



## April 2026 Newsletter

**Our mission is to provide a supportive and informative environment for people with lung conditions, as well as their families and carers.**

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**Web Sites:** [Canberra Lung Life Support Group | Web Site](#)  
[Canberra Lung Life Support Group | Facebook](#)

**NEXT MEETING:** Thursday 14 May 2026  
10:15 am – 12:00 noon  
Weston Creek Labor Club  
Teesdale Close, Stirling ACT 2611

**Speaker: Estella Hutchinson from Sunset End of Life Services  
Voluntary Assisted Dying**

### April Meeting

Our meeting began with a talk on **mental health** by our speaker, Martin Fisk, CEO of St John's Ambulance ACT who has both personal and work experience with mental health. In this talk, he spoke about **anxiety and depression**.

Martin began by telling of his own personal experience. When he was 18 he suddenly woke up one morning, terrified and unable to get out of bed. He finally ended up in a mental health clinic for a few weeks suffering from anxiety and depression.

He realised after, that there had been a general build-up of issues which came to a head that morning. And this is generally what happens – people don't recognise the build-up is happening.

Martin has benefitted from a lot of support but even today his anxiety can suddenly recur.



He said that anxiety and depression can creep up on you; or can be triggered by an event, not necessarily traumatic.

One in four adults annually will go through a mental health episode which lasts longer than 2 weeks and can be diagnosed. Younger people and older people have a higher rate. But anxiety and depression are almost always temporary.

**How would you identify someone with a mental health issue?** It can vary from individual to individual but generally, there's a change of behaviour or of personality – eg from a social person to a quiet one. With men, it's often anger – flying off the handle; with women, it's more withdrawal. Often it's being less productive in the things you do.

**How do you support them?** Sometimes, a person just needs a friendly chat – asking if you can help; encouraging the person to talk about their issues. Maybe talk about your own issues. It's important not to be judgemental. Sometimes, the person needs more professional support such as Lifeline or a psychologist; sometimes an antidepressant – but early intervention is the key.

Even if a person is suicidal, ask them about it. There is no evidence that it will encourage them – in fact, the evidence supports the opposite view.

**The barriers to getting help?** Often it's the stigma or shame of not coping, but it's important to talk to friends or find a counsellor who suits you (and not all do).

**How to keep mentally fit?** Daily habits are important. For instance, keep a diary and in it write 3 things you did well that day; or 3 things you are grateful for. This changes your mindset from a negative one to a positive one and this has a ripple effect on the people around you.

Martin gave us a list of 5 things to help develop and maintain mental health resilience. This is based on research from the UK.

- ✓ Connect with people – it helps to take your mind away from yourself as you interact with the other people.
- ✓ Be active – as much as you can! It helps you to feel better mentally as well as physically.
- ✓ Be curious – this can simply be noticing the things around you – it gets you out of your head!
- ✓ Learn something new – this keeps your mind active and it shifts the focus from yourself.
- ✓ Give time/ energy/ focus to other people. Again, it's changing the focus from yourself to someone else.

### **Dealing with social media**

Martin made some suggestions about social media which we know can have limiting and negative effects:

- ✚ Switch off notifications on the phone – this prevents you from looking at it every time it beeps in case it's important – when mostly it's not.
- ✚ Don't pass on links to negative material. If you do, the algorithms recognise your interest in the negative and suggest more similar links – which can lead you down a rabbit hole of negativity.
- ✚ Realise that you're getting selective information.

**Finally:** when times are bad, remember that setbacks are temporary and due to other things – remember this for yourself or for when you are supporting someone else.

## It's Time

It's time to renew your membership for Lung Life. This is a voluntary payment but it helps with Lung Life costs for materials, expos and other events.

### Membership Payment

Membership fee is \$20.00 pa which can be paid as a direct transfer into our Beyond Bank account. See details below or pay in cash to the treasurer at any meeting.

**BSB No: 325 185**

**Account Name: Community Account**

**Account number: 04043535**

**Reference: please write your name in full.**

## March's lunch held at the Mawson Raiders Club.

**from Val Siemionow**



**The lunch was originally scheduled to be outdoors at the Bakesmith Cafe in Piialago but given the weather forecast for Friday of very cold weather, strong winds, rain and hail; it was changed to an indoor setting at the Mawson Club.**

**There were 12 of us in attendance and it was a very pleasant event. The conversations were wide ranging, humorous and enjoyable; the service was good; and the menu catered for all tastes.**

## May: Lung Health Awareness Month

From Lung Foundation Australia [Events - Lung Foundation Australia](#)  
[Lung Health Awareness Month - National Today](#)

Lung Health Awareness month is a campaign by Lung Foundation Australia (LFA) to raise awareness of the importance of lung health and how to recognise symptoms of lung disease.

- ✚ One in three Australians is impacted by lung disease and lung cancer, and these lung diseases are the causes of 45 deaths of Australians every day.
- ✚ They can affect anyone, no matter their age or background.

**Lung Health Awareness Month** is a reminder to take care of our lungs and see the warning signs of lung disease. Recognizing the warning signs can help you get a diagnosis and receive treatment to prevent it from becoming worse or even life-threatening. This campaign is essential because 46% of all Australians rarely or never even think about their lung health. It probably leads to many cases that are diagnosed at a late stage when there are limited treatment options.



