



# 2025 Australian Federal Election Priorities

Recommended by Lung Foundation Australia

# About Lung Foundation Australia

Lung Foundation Australia is the only charity and leading peak body of its kind in Australia that funds life-changing research and delivers support services that give hope to people living with lung disease or lung cancer. Since 1990, we have been 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.

## Lung Foundation Australia achievements, 2023-24:



**1,039,117** people connected with resources, support services and programs through our website



**1,868** telephone-based appointments with a nurse or social worker

**4,262**

health-related enquiries to Information and Support Centre



**3,042**

healthcare professional registrations for learning sessions



**65+**

government submissions for life-saving treatments, new medicines and policy change



**3,350** earned media stories about lung health reached 1.01 billion



**94,963** people accessed our online Lung Health Checklist - resulting in 229 people seeing their GP and 85 reporting receiving a lung health diagnosis



### Acknowledgement of Country

Lung Foundation Australia acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands on which we work throughout Australia and their unceded sovereignty of and continuing connection to land and sea. We pay our respects to their cultures and to Elders both past and present. We acknowledge the overrepresentation of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people in lung disease and lung cancer. In the spirit of reconciliation, we recommit to working with communities to close the gap on lung health and build on the strengths of communities to lead and guide the path to healthy lungs for all.

# Lung Foundation Australia's recommendations

There are over 30 different types of lung disease currently impacting **1 in 3 Australians**. Lung diseases, including lung cancer, are leading causes of death in Australia, but they have consistently been underfunded compared to other prominent diseases. There is an urgent need for the government to **fund prevention efforts as well as improved services for those already living with a lung disease, and the healthcare professionals who support them**.

Lung Foundation Australia are calling for investments across five priority areas which will lead to huge returns. These recommendations can reduce the burden of lung diseases on those living with the disease and on the health system as a whole.

## We recommend that the next Australian Government:

1

### Reduce pressure on the Australian health system:

Invest \$1.6 million per year, over three years, in Lung Foundation Australia's Respiratory Care Program.

2

### Reduce inequities in the leading cause of cancer death in Australia:

Invest \$5 million per year in Specialist Lung Cancer Nurses and commit to sustained investment in the National Lung Cancer Screening Program.

3

### Ensure high quality training for primary healthcare professionals:

Invest \$1.7 million, over three years, in Australia's best-practice lung health education and training program in primary care.

4

### Reduce the burden of chronic diseases in a cost-effective way:

Increase investment in preventive health, towards 5% of the health budget.

5

### Promote a smoke and vape free Australia:

Explore a generational phase out of tobacco products; ban political donations from the tobacco industry.

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 and their families.



**Mark Brooke**  
Chief Executive Officer



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

## Reduce pressure on the Australian health system

Invest \$1.6 million per year, over three years, in Lung Foundation Australia's Respiratory Care Program.

Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD) is a progressive, long-term lung condition that leads to increasing breathing difficulty, disability, and premature death. **COPD is a leading cause of preventable hospitalisations in Australia<sup>1</sup>**, putting enormous pressure on the Australian health system.

Although not fully reversible, COPD is treatable and better management of COPD can reduce exacerbations that lead to preventable hospitalisations<sup>2</sup>.

Lung Foundation Australia's cost-effective Respiratory Care Program supports people across Australia living with a respiratory disease to better manage their condition and avoid unnecessary hospital admissions.

### Benefits of Lung Foundation Australia's Respiratory Care Program

Free to consumers  Evidence-based and cost-effective 



Provides equitable access via a telehealth model

Reduces hospitalisations and emergency department presentations



Since 2019, **more than 1,000 Australians** living with COPD have participated in our program

**99%** of participants were satisfied with the program



Participants were significantly **more likely to use a range of strategies** to manage their lung condition such as keeping vaccinations up to date, using airway clearance techniques, and having a written action plan



## Naomi, mother of three, living with COPD



*I had just been diagnosed with COPD. I tried to get answers from the specialist about what I could expect, what was going to happen. But there really wasn't any empathy. I didn't know how long it takes, what you could do, I didn't really know much at that point. I tried to talk to my family about it, but they didn't really understand. They didn't know what COPD was. So, **you feel really alone.***

Naomi was feeling scared and alone after receiving her diagnosis of COPD.

Naomi describes the relief felt once she was connected to Lung Foundation Australia's free Respiratory Care Program.

"My first call, I was so frightened, I didn't know what to expect" she says, "I called the service, and **they were just so helpful...** it was just so beautiful."

Our highly skilled Respiratory Care Nurses provided Naomi with friendly, evidence-based guidance that empowered her to better manage her COPD.

"Knowledge is power, which is what the nurses service does, because it gives you that knowledge to go out there and help yourself."

For Naomi, a working mum with three children, her focus is on preventive measures to better manage her COPD and stay healthy for longer.

