

# Response ID ANON-VUZH-JJJ5-Z

Submitted to MRFF Australian Medical Research and Innovation Strategy and Priorities consultation  
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## Introduction

### 1 Full name

Full Name:

Lung Health Alliance: Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand; Lung Foundation Australia; Asthma Australia; Cystic Fibrosis Australia

### 2 Submission type

Organisation affiliated

### 3 Organisation type

Non-government

### 4 Organisation sub-type

Consumer, Medical Professional

### 5 Residential state or territory

Victoria, New South Wales, Australian Capital Territory, Queensland, Northern Territory, Western Australia, South Australia, Tasmania, International

## Strategy Consultation Questions

### 6 Could the current Strategy (2016-2021) be altered to better meet the purpose set out in the MRFF Act? If so, how?

Max 200 words :

We support the current strategic platform and key factors which are used to identify medical research priorities - burden of disease, practical outcomes, and the ability to complement existing medical research and innovation. However, the AMRAB must ensure the MRFF strategy is targeted to address the health burden in a proportionate way. In considering these factors, we highlight the significant financial and health burden which is present in Australia due to lung disease. Seven million Australians live with a lung disease. While 9% of total disease burden between 2008 and 2017 was attributable to lung diseases and lung cancer, only 2% of total research funds was awarded to research into these same diseases. Lung conditions pose a substantial economic burden on individuals, their families, the healthcare system, and the broader economy. COVID has highlighted the need for investment in respiratory research and the workforce. Recent catastrophic bushfires and pandemics have forced Australians to turn towards respiratory experts for their research and care. We need to harness this momentum and invest in discoveries in medical research and innovations, optimising health service delivery, supporting our people, and ensuring robust evidence translation. The most impactful approach will be through a Respiratory Health Mission.

### 7 What are the most critical current and future issues and factors impacting on the health system, including primary prevention, and on the health and medical research sector that the next Strategy needs to address?

Max 200 words :

The Australian Government's National Strategic Action Plan for Lung Conditions outlines critical areas for research and monitoring. Most critical issues include the prevention and early detection of lung disease, healthcare workers (capacity and wellbeing) and equitable patient access. We need a sustainable and optimised healthcare system. Health services delivery must be modified to ensure capacity building, support, and staff retention to deliver excellent and timely care to patients. COVID-19 has brought respiratory medicine into focus for the global population but has also impeded timely access to care for many patients. Individuals who have developed a lung condition or who already live with a chronic lung condition have had limitations in their care or delays in appropriate screening, diagnosis, and management. Anyone with respiratory symptoms have faced more difficult access to healthcare due to the pandemic risk management. It is imperative to establish systems that promote prevention, improve disease screening and early diagnosis, and are appropriately resourced for optimised care. We need a better interface between primary and specialist care. Each health service decision should be supported by evidence. Similarly, tools and emerging platforms should be established so that they contribute to personalised and precision care and a self-improving health system.

### 8 Suggest options for how the next Strategy could address these critical issues and factors?

Max 200 words :

It's time to support a Respiratory Health Mission to innovate and test new models, enablers and systems and translate the technology that has rapidly been developed during the respiratory pandemic. A Respiratory Health Mission would incubate ideas with an aim to build research capability and capacity to make immediate and long-term improvements in disease prevention and health outcomes for people living with lung conditions – amounting to approximately 1 in 3 Australians. It would translate evidence to advocate for equity and quality in prevention, diagnostics, and support for people living with and impacted by respiratory conditions. It would drive transformative change through national and international collaboration. It would bolster

growth of partnerships across government, non-government, and industry as the custodians of a multiplicity of the knowledge, skills and resources necessary to advance respiratory health science, prevention and management. We must be innovative and encourage agility and excellence in respiratory health research and support novel and proof-of-concept initiatives designed to deliver high-impact, high-value outcomes for patients and their families. Any strategic funding decision must support a staged approach to achieve a clear and aspirational goal. A Respiratory Health Mission is a prime opportunity to address this issue.

9 Given the new and significant impact of COVID-19 on health services and health research, how should the new Strategy address COVID-19 related topics and impacts?

Max 200 words :

We suggest;

- The national management of pandemics be reviewed. Pandemics are a threat which will remain and must be planned for in earnest. We have rich and valuable data which should be examined for future infrastructure, policy, and public health decisions.
- The long-term effects be monitored as the persistence and severity of disease remain unknown. We recommend a long-term national, multidisciplinary clinical quality registry which will provide a well characterised cohort and stimulate continuous clinical improvements through research and education.
- Australia rethinks its onshore technology capability as the pandemic highlighted our reliance on the global supply chain. We must continue to support and grow our own discovery and technology sector so that we can protect the health interests of Australia and our neighbours.

