment of four Specialist Lung Cancer Nurses but many more are urgently needed to reduce inequities in access and to be ready for the roll out of the national lung cancer screening program in 2025.

We strongly recommend the investment in 12 additional nurses at \$2.5 million per year. These specialist nurses will complement and work alongside the federally

funded All Cancer Nurses,<sup>1</sup> and are vitally needed in the community.

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. Our nurses, which are evidence-based and cost-effective, 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.



*“Navigating the health system as a lung cancer patient can be stressful, confusing, and particularly overwhelming when you are emotionally vulnerable... It was such a relief and comfort when I met my SLCN who answered my questions, guided me through the complex processes, explained confusing paperwork, and helped me resolve logistical challenges. Access to SLCNs should be the norm, not a luxury.”*



Lung cancer remains the **#1 cause** of cancer death<sup>2</sup> and the 4th leading cause of all death in Queensland in 2022<sup>3</sup>



Approximately **2,300** Queenslanders are diagnosed with lung cancer every year<sup>4</sup>

### Location of current SLCNs in QLD

- 1 x in Cairns and Hinterland Hospital and Health Service (HHS) (Cairns Hospital)
- 1 x in Darling Downs HHS (Toowoomba Hospital)
- 1 x in West Moreton HHS (Ipswich Hospital)
- 1 x in Wide Bay HHS (working across Hervey Bay and Bundaberg Hospitals).

More SLCNs are urgently needed to support the large incidence and mortality of lung cancer patients across Queensland.

By expanding SLCNs across more HHSs, it will contribute to better health outcomes and quality of life for more Queenslanders affected by lung cancer and ensure equitable health access in regional and remote areas.



1. Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care. Biggest investment in cancer nurses on record. Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care. Published November 17, 2023. Accessed March 15, 2024. <https://www.health.gov.au/ministers/the-hon-mark-butler-mp/media/biggest-investment-in-cancer-nurses-on-record> 2. Queensland Health. Investment in research and technology sees Queensland cancer death rate reach 25-year low. Queensland Health. Published December 28, 2023. Accessed February 26, 2024. <https://www.health.qld.gov.au/newsroom/news/investment-in-research-and-technology-sees-queensland-cancer-death-rate-reach-25-year-low> 3. ABS. Causes of Death, Australia, 2022 | Australian Bureau of Statistics. Published September 28, 2023. Accessed February 19, 2024. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/causes-death/causes-death-australia/latest-release> 4. Information and symptoms of lung cancer. Cancer Council Queensland. Accessed February 21, 2024. <https://cancerqld.org.au/get-support/cancer-information/types-of-cancer/lung-cancer/>

## Respiratory Care Program

– connecting all Queenslanders to evidence-based information and support while easing pressure on hospitals – \$950,000 per year

Lung Foundation Australia’s Respiratory Care Program supports people with respiratory disease to increase their knowledge, confidence, and skills. Each patient is provided individually tailored information about condition management as well as educational resources where necessary under the guidance of a trained health professional. Our Respiratory Care Program provides a unique opportunity to support the thousands of Queensland residents with a lung condition ensuring that they can manage their condition, are connected with relevant support services, and avoid unnecessary hospital admissions. The evidence-based and cost-effective program is delivered via telephone, and if scaled up with funding can enable all Queenslanders with a lung condition to access this service regardless of their location.

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) alone was responsible for over **18,880** potentially preventable hospital admissions in Queensland, representing a significant burden to the health system.<sup>5</sup>

### Evaluation demonstrated:<sup>6</sup>



Improved care in the community



**\$2,075 savings per person** when completing the program



Telehealth service for equitable access



Improved health outcomes



Reduced pressure on emergency departments



*“The program has been really very good, it’s helped me work out a balanced exercise regime and proper airway clearance techniques, and it keeps me up to date on the latest information and advice.”*

*“I haven’t had as many flare ups, which has meant not having to go to the doctor as often for extra medicine prescriptions and rounds of antibiotics, which is so helpful to my overall health and far less expensive.”*

Dick from Brisbane, living with a chronic lung disease.

5. Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care. Potentially preventable hospitalisations - Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease 2014-15, 2015-16, 2016-17, 2017-18 | Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care. Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care. Published 2021. Accessed February 21, 2024. <https://www.safetyandquality.gov.au/publications-and-resources/resource-library/data-file-21-potentially-preventable-hospitalisations-chronic-obstructive-pulmonary-disease-2014-15-2015-16-2016-17-2017-18> 6. Rana R et al. (2022). The impact and effectiveness of a nurse led telehealth education program for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease patients. Available from: <https://lungfoundation.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Evaluation-Report-on-LFA-COPD-Nurse-Education-program-1.pdf>

# Addressing gaps in e-cigarette resources and information for young people - \$500,000

With Lung Foundation Australia’s strong track record of producing high quality e-modules, videos and fact sheets on e-cigarettes we would like to expand these resources into new content areas and ensure up-to-date information is provided in this rapidly changing space.

