



**ASTHMA
AUSTRALIA**

A.C.T PRE-BUDGET SUBMISSION

October 2019

For more information about this Pre-Budget Submission,
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ABOUT ASTHMA AUSTRALIA



Asthma Australia is a for-purpose, consumer organisation which has been improving the lives of people with asthma since 1962. Asthma affects one in nine Australians or 2.7 million people. Asthma is an inflammatory condition of the airways, restricting airflow and can be fatal. There is no cure, but most people with asthma can experience good control.

Our purpose is to help people with asthma gain control of their symptoms so they can lead full and productive lives.

We operate across New South Wales, Victoria, Queensland, Tasmania, South Australia, and the Australian Capital Territory to deliver evidence-based prevention and health strategies to more than half a million people each year. Asthma Australia works in partnership with the Asthma Foundations of Western Australia and the Northern Territory to deliver consistent services across the nation.

Asthma has various degrees of severity (mild to severe) and affects people of all ages, from childhood to adulthood, and it can appear at all ages and stages of life. To ensure people can access effective treatments and best practice healthcare for their asthma, we work directly with people with asthma, their family and friends, health professionals, researchers, schools and governments. This way, we can ensure people with asthma are supported with education, access to high-quality information and care where they live, work and play in all stages of life.

One of our core services is the 1800 ASTHMA telehealth service. Thousands of people call this free service each year to speak directly with one of our Asthma Educators to seek help with their asthma or someone they care for.

Our Asthma Educators are experienced professionals who lead our one-to-one COACH Program®, a telephone coaching program which helps people with asthma achieve better control of their condition through the provision of

education and resources, addressing asthma and the important contributing factors, goal setting, and integrating care with their respiratory physician or GP. People can access our telehealth services through several channels; calling us directly, our website, or via referrals from GPs and Emergency Departments.

A primary focus of Asthma Australia is to educate the community about asthma, improve general understanding and support of the disease. By offering free online training for teachers to know what to do when a student has an asthma flare-up or an asthma attack, to working with emergency services to ensure people with asthma are informed during hazard reduction burn season, we work collaboratively with a range of stakeholders to achieve a better or safer future for people with asthma.

Asthma Australia's leading work attracts the financial support of governments, industry and the generous donations from the community to provide free, accessible services to the community, cutting-edge research, effective healthcare programs, and advocacy.



OUR VISION

A community free of asthma.

At Asthma Australia we are committed to halving the number of avoidable asthma-related hospital presentations by 2030.

We want everyone in the community to understand asthma so they can help in an asthma emergency situation.

Unfortunately, there has been limited progress over recent decades. Reductions in deaths and hospitalisations have stagnated. We need to challenge the status quo to improve outcomes for people with asthma. We will amplify the consumer voice and collaborate with consumers to design and deliver new approaches to more effectively address the challenges of living with asthma, and enable people to breathe so they can live freely.

At Asthma Australia, we help people to breathe so they can live freely.

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Asthma Australia believes that the health outcomes of the people of the A.C.T can be improved by the A.C.T Government supporting the A.C.T Better Pathways of Asthma Care Initiative. We are seeking a consolidated agreement and investment of \$1.155m over the next 3 years to provide a comprehensive range of programs and services:

- [Telehealth & Digital Health](#)
- [Emergency Department \(ED\) Discharge Program](#)
- [Health promotion campaigns](#)
- [Program Governance and evaluation](#)

This package of activities includes those we are already funded to deliver over the coming 2.5 years and the addition of a further amount to enable the continuation and improvement of the emergency department discharge program beyond June 2020.

(A general budget breakdown of Recommendations is contained on page [9])

1. Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018; National Health Survey: First Results 2017-18. ABS Cat no. 4364.0.55.001. Canberra: ABS. 2. AIHW 2017, Emergency department care 2016-17: Australian hospital statistics. Canberra: AIHW. 3. Public Health Information Development Unit (PHIDU) 2019, Asthma Atlas of Australia. Adelaide: PHIDU

ASTHMA AFFECTS TOO MANY PEOPLE IN THE A.C.T

Asthma Australia believes that all Canberrans should have access to services, education and supports that enable them to be healthy and free from the avoidable burden of asthma.

