



## Inquiry into the National Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry Bill 2023 and the National Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2023

The Senate Community Affairs Committee opened a consultation on the above Bills on occupational respiratory diseases in 2023. Cancer Council Australia, and Cancer Council's national Occupational and Environmental Cancer Committee welcomed the opportunity to provide submissions to this consultation.

Cancer Council commended the Government for introducing the National Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry Bill 2023 (NORDR Bill) and the National Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry (Consequential Amendments) Bill 2023. The National Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry (the Registry) has the potential to help support the identification of industries, occupations, workplaces, and tasks at high risk of exposure to respiratory disease-causing agents.

Silica dust is classified as a Group 1 carcinogen by the International Agency for Research on Cancer, because prolonged exposure to respirable crystalline silica (RCS) increases the risk of lung cancer. Exposure to respirable crystalline silica and the resulting increase in cases of silicosis in the engineered stone, construction, and other industries in Australia has been the catalyst for the wider recognition of the need to establish a national registry of occupational respiratory disease. However, there are also many other occupational exposures that can result in respiratory diseases, including lung cancer. These exposures include (but are not limited to) asbestos, diesel engine exhaust, and welding fumes. Currently, there are limited data available relating to the prevalence and extent of occupational exposure to these respiratory carcinogens and the burden of the resulting cancers in Australia.

Our recommendations noted the importance of the Registry being designed and implemented to allow for the detection of new and emerging occupational respiratory disease issues, and enabling the implementation of timely and targeted interventions and prevention activities, including compliance and enforcement actions which will further reduce worker exposure and disease.

Cancer Council supports the introduction of the NORDR Bill and Consequential Amendments, as if the Registry is properly established, it will be critical to identifying priority areas where exposure to occupational respiratory carcinogens is occurring, and informing activities aimed at preventing workers' exposures to these carcinogens.

However, whilst collecting data on occupational respiratory diseases in Australia is necessary and important, it is not sufficient to prevent future cases on its own. It is critical that Government continues to focus on the prevention and control of exposure of workers to respiratory hazards that increase the risk of respiratory diseases, including cancer.