E-cigarette use by young people has increased significantly over the last few years, creating a new public health crisis and seriously harming our young people. Queensland has worked incredibly hard to drive down tobacco smoking rates to prevent avoidable health impacts and reduce subsequent costs to the health system and society

more broadly, and this is reflected in Queensland’s comprehensive tobacco legislation.<sup>7</sup> However, we are witnessing a new generation of young people inhaling harmful chemicals, addicted to nicotine, and needing support. We recognise and strongly support Queensland’s investment.

With a rapidly changing policy environment, and evidence continuing to emerge around best-practice prevention, cessation and support, there is a strong need for additional information and resources. Lung Foundation Australia are well placed to deliver this work as we have a strong track-record of rapidly developing accurate, quality, and co-designed resources.

## In Queensland (2022)<sup>8</sup>

Nearly **1 in 6** Queensland children aged 12-17 had used e-cigarettes

More than **1 in 4** Queensland children aged 16-17 had used e-cigarettes



There was a **486% increase** in calls to poisons line involving children exposed to e-cigarettes and vaping products<sup>9</sup>

## Health impacts from vaping include:<sup>10</sup>

- poisoning
- acute nicotine toxicity including seizures
- nicotine dependence
- burns and injuries
- lung and brain injury
- risk of onset or worsening of mental health disorders



E-cigarettes contribute to **environmental waste** and fires



Unveil what you inhale resources

In addition, we hope the Queensland Government will expand their monitoring and enforcement efforts to curb the illegal sale of e-cigarette products outside of the approved cessation pathway that align with the recent federal reforms and the agreed national approach.

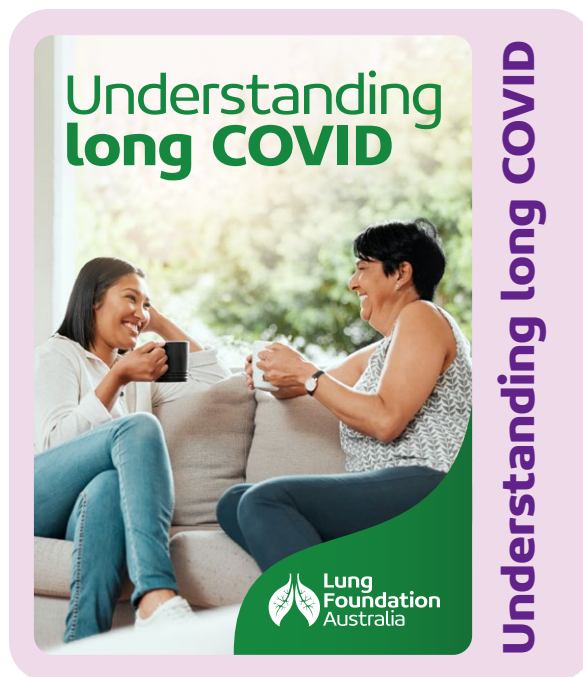
7. Queensland Government. Tobacco and Other Smoking Products Act 1998 - Queensland Legislation - Queensland Government. Published online 2023. Accessed May 27, 2024. <https://www.legislation.qld.gov.au/view/html/inforce/current/act-1998-001> 8. Queensland Government health and Environment Committee; 2023. <https://documents.parliament.qld.gov.au/tp/2023/5723T560-5052.pdf> Queensland Government. Report of the Chief Health Officer Queensland. 2023. The health of Queenslanders. Published online 2023. <https://www.choreport.health.qld.gov.au/> 9. Davey M, Rose T. Australian government to crack down on nicotine e-cigarettes as rates of teen vaping skyrocket. The Guardian. <https://www.theguardian.com/australia-news/2022/nov/29/government-to-crack-down-on-nicotine-e-cigarettes-as-rates-of-teen-vaping-skyrocket> 10. Banks E, Yazidjoglou A, Brown S, et al. Electronic Cigarettes and Health Outcomes: Systematic Review of Global Evidence. National Centre for Epidemiology and Population Health; 2022. [https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/attachments/ecigarettes/Electronic\\_cigarettes\\_and\\_health\\_outcomes\\_%20systematic\\_review\\_of\\_evidence.pdf](https://www.nhmrc.gov.au/sites/default/files/documents/attachments/ecigarettes/Electronic_cigarettes_and_health_outcomes_%20systematic_review_of_evidence.pdf)

## Support for COVID recovery - \$450,000 over two years to support Queensland residents experiencing long COVID

Long COVID remains an ongoing risk for Queensland residents of all ages and backgrounds. Lung Foundation Australia are well-placed to address current and emerging gaps in long COVID information, as, in partnership with consumers and key opinion leaders, we developed the *Understanding long COVID booklet*.<sup>11</sup> The booklet has been widely disseminated and has received strong support from consumers, health professionals, as well as positive feedback from key bodies.