In the A.C.T:

48,700 people have asthma, representing one in nine people.¹ Prevalence in the A.C.T is higher than national prevalence rates and ranks third highest amongst the states and territories.¹

Asthma was one of the top 20 most common reasons for ED presentations in the A.C.T (and all other states/ territories) in 2016-17.² There were 1,108 ED presentations for asthma.²

Asthma is responsible for 133 hospitalisations per 100,000 people, equating to approximately 536 admissions in 2016-17.³ This is highest in Tuggeranong (168.9 per

100,000) and Belconnen (158.5 per 100,000).³

Preventable hospital admissions are defined by asthma flare-ups that may otherwise have been prevented through the provision of appropriate preventive health interventions and early disease management in primary care and community settings.⁴

Concerning primary care, less than a third of Canberrans with asthma (32.8%) have written Asthma Action Plans.⁵ A.C.T has the highest rate of allergic rhinitis in Australia⁶ which is the most common comorbidity in asthma and contributes to asthma-related hospital admissions. A.C.T also reports the lowest bulk billing rate of any state or territory in the country⁷, whilst a Canberra Hospital-generated report highlighted the deficiency and importance of supporting people between hospital and community. Our proposed A.C.T Better Pathways of Asthma Care will address these issues by supporting comprehensive, person centred care in the community.

The Productivity Commission's Report on Government Services 2018 states that: 'Written asthma action plans enable people with asthma to recognise and respond quickly and appropriately to deteriorating asthma symptoms, thereby preventing or reducing the severity of acute asthma episodes.'



COST OF ASTHMA ATTACKS AND HEALTH SERVICE USE FOR A.C.T PEOPLE AND THE A.C.T GOVERNMENT

Asthma is the leading burdensome disease for children 0-14 years and in the top ten for all age groups.⁸ The main cause of this burden for people with asthma relates to the time lost by individuals affected or disabled by their poorly controlled asthma. Although not for all, this burden is largely avoidable.

This avoidable burden also places significant stress on people with asthma and on already overburdened hospitals. ED presentations and hospitalisations from asthma come at a significant cost to the A.C.T Government. Each ED presentation for asthma costs \$855 on average, and a hospital admission costs approximately \$4,067.⁸

40% of adults and 62% of children re-present to emergency departments within one year of initial presentation.⁹ Most ED presentations and many hospitalisations are avoidable.^{10, 11}

