



## **COPD: Knocking the wind out of over a million Australians Outline of Funding Submission**

The purpose of The Australian Lung Foundation's (ALF) funding submission is to advocate for a national approach for the diagnosis and treatment of Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease (COPD). To view a full copy of the submission please visit: [www.lungnet.com.au](http://www.lungnet.com.au).

### **About COPD**

- COPD is a long-term lung disease that is progressive, disabling and often fatal
- It is the fifth biggest killer and third largest cause of disease burden, after heart disease and stroke
- It affects over a million Australians – up to one in six people over 45
- Three out of four people with COPD do not know they have it
- Every day 1,000 COPD patients occupy hospital beds
- COPD is estimated to cost the health system between \$800-\$900million every year

### **Key recommendations**

The Australian Lung Foundation proposes six recommendations for COPD in its Funding Submission:

#### **Recommendation 1: Increase access to pulmonary rehabilitation**

Pulmonary rehabilitation is a proven self management program that significantly improves the lives of people with COPD and reduces hospital admissions. A modest investment to create 12,000 new pulmonary rehabilitation places annually for the next four years, is estimated to save the health system between \$115 million and \$264 million.

#### **Recommendation 2: Improve diagnosis of COPD through enhanced access to spirometry testing**

Spirometry (otherwise known as "lung function testing") is internationally considered the gold standard tool for confirming COPD. However, access to spirometry at a primary care level is currently inequitable. Many GPs have a spirometer, but very few use them. The barriers to GP usage of spirometry are two-fold: (i) training, and (ii) reimbursement. This submission advocates for an increase in the MBS rebate for GP surgeries to perform spirometry from \$15.10 to \$30.62.

#### **Recommendation 3: Ensure equity of access to home oxygen**

Long term oxygen therapy can have a significant impact on the quality and length of the lives of COPD patients. Currently access to subsidised home oxygen therapy depends on where a patient lives. The Australian Lung Foundation recommends the establishment of a National Oxygen Secretariat to monitor and ensure equitable access to long term oxygen therapy.

#### **Recommendation 4: Direct funding to epidemiological research**

There is currently no agreed national data set that provides authoritative prevalence data. The BOLD (Burden of Obstructive Lung Disease) project is a recognised international research protocol designed to collect high quality, country specific data on COPD. The Australian Lung Foundation recommends funding is directed to ensure this important project is completed.

### **Recommendation 5: Improve diagnosis of COPD through increased community awareness**

Despite being one of Australia's biggest killers, community awareness of COPD is low. The Australian Lung Foundation recommends Federal Government funding assistance to roll out an intense and targeted advertising campaign to raise awareness amongst the at-risk populations.

### **Recommendation 6: Increase funding to enhance self-management strategies for COPD patients**

Self-management strategies have a significant impact on the health outcomes of people with chronic disease. Self-management is also shown to reduce demand for hospital services. The Australian Lung Foundation advocates for funding to trial a self-management program, using the established network of 15,000 Australian Lung Foundation self-help patient support group members.

### **The Australian Lung Foundation**

The submission is a culmination of much work by The Australian Lung Foundation to bring about better diagnosis and treatment for COPD. Other recent initiatives targeting government include:

- 21 March 2006: ALF lodges submission to Standing Committee for Health & Ageing
- 21 July 2006: ALF presents to Public Inquiry into Health Funding, Sydney
- 10 October 2006: ALF launches Parliamentary Friends of COPD
- 15 November 2006: ALF lodges "COPD: Knocking the wind out of over one million Australians", a national funding approach to COPD

**The Australian Lung Foundation is a not-for-profit organisation working to reduce the burden of lung disease in Australia.**

**For information on support available for people with COPD, contact:**

**Toll free 1 800 654 301**

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