### Lung Foundation Australia are requesting funding to deliver the following:

- Providing consumers and health professionals with regular updates on the latest evidence and resources.
- Development and targeted dissemination of long COVID resources for culturally and linguistically diverse communities and First Nations communities.
- Development and delivery of webinars dedicated to keeping consumers and health professionals informed of latest evidence in the evolving long COVID landscape.



We also recommend that the Queensland Government invest in long COVID clinics as an important adjunct to the information and support from Lung Foundation Australia.



**1,773,968**  
cases of COVID  
in Queensland<sup>12</sup>



**5-10%**  
of people get  
long COVID



**3 in 4** Queensland residents believe the government should invest in increasing support and information for individuals experiencing ongoing COVID-19 symptoms<sup>13</sup>

### Long COVID symptoms include:<sup>11</sup>



Breathing difficulties



Brain fog



Fatigue



Cough

11. Lung Foundation Australia. Understanding Long COVID Booklet. Published online 2023. <https://lungfoundation.com.au/resources/understanding-long-covid/>  
12. Macali A. 1,773,968 Coronavirus Cases and 749 Active in Queensland - COVID Live. Accessed February 26, 2024. <https://covidlive.com.au/qld> 13. Lung Foundation Australia. Share Your Experience: The COVID-19 pandemic survey.

## Priority 5

### Free pneumococcal vaccination – for Queenslanders who are recommended to receive it

**Pneumococcal vaccination reduces the likelihood of developing pneumonia and worsening COPD symptoms.<sup>14</sup> The Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI) clinically recommend pneumococcal vaccination for people of all ages living with COPD, severe asthma, or interstitial and fibrotic lung disease. Free pneumococcal vaccination is on the National Immunisation Program (NIP), however, it is only available to Australians aged over 70 and Indigenous Australians aged over 50.**

Approximately 163,800 Queenslanders have a diagnosis of COPD, with around half under the age of 65.<sup>15</sup> This means that many are not eligible for free vaccination. Pneumococcal vaccination costs over \$200 on private script. There is an urgent need to remove the financial barrier for Queenslanders to access this vaccine.

14. Walters J, Tang J, Poole P, et al. Pneumococcal vaccines for preventing pneumonia in chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. 2017; 1(1): CD001390. Cochrane Database Syst Rev. 2017;1(1). doi:doi: 10.1002/14651858.CD001390.pub4 15. Chronic conditions, 2017-18 financial year | Australian Bureau of Statistics. Published December 12, 2018. Accessed March 11, 2024. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/health-conditions-and-risks/chronic-conditions/latest-release>

## Priority 6

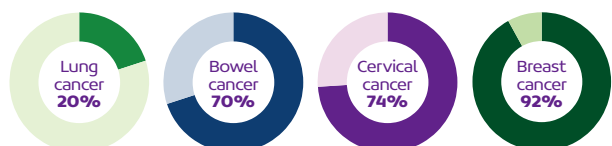
### Increase funding for system preparedness for lung cancer screening

We recommend the Queensland Government rapidly increase investment in workforce and system preparedness ahead of the launch of the new national lung cancer screening program, including the crucial implementation of additional Lung Foundation Australia SLCNs. Early detection of lung cancer is vital, it saves lives and reduces the burden on individuals, communities and the health system.

Lung cancer is Queensland's leading cause of cancer death each year. In 2020, Queensland reported 3,006 cases of lung cancer and alarmingly 1,953 deaths. This means that each year there are more deaths from lung cancer than from breast cancer, prostate cancer and melanoma combined.<sup>8</sup>

When lung cancer is detected early the survival rate is dramatically improved. This new screening program, which will begin rolling out across the country in July 2025, will save thousands of lives.

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



All jurisdictions are currently working together to prepare for implementation. We recommend increased investment locally to ensure that the workforce and system broadly are upskilled and prepared. We also note the opportunity to incorporate occupational lung disease screening (like silicosis) for workers in the future.

## **Lung Foundation Australia**

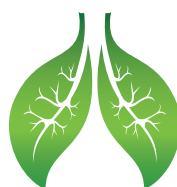
Level 4, 12 Cribb Street  
Milton QLD 4064

PO Box 1949, Milton QLD 4064

E: [enquiries@lungfoundation.com.au](mailto:enquiries@lungfoundation.com.au)

[www.lungfoundation.com.au](http://www.lungfoundation.com.au)

Free call 1800 654 301



**Lung  
Foundation  
Australia**