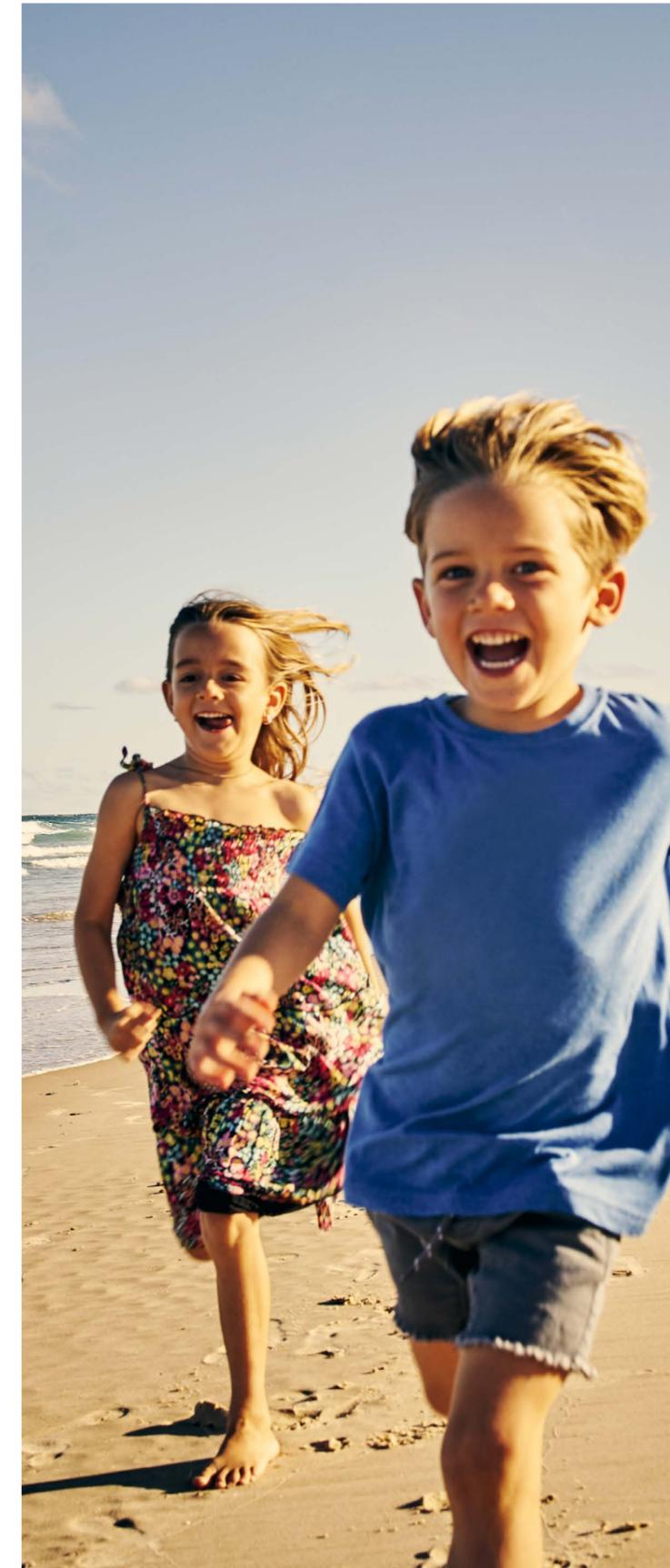
OUR RECOMMENDATION

Substantial, strategic and coherent action is required to move the dial on these persistent asthma trends and burdens. Asthma Australia's Better Pathways package does this.

Asthma Australia's Better Pathways package focuses on the following crucial interrelated and interconnected areas:

- Telehealth
- Emergency Departments
- Health Promotion
- Governance and evaluation

4. OECD 2015, Health at a glance 2015: How does Australia compare, Paris: OECD
5. Australian Government Productivity Commission 2018. Report on Government Services
6. Australian Bureau of Statistics 2018; National Health Survey: First Results 2017-18. ABS Cat no. 4364.0.55.001. Canberra: ABS
7. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare 2019. Australian Burden of Disease Study: impact and causes of illness and death in Australia 2015. Australian Burden of Disease series no. 19. Cat. no. BOD 22. Canberra: AIHW
8. Figures provided by ACT health
9. Wakefield et al 1997. Risk factors for repeat attendance at hospital emergency departments among adults and children with asthma. Aust N Z J Med; 27: 277-284
10. AIHW 2019, Admitted patient care 2017/18: Australian hospital statistics. Canberra: AIHW
11. Goeman, D.P, Thien, F.C.K, Douglass, J.A, Aroni, R.A, Abramson, M.J, Sawyer, S.M and Stewart, K. 2004. Back for more: a qualitative study of emergency department reattendance for asthma.



