

Australian Capital Territory Budget Proposal 2024-25

Meeting the lung health needs of the
ACT community

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About Lung Foundation Australia

Lung Foundation Australia (LFA) 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 point-of-call for lung health for patients, their families, carers, health professionals and the general community. There are **over 30 different types of lung diseases** currently **impacting 1 in 3 Australians**.

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 protecting lung health, promoting 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. We have partnered with patients, health professionals, researchers, medical organisations, and the broader community to drive reform in the delivery of health services in Australia to benefit the more than 7 million people impacted by lung disease or lung cancer. We are committed to ensuring that the community have access to timely and accurate information and support, and that our services are integrated within the state-based health systems.

Lung disease and lung cancer in the ACT



Lung conditions contribute significantly to overall burden of disease in the ACT. If lung conditions are not detected early or managed properly, lung health may deteriorate irreversibly, contributing to poor health outcomes, reduced quality of life, and preventable costs for patients and the health system.

In the Australian Capital Territory, it is estimated that:

- 11,100 people live with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD)¹
- In the past 10 years, there have been over 100 new cases of lung cancer diagnosed each year²
- In 2022, chronic lower respiratory diseases were the 4th leading cause of death and lung cancer was the 6th leading cause of death³
- Each year, there are approximately 200 potentially-preventable hospitalisations for COPD per 100,000 people⁴

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-4dgc/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 Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care. (2021). <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>

Proposed investment in lung health in ACT

We are seeking a very modest investment by the ACT Government to improve lung health in the ACT. In 2024/2025, we seek an investment of **\$338,500** and in 2025/2026 an investment of \$326,000, equating to a total investment of just **\$664,500 over two years.**

Staffing / Oncosts	Description	2024/25	2025/26	Total
Specialist Lung Cancer Nurse	Level 7.2 @ \$150,000 pa	\$150,000	\$154,500	\$304,500
Respiratory Care Nurse	Level 7.2 @\$150,000 pa	\$150,000	\$154,500	\$304,500
Associated nurse costs	Travel, professional development and program support costs	\$38,500	\$17,000	\$55,500
Total costs		\$338,500	\$326,000	\$664,500

Alignment with ACT Government plans and strategies

Investment in the above stated services is in alignment with a number of key ACT Government plans and strategies, most notably the:

- **ACT Health Services Plan 2022-2030:** which provides a roadmap for improved and equitable access to health services in the ACT, with a particular focus on strategies to address current and future service demands, reduce unnecessary service use, and deliver better value care in the right place at the right time.
- **ACT Health Workforce Strategy 2023-32:** in particular Strategic Priority 7, Stepping into the future, with early actions to include identifying innovative models of care occurring nationally for consideration in the ACT.

1. Fund Specialist Lung Cancer Nurses

We urge the ACT Government to invest in one (1) Specialist Lung Cancer Nurse to provide vital support to ACT residents diagnosed with lung cancer.

Lung cancer can affect anyone, not just smokers, **if you have lungs, you can get lung cancer**. There is insufficient support for ACT residents with lung cancer who need assistance in navigating their diagnosis and the healthcare system.

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

**Only 1 nurse
currently provides
specialist lung
cancer care for
the entire territory**

LFA's model of care for our Specialist Lung Cancer Nurse service is evidence-based and includes an evaluation framework. The service can complement the federal investment in navigation services. Investment in LFA's Specialist Lung Cancer Nurse service in the ACT will lead to:

- High value patient-centred care for people with lung cancer
- Reduced timeframes between lung cancer diagnosis and treatment, in line with optimal care guidelines
- Increased patient capacity to self-manage
- Improved outcomes for patients and carers affected by lung cancer (cancer outcomes, quality of life and wellbeing)
- Reduced avoidable Emergency Department presentations

By investing in additional specialist lung cancer nurses in the ACT, the ACT Government will contribute to reducing the extreme inequities that persist in cancer care. There will be significant benefits for ACT residents impacted by lung cancer, in addition to other health system and economic benefits.

2. Fund the telephone-based Respiratory Care Program

We urge the ACT Government to invest in one (1) Respiratory Care Nurse to support the many ACT residents living with respiratory disease.

Respiratory disease is a leading cause of premature mortality and responsible for significant health system pressure and expenditure when not managed properly. Our respiratory care program is evidence-based and cost-effective⁵ and can provide significant benefits to ACT residents living with lung disease.

What is Lung Foundation Australia's Respiratory Care Program?

The Respiratory Care Program supports people with respiratory disease 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 nurses with expertise in respiratory disease management. Each patient is provided with individually tailored information about 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.

“She helped me with my medications, vaccination, technique, doctor questions etc.... She made me feel in control of my health and able to help myself.”

Investment in LFA's telephone-based Respiratory Care Program will offer the following benefits for ACT residents and the ACT health system:

- Increased health-promoting behaviours, such as increased physical activity and reductions in smoking
- Increased adherence to medications and correct use of medications
- Reductions in disease exacerbations
- Improved health-related quality of life
- Reductions in Emergency Department presentations

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.

⁵ Rana, Gow, & Moloney. (2022). *The impact and effectiveness of a nurse led telehealth education program for Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease patients.* <https://lungfoundation.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2022/11/Evaluation-Report-on-LFA-COPD-Nurse-Education-program-1.pdf>