While COVID-19 needs to be addressed in the Strategy, it's also important that previous deficiencies in the research investment and subsequent improvements to Australian health and wellbeing are not forgotten. Lung disease is already responsible for a high proportion of the disease burden, health expenditure and mortality, which has been yet to be addressed. We urge appropriate consideration be given to lung disease more broadly given the huge burden and previous lack of investment.

### Priorities Consultation Questions

10 Could the current Priorities be improved to better address the requirements under the MRFF Act? If so, how? This could include consideration of what elements of the Priorities work well to guide MRFF investments and what could be improved for research translation and impact?

Max 200 words :

Aboriginal people are disproportionately affected by many different types of illness and the gap in health outcomes is significant. The Aboriginal population remains vulnerable with one-third of Aboriginal people having a respiratory condition and asthma is now nearly twice as common for Aboriginal people than for non-Indigenous people. It is paramount that Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Health is considered within each priority. There is an urgent need for a national health protection strategy - Public Health intervention. Targeted research is required to strengthen the capacity of the research and health sector to respond to national (climate change, bushfires, air quality) and international (pandemics) threats. This strategy must be utilised to inform policy, regulations, and enhance disaster preparedness. Environmental respiratory threats will always be apparent in Australia and appropriate management must be supported.

Comparative Effectiveness Research must be prioritised to help optimise health care. Movement restrictions have changed the way we access care. It is essential that innovative strategies are funded, including research to optimise the delivery of both community and home-based programs (e.g., pulmonary rehabilitation programs). This adaptation and responsive change in service delivery is vital and presents long term economic savings and social gains through care optimisation.

11 What are the most critical current and future issues for the health system and the health and medical research sector that the next Priorities need to address through research translation/implementation?

Max 200 words :

Lung conditions contribute a significant burden on the health system, and the medical research sector can play an important role in reducing this burden by investigating and translating new knowledge from discovery through to implementation and evaluation. Issues include climate change, air quality, and the growing burden of respiratory diseases. The respiratory sector faces a disproportionate burden of disease versus resource investment, and this will have a substantial impact on service delivery and innovation.

Workforce capacity remains a national issue. To retain our best clinicians and researchers to produce quality research in Australia, we must foster local career development. While students and early career researchers have been supported, many mid-career researchers are unable to pursue research when there is only a <15% success rate for competitive research funding success in Australia. The alternative of undertaking research overseas or even a career change is often a more viable path. This issue is broader than "clinical" research in Australia. The pandemic has been detrimental to our core research sector with the progressive underfunding of universities, underfunding of research, and border restrictions limiting international student access to universities. These issues must be rectified for Australia to be a global leader in medical research.

12 Suggest options for how the next Priorities could address these critical issues?

Max 200 words :

The Lung Health Alliance recommends the MRFF fund a Respiratory Health Mission as part of its 10-year investment strategy. The next priorities should support generation of new knowledge. This will lead to improved understanding, novel treatments, and data on risk and protective factors. We need a continued focus on vaccine development for respiratory disorders. We must prioritise local technology innovation and develop better tools and devices to screen, diagnose, treat, and manage ill-health, and to reduce Australia's reliance on international supply. A focus on local capacity and capability building of health professionals, research networks, and collaborations is required. Priorities must ultimately support better care, including precision diagnosis and treatment, knowledge translation into practice, and self-improving systems.

A well-funded Respiratory Health Mission is critical to ensuring the burden of lung disease is addressed. It presents an opportunity for significant

improvement to the lives of many Australians experiencing lung disease (which is a growing community due to COVID-19), and position Australia as a global leader in respiratory health.

13 Given the new and significant impact of COVID-19 on health services and health research, how should the new priorities address COVID-19 related topics?

Max 200 words :

The health system has been transformed due to COVID-19 and we must ensure emerging models are robust, economical, and sustainable. We recommend that Australia capitalise on this period of rapid innovation, adaptation, and acceptance of change, and seriously invest in medical research and transforming the health care system.

Recent years have shone a spotlight on respiratory disease with COVID-19 affecting everyone. We have seen millions of acute cases, which will continue to grow and then be replaced by Long-COVID cases which will need to be managed. At the same time, access to care and management for patients with chronic respiratory disease have been impacted and delayed. Chronic respiratory disease already affects 31% of all Australians. This is likely to increase in future years with an aging population, unforeseen natural disasters, pandemics, non-communicable diseases like silicosis, asthma and cystic fibrosis, lung cancer and COPD, and use of tobacco and liquid nicotine products. Respiratory disease can affect all Australians indiscriminately, yet the level of investment in lung related research in Australia is not commensurate with disease burden. To make real progress in reducing the respiratory health burden a serious funding effort is urgently needed.