"I'm working, I've got a young child and I'm going to be living with this and for a very long time. **We need to keep ourselves well so that we can keep contributing to Australia's economy.**"

For Naomi, and many others living with respiratory diseases, the Lung Foundation Australia Respiratory Care Program is a lifeline.

"The level of anxiety and feeling of being alone is so great before you get to a service like the Lung Foundation nurses where all of a sudden, you're validated, you're heard, you feel like a person again. And once you feel those things, you're able to absorb the information of how to help yourself. People like the Lung Foundation Nurses, **it's almost like they give you back your life.** They give you back the ability to take control and move forward."

## Priority 2

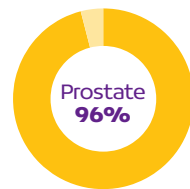
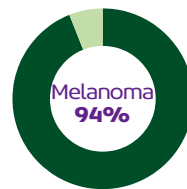
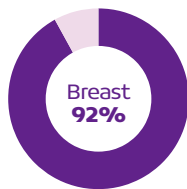
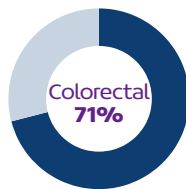
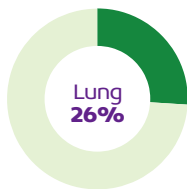
# Reduce inequities in the leading cause of cancer death in Australia

Invest \$5 million per year in Specialist Lung Cancer Nurses and commit to sustained investment in the National Lung Cancer Screening Program.

Lung cancer is the #1 cause of cancer deaths in Australia and fourth leading cause of all death<sup>3</sup>. Of the five most common cancers in Australia, lung cancer has by far the lowest survival rate (26%) with the next lowest being 71% (colorectal cancer)<sup>4</sup>.

Early detection and support to navigate the diagnosis is vital and saves lives.

### 5-year survival rate for the five most common cancers in Australia



### Sustained investment in The National Lung Cancer Screening Program

Many lung cancer patients experience critical delays in diagnosis and commencement of treatment<sup>5</sup>. When lung cancer is detected early survival rate and quality of life is dramatically improved. The National Lung Cancer Screening Program, commencing on 1 July 2025, provides an opportunity for early detection and early intervention for people with lung cancer. This program is predicted to **save more than 500 Australian lives** each year by diagnosing cancers at an earlier stage<sup>6</sup>.

We urge the Australian Government to commit to investing at least the \$101 million per year outlined in the forward estimates for this life-saving program. This investment will ensure that the workforce and system are upskilled and appropriately equipped to implement the screening program.

### Expanded access to Specialist Lung Cancer Nurses

Lung Foundation Australia's Specialist Lung Cancer Nurses are highly skilled advanced practice nurses, who provide lung-specific cancer care, information and support to optimise care for people living with lung cancer.

Expanding Lung Foundation Australia's Specialist Lung Cancer Nurse service will contribute to better health outcomes and quality of life for more Australians affected by lung cancer and ensure equitable health access in regional and remote areas. We are advocating for an investment of \$5 million to fund more than 20 additional nurses, or a minimum of \$1.2 million per year for six nurses to be placed on the Heart of Australia buses where they will provide support at the early stages of the diagnostic pathway as part of the National Lung Cancer Screening Program.



# Lung Foundation Australia's Specialist Lung Cancer Nurse service

- ✔ Provides valuable support across the lung cancer care pathway
- ✔ Identifies and addresses gaps in local health services that lead to unwarranted variations in outcomes
- ✔ Improves patient access to treatment
- ✔ Reduces wait times from referral to treatment
- ✔ Improves patients capacity to self-manage symptoms
- ✔ Reduces emergency department presentations
- ✔ Improves health outcomes

**If 100 of these nurses were funded in Australia, this would deliver \$18 million in health savings.**



**Yana Jones**, one of our Specialist Lung Cancer Nurses in Queensland

*"I have the privilege to take care of and support patients and their family, carers, and friends whose lives have been disrupted by Lung Cancer. Sometimes it's just as simple as being a familiar face at an appointment."*

**Taylor Tallboy**, one of our Specialist Lung Cancer Nurses in South Australia

*"Working in a low socioeconomic area with higher smoking and vaping rates, I pride myself on supporting patients with smoking cessation and improving their health literacy to help them make informed health decisions."*



*[The nurse] is compassionate and very knowledgeable. I enjoy the time chatting with [her] and find not only the call but information provided via email very beneficial. I appreciate [her] time and thank Lung Foundation Australia for providing this free invaluable service to patients all over Australia."*



*I cannot express how much I have benefited from my discussions with [the nurse]. I learnt so much on how to cope with side effects of my treatment and always felt there was someone there for assistance if needed. Thank you so much for providing this service for Lung Cancer patients, it means to much."*

# Ensure high quality training for primary healthcare professionals

Invest \$1.7 million, over three years, in Australia's best-practice lung health education and training program in primary care.

