

The Australian Capital Territory Election Priorities

July 2024

Contact: Mark Brooke - CEO Lung Foundation Australia
at markb@lungfoundation.com.au or 0417 076 090

Level 4, 12 Cribb Street, Milton QLD 4064

PO Box 1949, Yuggera Country Milton QLD 4064

ABN: 36 051 131 901

1800 654 301

Lungfoundation.com.au

enquiries@lungfoundation.com.au

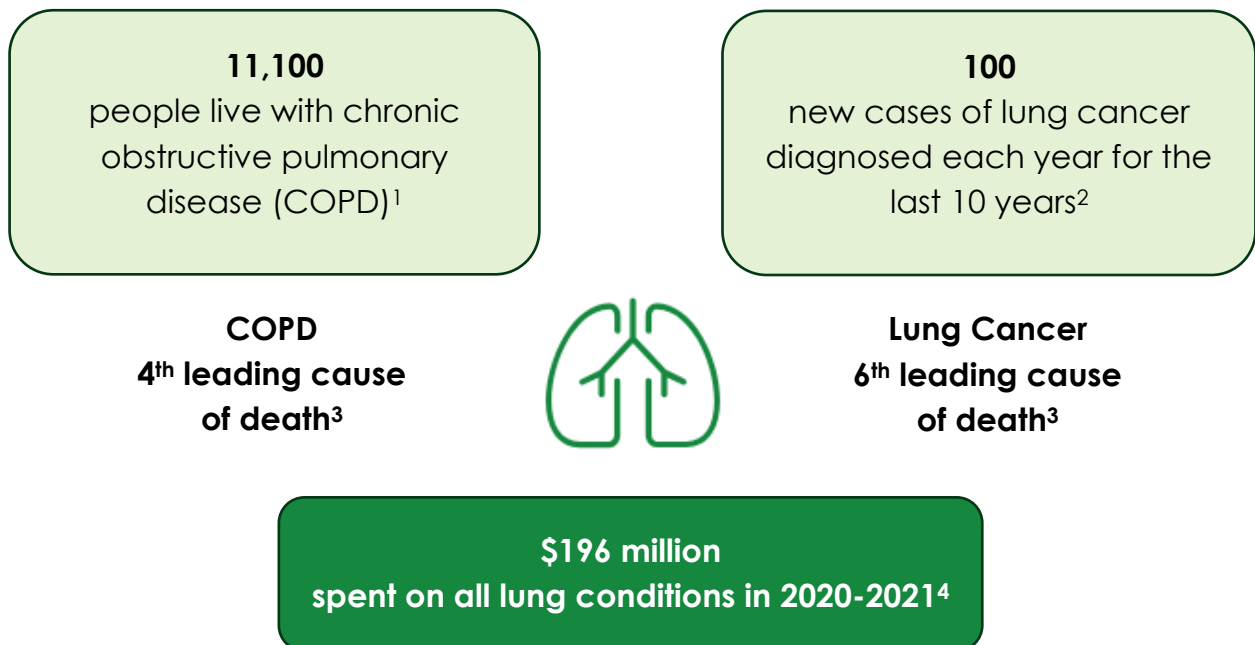
Lung Foundation Australia

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 30 years, we have been the trusted point-of-call on lung health for patients, their families, carers, health professionals, and the general community. We will continue working to ensure lung health is a priority for all by promoting prevention 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.

Lung disease and lung cancer in the ACT

Respiratory diseases place a significant burden on the health and economic systems of the ACT. As we navigate evolving respiratory concerns, such as the ongoing impacts of COVID-19, the number of ACT residents impacted by lung conditions continues to grow. Lung diseases, including lung cancer, are responsible for a considerable proportion of morbidity and mortality in the ACT, highlighting the need for tailored information and support to improve self-management and outcomes for the community.

In the Australian Capital Territory, it is estimated that:



Our Recommendations and Priorities for the ACT

We urge the ACT Government to take the following actions to promote lung health and improve self-management of lung conditions in the ACT community:

Lung Health Priorities in the ACT

Priority 1. Invest in Specialist Lung Cancer Nurses – providing vital support to ACT residents diagnosed with lung cancer – \$230,000 per year

Priority 2. Invest in Lung Foundation Australia's Respiratory Care Program – connecting Canberrans to evidence-based information and support while easing pressure on hospitals – \$260,000 per year

Priority 3. Invest in support for COVID recovery – providing up-to-date information and resources on long COVID to the community – \$120,000 per year

Priority 4. Invest in e-cigarette educational resources – empowering young Canberrans to make healthy decisions informed by the latest evidence and research – \$255,000 per year

Priority 5. Amend the Territory's Electoral Act 1992 to ban political donations by the tobacco industry – sending a clear message that the tobacco industry should have no influence on public policy.