OBJECTIVE ONE

Support people with asthma in A.C.T to better manage their asthma

Amount/Year \$230,000

Over the next three years, approximately 1200 Canberrans with asthma will be supported to develop better asthma self-management through our 1800 ASTHMA and The COACH Program® telehealth service; an asthma primary health care program; and targeted outreach to hospitals and other at-risk communities. Early results show that 56% of patients in The COACH Program® experienced statistically significant improvements in Asthma Control by three points or more from initial to first follow up call. Improved asthma control is critical in avoid risk of further flare-ups and the associated danger and burden this causes

Estimated Minimum Reach/Outcome/Year

Approximately 240 people with asthma will be supported to develop better asthma self-management practices via The COACH Program®. Of those who receive more than one session, more than half (56%) should achieve clinically significant improvements in Asthma Control, thereby reducing the risk of requiring urgent healthcare for acute exacerbations.

OBJECTIVE TWO

Support people with asthma to avoid further asthma flare-ups and the need for emergency health service use

Amount/Year \$100,000

Over the next three years, Asthma Australia will drive quality improvement through structured and evidence-based support to people with asthma presenting to Canberra's two main hospital emergency departments after asthma flare-ups and reduce their risk of re-presenting. Through a systematic approach to best practice emergency asthma management, people with asthma will be better supported in the community, not only reducing the demand on hospitals services, but improving patient outcomes. More than 50% of patients enrolled in The COACH Program® after discharge obtain clinically significant improvement in their asthma control.

Asthma Australia will draw upon the results and learnings realised from the work done to date under the Calvary COACH Program®, and a previous randomised controlled trial undertaken in Queensland.

Estimated Minimum Reach/Outcome/Year

Most people with asthma discharged from A.C.T emergency departments will have the opportunity to reduce their risk of re-admission.

At least 50% of participants will achieve clinically significant improvement in asthma control, meaning they will experience less symptoms and flare ups and reduce the risk of re-presentation.

OBJECTIVE THREE

Empower people with asthma and their surrounding community to identify risks, activate support and build resilience against environmental asthma triggers

Amount/Year \$25,000

Over the next three years, up to 100,000 Canberrans including many of the 48,700 people with asthma will have better awareness and understanding of asthma, risk factors and how to better manage the condition and support each other during high risk weather/seasons as a result of Asthma Australia's targeted asthma health promotion campaigns.

Examples of campaigns and projects that have addressed these priority periods are:

- Back to school;
- Autumn/winter cold and flu season;
- Spring pollen season; and
- Hazard reduction burning, flooding, bushfire and thunderstorm prone periods

Estimated Minimum Reach/Outcome/Year

Over 100,000 Canberrans including the 48,700 with asthma will have better awareness of asthma, risk factors and how to better manage the condition and support each other.

OBJECTIVE FOUR

Ensure integrity, accountability and quality improvement in all that Asthma Australia does

Amount/Year \$30,000

Robust governance, monitoring and evaluation of the A.C.T Pathways for Better Asthma Care Initiative will occur by developing baseline data and maintaining a governance and accountability function. The role of the governance function will be to monitor the progress of the Initiative and ensure it continues to align with key A.C.T Government and national plans and strategies, including the National Asthma Strategy. This function will coordinate sharing learnings across the health system and across health conditions. Acting as a knowledge broker will increase the capacity of agencies involved to spread learnings.

This governance function will include membership from the two advisory councils of Asthma Australia: the Consumer Advisory Council (CAC) and the Professional Advisory Council (PAC), and will be able to draw upon their skills, knowledge and expertise.

Total \$385,000 p.a.
\$1.155m over 3 years

GENERAL BUDGET BREAKDOWN (A.C.T)

EXPENDITURE ITEMS	AVERAGE COMPONENT (%)
Salaries and wages	62%
Support costs	30%
Consultancy	4%
Service delivery	4%

Variance: +/-10%

ASTHMA AUSTRALIA AS PARTNER OF THE A.C.T GOVERNMENT

A PARTNERSHIP OF CONSISTENCY AND QUALITY

Since 2010, Asthma Australia has consistently fulfilled its service agreement obligations with the A.C.T Government in delivering quality information, education and support to lessen the burden of asthma for Canberrans and to improve their quality of life. Working in partnership with community groups, health professionals and hospitals, Asthma Australia has progressed in alleviating the difficulties faced by the business and operating models of general practices and hospitals to meet the minimum level of best practice care for people with asthma as outlined by the Asthma Management Handbook, the national asthma guidelines.

