

MEDIA RELEASE

New research: 1.4 million Australians will die of cancer in the next 25 years unless governments intervene now

New research by the Daffodil Centre, at Cancer Council NSW and the University of Sydney, shows that 1.45 million Australians will die of cancer over the 25-year period from 2020-2044 without major new government investments in prevention, early detection and patient care.

The study, published in the *Lancet Public Health*, is the largest and most comprehensive of its kind and provides a blueprint for how cancer should be controlled and treated into the future. It also allows for future cancer control policy and research to be prioritised according to where the highest burden is expected.

The number of new cancer cases diagnosed over the period from 2020-2044 is projected to total more than 4.56 million. Although 1.45 million Australians are expected to die, the overall rate of deaths between now and 2044 is projected to fall by around 20%—a smaller drop than recorded over the previous 25-year period (30%).

Daffodil Centre Director and Chair of Cancer Council's Cancer Screening and Immunisation Committee, Professor Karen Canfell, said the study highlighted the magnitude of expected cancer burden in Australia and how trends in future expected case and death numbers reflect success stories, opportunities and future priorities.

“Every one of those 4.56 million individuals that could develop cancer in the future is a valued member of our community. Research is needed to support new breakthroughs in prevention, treatment and care. Further investment is also required to increase access to the most effective existing approaches, such as national screening programs.”

The common cancers for which death rates are predicted to fall most sharply are lung cancer (43% for males and 31% for females) and melanoma (49% for males and 28% for females). These falls will be driven largely by established prevention approaches – tobacco control and sun protection respectively, as well as improved treatments for these cancers.

Government initiatives such as screening programs for bowel, breast and cervical cancer are also expected to reduce death rates, with increased bowel cancer screening participation one of the most important priorities, given the low screening rates and high prevalence of the disease.

“Death rates are expected to fall, at varying rates, for most cancers, except for a few cancers which are projected to be relatively stable or increase. While this projected decline in overall cancer death rates is positive, we know that a 20% fall over the next 25 years just isn't enough.”

“We could improve significantly on these outcomes, potentially saving hundreds of thousands of the 1.45 million lives expected to be lost – but only if there is a commitment to investing in doing more of what we know works to prevent, detect and treat cancer, and fund more potentially life-saving cancer research.” Professor Canfell concluded.

This is consistent with Cancer Council’s call for increased government investment into cancer control to prevent more cancers across the community, increase participation in cancer screening programs, find new ways to systematically detect cancer early, control risk factors, and improve treatment outcomes at all stages.

CEO of Cancer Council Australia, Professor Tanya Buchanan, noted that now is the time for governments to take action.

“Australia faces an unprecedented growth in new cancer cases, and this represents millions of people who will require treatment and care. The government needs to act now in order for Australia to improve this picture across the community over the next 25 years,” added Professor Buchanan.

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Media enquiries:

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About the Daffodil Centre

The Daffodil Centre is a joint venture between the [University of Sydney and Cancer Council NSW](#). As a leading research centre on cancer control and policy, The Daffodil Centre provides timely and relevant evidence to national and international policy-makers to inform best-practice decision-making in cancer control.
daffodilcentre.org

The full research paper can be found here:

[https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667\(22\)00090-1/fulltext](https://www.thelancet.com/journals/lanpub/article/PIIS2468-2667(22)00090-1/fulltext)