Investment in our priorities is aligned with key ACT Government plans and strategies, most notably the **ACT Health Services Plan 2022-2030**, the **ACT Health Workforce Strategy 2023-2032** and the **ACT Preventive Health Action Plan 2023-2025**.

These modest investments, amounting to \$865,000 annually, represent less than 0.5% of the total yearly expenditure on treating lung conditions in the ACT. This small investment will enable LFA to respond to the current lung health priorities in the ACT, which will significantly benefit ACT residents impacted by a lung condition and will ultimately reduce direct health system costs in the short and long term.

Priority 1

Invest in Specialist Lung Cancer Nurses to provide vital support to ACT residents diagnosed with lung cancer.

What is Lung Foundation Australia's Specialist Lung Cancer Nurse Program?

Specialist lung cancer nurses are highly qualified advanced practice nurses, working at the top of their scope, who provide expert clinical, social, and emotional support to people living with lung cancer. As a core member of the multidisciplinary team, specialist lung cancer nurses play a pivotal role in every step of the lung cancer patient pathway, including:

- Prevention and screening
- Diagnosis and staging
- Symptom management
- Progression
- Mental health and wellbeing
- Survivorship

LFA's model of care for our Specialist Lung Cancer Nurse service is evidence-based and includes an evaluation framework. The service complements the federal investment in navigation services and will fill a clear gap in current information and support for residents in the ACT.

Why are we requesting the Government to invest in this priority? What will be achieved?

Lung cancer can affect anyone, not just smokers. Receiving a diagnosis can be a very overwhelming and frightening experience. There are many decisions to be made from a health perspective, as well as a social perspective, when a person is diagnosed with lung cancer.

There is limited support for ACT residents with lung cancer who need assistance in navigating their diagnosis and the healthcare system. We know that patient outcomes and overall wellbeing are drastically improved when a SLCN is involved⁵.

When a Specialist Lung Cancer Nurse is involved:

44%

are more likely to have access to treatment⁶

75%

fewer presentations to emergency department⁷

By investing in Lung Foundation Australia's Specialist Lung Cancer Nurse Program in the ACT, the ACT Government will contribute to reducing the extreme inequities in care that exist for people living with lung cancer compared to other cancers. There will be significant benefits for ACT residents impacted by lung cancer, in addition to other health system and economic benefits.

Investment required: \$230,000 per year over three years

Priority 2

Invest in Lung Foundation Australia's Respiratory Care Program – connecting Canberrans to evidence-based information and support while easing pressure on hospitals.

What is Lung Foundation Australia's Respiratory Care Program?



The Respiratory Care Program supports people with a chronic lung condition to increase their knowledge, confidence, and skills for effective self-management. The service is provided free-of-charge to patients and delivered via telephone by trained health professionals with expertise in respiratory disease management. Each patient is provided with individually tailored information and support regarding their condition as well as educational resources where necessary. The program serves as an adjunct to existing health services, empowering individuals to better manage their condition

Why are we requesting the Government to invest in this priority? What will be achieved?

Respiratory diseases, such as COPD, are a leading cause of premature mortality and responsible for significant health system pressure and expenditure when not managed properly.

Benefits of investing in our Respiratory Care Program⁸:

- increased health-promoting behaviours, such as increased physical activity, reductions in smoking, and correct use of medications
- improved health outcomes and health-related quality of life
- reduced pressure on emergency departments
- telehealth model promotes equitable access to care
- \$2,075 savings per person when completing the program

By investing in LFA's Respiratory Care Program, the ACT Government will contribute to reducing the burden of respiratory disease in the ACT, leading to health system benefits as well as significant improvements in health and quality of life for the many ACT residents impacted by lung disease.

Investment required: \$260,000 per year over three years

Priority 3

Invest in support for COVID recovery by providing up-to-date information and resources on long COVID to the community.

What will Lung Foundation Australia deliver with this investment?

Lung Foundation Australia have led the development of a holistic and comprehensive long COVID patient resource in partnership with consumers and key opinion leaders. The booklet has been widely disseminated and has received strong support from consumers, health professionals, and other organisations. With further investment, we will continue our leadership and expand information and resources available to Canberrans by:

- providing consumers and health professionals with regular updates on the latest evidence and resources,
- developing and disseminating long COVID resources for culturally and linguistically diverse communities, and
- developing and delivering webinars dedicated to keeping consumers and health professionals informed of latest evidence in the evolving long COVID landscape.

Why are we requesting the Government to invest in this priority? What can be achieved?

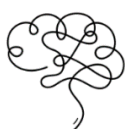
Long COVID remains an ongoing risk for Canberrans of all ages and backgrounds. Despite this, there is still a considerable lack of information and support available for people living with long COVID. Lung Foundation Australia are well placed to scale up COVID recovery information and resources to help Canberrans live healthy productive lives.