Asthma Australia's proposal for the A.C.T Pathways for Better Asthma Care Initiative will strengthen the links between the primary and secondary care levels of the A.C.T health system, while also empowering consumers with education and support to self-manage their asthma when they're outside of the health system; delivering care and support and building resilience in the community instead.

ALIGNMENT WITH A.C.T HEALTH STRATEGY AND POLICY

Our 4 key recommendations form a package of interrelated and interconnected activities which are heavily influenced and informed by A.C.T Health's strategic priorities of accessible, accountable and sustainable health services, as well as the A.C.T Digital Health Strategy. Asthma Australia intends to continue working with A.C.T health services and hospitals to provide consumers and patients with information and support through various digital and non-digital channels.

Asthma Australia's activities and its proposal align with and contribute to the realisation of A.C.T Government's broad policy goals and health concerns as outlined in:

- "Your health – our priority";
- ACT Digital Health Strategy 2019-2029
- ACT Multicultural Framework 2015-2020.
- ACT Chief Health Officer's Report 2018

Our consolidated proposal is accessible, accountable and sustainable. It is patient-centred, complemented by relevant current technologies, features a governance component, and supports health and medical research. Asthma Australia aims to boost participation and capitalise on the cultural and other diversity of the A.C.T.

Furthermore, various iterations of the A.C.T Chronic Conditions Strategy outline key priority actions aimed to improve care and support people living with a chronic disease, including:

- Optimising enhanced services through integration;
- Improving access;
- Better support those in the community;
- Improve person-centred care;
- Enhance early detection and secondary prevention; and
- Enhance governance and system enablers.

The A.C.T Multicultural Framework 2015 - 2020 is based on three themes which focus on the importance of supporting the A.C.T's multicultural communities to ensure everyone has the ability to reach their full potential. This includes Canberrans embracing the benefits of the A.C.T's culturally diverse community. The main theme this proposal supports is "Accessible and Responsive Services", which requires "targeted initiatives for those doing it tough in our community to ensure that they are able to fully participate in the life of our city."

Asthma Australia is committed to carrying out these action areas and addressing asthma as outlined by the A.C.T Government's broad policy goals outlined above. The system reform and self-management projects within the Initiative will incorporate these actions. Our consumer engagement strategy, developed by our team and Consumer Advisory Council, is focused on diversity and inclusion, ensuring equity of access to our services, and improving health literacy.

Asthma Australia's work also aligns with the Australian Government's plans and directions for asthma and chronic disease management: the National Asthma Strategy, the National Strategic Framework for Chronic Conditions, and the Implementation Plan for the National Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health Plan 2013-2023.

BEYOND THE INITIATIVE

Asthma Australia to date have enabled tens of thousands of Canberrans to access to integrated, innovative and evidence-based resources to support their progress towards good asthma health through:

- Development of the Asthma App, a popular education resource used by health professionals and consumers alike. Through the generosity of local foundation funding, Asthma Australia had the opportunity to develop this app and release it on the Android mobile platform for people with asthma and in total it has 8,700 users, 60% returning, across Australia.
- Development of the KISS MY ASTHMA Asthma app in partnership with the University of Sydney. The app, co-designed with and for young people with asthma, helps track symptoms, access individuals' asthma action plan, and set goals to achieve change.
- Promoting the AirRater smartphone app to help consumers identify weather and air quality risk and take action to avoid and manage this risk. There are currently 2000 users of AirRater.
- Contributing funding to the AusPollen group to develop and expand usage of their AusPollen App into Canberra; which has great potential to enable people with asthma to reduce their exposure to this particularly hazardous trigger.

For more information about this Pre-Budget Submission, please contact Asthma Australia Chief Executive Officer, Michele Goldman at mgoldman@asthma.org.au or 02 9018 0555.



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