There are three main types of lung disease:

- ✚ **airway diseases, such as chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD)**; COPD affects the airways carrying oxygen and other gases into and out of your lungs, making it difficult to breathe. The symptoms include a chronic cough, shortness of breath, or wheezing.
- ✚ **lung tissue diseases, such as idiopathic pulmonary fibrosis (IPF)**; With IPF, the lungs are unable to expand fully due to scarring or inflammation. The symptoms of IPF are also shortness of breath, a persistent dry cough, tiredness, or loss of appetite.
- ✚ **lung circulation diseases, such as pulmonary arterial hypertension (PAH)**. With PAH, arteries in the lungs and the right side of the heart are affected. The symptoms include increased shortness of breath, chest pressure or pain, swelling, or fast heart rate.

Lung Foundation Australia (LFA) has been supporting Australians with lung disease and lung cancer for over 30 years. Despite being one of the country's leading causes of death, lung disease remains under-recognised and underfunded. LFA is working to change that. This year, they are organising a **cold water challenge** through the **Plunge in for Lungs Challenge** where you commit to swimming a certain number of laps in May or plunge your body into an ice bath.

Lung Life is not planning to do that but is planning to hold a stall at a shopping centre to help raise awareness.

## Comment from 160 BCE

A character in a play, **The Brothers**, (written in **160 BCE**) by the Roman dramatist, Terence, exclaims:

*we're enclosed by so many things from which there's no escape: violence, poverty, injustice, loneliness, disgrace. What an age we live in!*

from *The Conversation*, April 2026.

# Bronchiectasis

From [www.lungfoundation.com.au](http://www.lungfoundation.com.au)

Bronchiectasis is a long-term lung condition where the airways become permanently widened, leading to mucus build-up and recurring infections. It often develops after repeated lung infections or other conditions which damage the airways. Common symptoms include a persistent, sometimes heavy, cough, frequent chest infections, shortness of breath, and fatigue. Diagnosis usually involves a combination of your medical history, imaging tests (like CT scans), and lung function tests.

Treatment can involve antibiotics to tackle infections, along with airway clearance techniques and physiotherapy to help loosen and remove mucus. These practical tips aren't just about managing flare-ups; they're also about improving your quality of life day-to-day.

The guide recommends lifestyle adjustments, such as regular exercise, maintaining a healthy diet, and getting vaccinated against flu and pneumonia, factors which can all contribute to better lung health. Specific breathing and chest clearance exercises that can be done at home, providing a clear action plan to manage symptoms effectively.

By following airway clearance exercises, people with Bronchiectasis can better manage their symptoms, improve lung function, and enhance their quality of life.

One of Lung Life's members, Chris Moyle, has had bronchiectasis for many years. She says: *the treatment which seems to be helping me more than anything is doing my own system of lung clearance on a daily basis. I've had no success with usual clearance devices, but my own breathing system actually enables phlegm to be coughed up and out - worth the 30+ minutes daily to remove this cause of infection.*

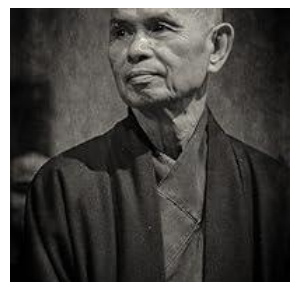
## Lung Foundation Support

The Lung Foundation offers support for people with bronchiectasis in a few different ways:

- Detailed information on their website, including suggested air clearance techniques and exercises for people with bronchiectasis: [www.lungfoundation.com.au](http://www.lungfoundation.com.au)
- **Bronchiectasis support group** – called **Bronchiexcellence Support Group (people living with Bronchiectasis)**
- Various webinars and videos dealing with different aspects of bronchiectasis
- **Respiratory care nurse** – a phone service for people living with COPD or bronchiectasis. Their nurses can give you advice about your condition based on the latest guidelines. To make a free phone appointment, call the Lung Health Helpline on [1800 654 301](tel:1800654301) option 1 (free call) or book online.
- **Contact LFA** -Talk with their team to ask them about your lung condition. It's free, confidential and open weekdays (8:00 am – 4:30 pm AEST). Call [1800 654 301](tel:1800654301) or email [enquiries@lungfoundation.com.au](mailto:enquiries@lungfoundation.com.au).

**“Feelings come and go like clouds in a windy sky. Conscious breathing is my anchor.”**

**Thich Nhat Hang, [Stepping into Freedom: An Introduction to Buddhist Monastic Training](#)**



## Assisting Physio Students

By Brian Chauncy

I responded to a request from The University of Canberra for volunteers from the community who have a chronic lung condition to participate in sessions for physiotherapy students to help them understand the condition better.



**UNIVERSITY OF  
CANBERRA**

There were 2 sessions of 1 hour each held over consecutive weeks in early March. The program is run by Richie Talbot, who is a lecturer in Physiotherapy at the Bruce campus of UC.

- Week 1 involved an assessment (including a 6 Minute Walk Test and a questionnaire)
- Week 2 was an exercise session, aimed at pulmonary rehabilitation.

The sessions were held in the UC hospital conveniently located just off Ginninderra Drive and parking was free after validation of your entry ticket. The students and staff were very friendly and greatly appreciated the opportunity to hone their developing skills. I found the experience valuable and informative, being given several new exercises aimed at lung health.

The University hopes to set up another pulmonary rehabilitation program at UC in addition to the one at Canberra Hospital subject to funding, given the difficulty in accessing the program run from Garran.

## Upcoming HCCA Event



**Finding good health information online**

With Dr Brooke Nickel (USyd) on social media & misinformation

Thursday 21 May, 3:30-4:30pm

**Finding good health information online**

**Thursday 21st May, 3:30pm - 4:30pm**

Online Via Zoom

Learn how to find trusted information online and see the warning signs of mis and disinformation. Featuring guest speaker, Dr Brooke Nickel from the University of Sydney, on her research into misinformation on social media and tips for spotting misleading posts.

[Learn more and register on Humanitix](#)