An estimated 5-10% of COVID-19 cases in Australia result in long COVID*.

Most commonly reported long COVID symptoms include:



Breathing difficulties



Brain fog



Fatigue



Cough

Investment required: \$120,000 per year over two years

Priority 4

Invest in e-cigarette educational resources to empower young people to make healthy decisions informed by the latest evidence and research.

What will Lung Foundation Australia deliver with this investment?

Lung Foundation Australia led the first campaigns and resources in Australia to educate the community on what is really in vapes. More recently, we have launched free e-learning modules and several co-designed animated short videos for First Nations young people. These resources complement our wide range of factsheets that provide information and support; on the harms of vaping, making informed decisions and the impact of vaping on mental health. We understand the need to speak to a wide audience when addressing vaping, which is why we take a coordinated approach and provide resources and support to young people, their parents, carers and educators.

With further investment, we will expand the information and resources available to young Canberrans in key topics aligned to the evolving context and evidence. For example:

- mental health and vaping including the impact of addiction,
- environmental harms of vaping products,
- impact of passive vaping and breathing in second hand vapour,
- vaping cessation support and tips, and
- new federal reforms for e-cigarettes (what the law is and what it means).



Why are we requesting the Government to invest in this priority? What will be achieved?

E-cigarette use among young people has increased significantly over the last few years. We know we have a new generation of young people inhaling harmful chemicals, addicted to nicotine, and needing support.

The Federal reforms passed in July 2024 will have a marked impact on reducing e-cigarette use in Australia, especially among children and adolescents, and we strongly support these efforts. This is an evolving policy environment and evidence continues to emerge around best practice prevention, cessation and support, highlighting the need for additional information and resources.

We believe this work will complement existing efforts in the ACT by delivering new and additional information and modalities. 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. We believe it is important to build on what is currently available, with a focus on meeting the evolving needs of young people and providing awareness and access to free resources.

Investment required: \$255,000 per year over two years

Priority 5

Policy change to amend the Territory's Electoral Act 1992 to ban political donations of any type by the tobacco industry.

Why are we requesting the Government to change in this priority? What can be achieved?

Australia is compelled to ban political donations from the tobacco industry through our obligations as a signatory to the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, and by all Australian jurisdictions' endorsement of the National Preventive Health Strategy 2021-2030 and the National Tobacco Strategy 2023-2030.

Action 1.4 of the National Tobacco Strategy calls for Australian jurisdictions

To develop and implement measures to prohibit contributions from the tobacco industry and those working to further its interest to political parties, candidates, or campaigns.

Legislating a ban on political donations from the tobacco industry operationalises the stated principle of ACT's main political parties (ACT Labor, Canberra Liberals, and The Greens) to not accept tobacco industry donations. At a time when the tobacco industry continues to fight sensible tobacco and e-cigarette reforms, both in Australia and globally, this action would send a clear message that the tobacco industry should have no influence on Australian public policy.

This policy reform is possible, with New South Wales currently the only Australian jurisdiction to ban political donations from the tobacco industry. Recognising the importance of this reform other jurisdictions have begun actively considering this action – and the ACT must join them.

By making a commitment to this change, the ACT can future proof interference by industry.

References

- [1] Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS). (2023). National Health Survey. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/health-conditions-and-risks/national-health-survey/latest-release#data-downloads>
- [2] ACT Government. (2023). ACT Selected Cancer incidence and mortality. https://www.data.act.gov.au/Health/ACT-Selected-Cancer-incidence-and-mortality/a2ku-4dqc/about_data
- [3] ABS. (2023). Causes of Death, Australia. <https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/health/causes-death/causes-death-australia/latest-release#data-downloads>
- [4] AIHW. (2023). Health system spending on disease and injury in Australia, 2020-21. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/health-welfare-expenditure/health-system-spending-on-disease-and-injury-in-au/data>
- [5] Stewart I, Leary A, Khakwani A, Borthwick D, Tod A, Hubbard R, et al. Do working practices of cancer nurse specialists improve clinical outcomes? Retrospective cohort analysis from the English National Lung Cancer Audit. *International Journal of Nursing Studies*. 2021;118:103718
- [6] Khakwani A, Hubbard RB, Beckett P, Borthwick D, Tod A, Leary A, et al. Which patients are assessed by lung cancer nurse specialists? A national lung cancer audit study of over 128,000 patients across England. *Lung cancer (Amsterdam, Netherlands)*. 2016;96:33-40. 101.
- [7] Leary A, Baxter J. Impact of lung cancer clinical nurse specialists on emergency admissions. *British journal of nursing (Mark Allen Publishing)*. 2014;23(17):935-8.
- [8] 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>
- [9] AIHW. (2022). Long COVID in Australia – a review of the literature. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/covid-19/long-covid-in-australia-a-review-of-the-literature/summary>