It is estimated that only:

**60%** of healthcare delivery aligns to evidence-based or consensus-based guidelines

**30%** is wasteful,

**10%** is harmful.<sup>12</sup>

Poor recognition of the risk factors and symptoms associated with lung diseases contributes to delayed diagnoses and subsequent delays in evidence-based care, leading to an unnecessary burden<sup>13,14,15</sup>. There is a need to support the primary care workforce to implement evidence-based guidelines in practice.

Lung Foundation Australia in partnership with Asthma Australia and the Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand have been funded to deliver the Lung Learning Program until mid 2025. This co-designed competency-based program ensures that that primary healthcare professionals are provided with high quality, evidence-based respiratory health training to improve patient outcomes.



More than **1,200** primary healthcare professionals are currently registered with the Lung Learning Hub

**91%** of users said they trusted the information and learning opportunities presented



With the high demand, rapid evolution to scope of practice, emerging evidence on respiratory diseases and associated communicable diseases, there is a need for high quality health professional education and training. Lung Foundation Australia request funding to continue to provide, and build upon, this vital education and training program.

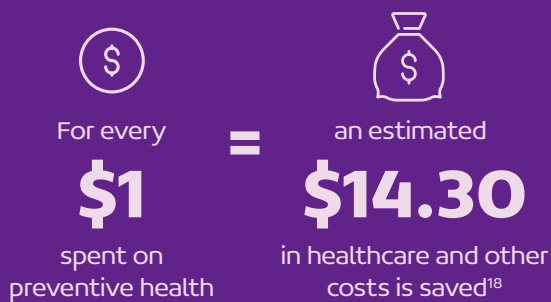




# Reduce the burden of chronic diseases in a cost-effective way

Increase investment in preventive health, towards 5% of the health budget.

Chronic diseases are the leading cause of death and disability in Australia and accounted for 90% of deaths in 2022<sup>16</sup>. However, nearly 40% of Australia's chronic disease burden could be prevented by reducing modifiable risk factors<sup>17</sup>.



Investment in preventive health measures is cost-effective<sup>19</sup>, yet the Australian Government spends <2% of its health expenditure on public health<sup>20</sup>, lower than most other OECD nations<sup>21</sup>.

The National Preventive Health Strategy (NPHS)<sup>22</sup>, developed using the best evidence from a range of sources, set a target to increase investment in preventive health to 5% of the total health expenditure across Commonwealth, state, and territory governments by 2030. Specifically, the NPHS recommends preventive health and health promotion activities in Australia need to be sustainably funded through **ongoing, long-term prevention funding**.

NGOs are core partners in prevention and essential to achieving the targets set in the NPHS. One mechanism for providing sustained investment in preventive health is through funding mechanisms like the Health Peak and Advisory Bodies Program, which provides NGOs, including Lung Foundation Australia, with the funding to effectively develop Australia's health system in line with the NPHS. Increased investment and commitment to preventive health is crucial to achieving the outcomes outlined in the NPHS.



# Promote a smoke and vape free Australia

Explore a generational phase out of tobacco products and ban political donations from the tobacco industry



Tobacco use is responsible for more than \$136 billion annually in treatment and lost productivity<sup>27</sup>.

Tobacco is still the leading cause of death and disease in Australia<sup>23</sup>. While Australia has been successful in reducing smoking rates through the implementation of a range of world-leading policies, public awareness campaigns and program supports, there is still more to be done.

### Consider a generational phase out of tobacco products

In alignment with the National Tobacco Strategy<sup>24</sup>, we recommend that the Australian Government commence an exploration of the health and economic impacts of raising the minimum age of purchase of tobacco products.

A recent study published in *The Lancet* found that implementing a tobacco-free generation could drastically reduce lung-cancer mortality globally. They estimated that 40% of lung cancer deaths in people born during 2006–10 could be prevented if a tobacco-free generation was achieved<sup>25</sup>.

The Australian Government's bold actions to protect young Australians from e-cigarettes will help stop a new generation from experiencing the addiction of nicotine and the harms from a range of chemicals. Bold action on tobacco cigarettes will do the same.

### Ban political donations from the tobacco industry

To meet Australia's obligations under the WHO Framework Convention on Tobacco Control, and to progress the National Tobacco Strategy, a legislative ban on political donations of any type by the tobacco industry is required. We encourage the Australian Parliament to ensure this action through amendments to the Electoral Legislation.



**Two-thirds** of Australians aged 14 and over support 'raising the legal age for sale or supply of tobacco products to those aged 21 years and over'<sup>26</sup>.





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## **Lung Foundation Australia**

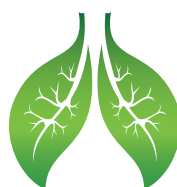
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