



January 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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NEXT MEETING: Thursday 12th February 2026
10:15 am – 12:00 noon
Weston Creek Labor Club
Teesdale Close, Stirling ACT 2611

Raj Puthenveedu, COPD Nurse, will be the guest speaker.

Canberra Lung Life Meeting 8th January - Marina Siemionow

This was our annual planning meeting at which we reviewed our activities over 2025 and decided the direction and key focus for the coming year along with establishing the types of speakers we would invite.

Even with the very low turnout for the meeting with only nine members attending, the discussion and involvement was lively and provided clear and strong direction for the year to come. Hopefully it was the incredibly hot outside temperatures that kept others away rather than a lack of interest.



Christmas Lunch 2025 – see page 6 for more about the lunch

Overall members were quite satisfied with the activities for 2025. They enjoyed the social lunches and asked for some additional social activities over the year including some road trips around our local district to destinations like regional galleries or museums including lunch. Val Dempsey volunteered to talk to the Arboretum about the tours they could offer our Group. A range of venues were suggested for lunches, and these were voted on. The results will be included in the 2026 programme.

Our marketing activities including the stalls, advertisement and the updating of all our publicity materials along with the addition of our website, were well regarded. Only the development of our Facebook Page is outstanding, and Marina said that that would happen over the next month.

The only issue raised was the limited number of speakers who attended in 2025. Of the seven who had been arranged only five made it, and that really was not enough for the year. This year it was agreed to try for eight speakers over the 11 meetings, have two meetings without speakers to enable open discussion across the group and one planning meeting. The selection of speakers suggested included some suggested during previous meetings and some new ones like:

- a speech therapist who specialises in teaching people how to breathe properly
- a speaker to discuss the types of burials available today
- a pharmacist to discuss the range of services available through pharmacies today
- a psychiatrist to discuss the mental impact of a chronic condition
- COTA to talk on recent changes to aged care
- HCCA to discuss self-advocacy in health care
- HCCA to discuss the Voluntary Assisted Dying (VAD) scheme recently introduced in the ACT
- Lung Foundation Australia to discuss the services they provide and how best to access them
- dietician to discuss food and diet for people with chronic conditions.

The meeting went over time and Marina drew it to a close at 12:40 pm with the discussion on roles to support the Group held over until the next meeting.

The Weston Creek Labor Club agreed to continue to support the Canberra Lung Life Support Group by donating their main meeting room and the projector on the second Thursday of every month for 11 months, from January to November 2026.

Our January lunch will be on Friday the 30 January at the Southern Cross Club in Woden.

Next meeting will be on Thursday the 12 February and Raj Puthenveedu, COPD Nurse, CHS will be the speaker.

A Medical Joke – Chris Moyle - *From City News December 4-10, 2025 - Whimsy column*

A woman goes to a health centre where she is seen by one of the younger doctors. After about four minutes in the examination room, she bursts out screaming and runs down the hall.

An older doctor stops her and asks what the problem is, and she tells him her story. After listening, he has her sit down and relax in another room.

The older doctor marches down the hallway back to where the young doctor is writing on his clipboard. 'What's the matter with you?' the older doctor demands. 'Mrs Terry is 61 years old, has four grown children and seven grandchildren and you tell her she is *pregnant*?'

The younger doctor continues writing without looking up and says: 'But does she still have the hiccups?'

Canberra Lung Life Support Group: 28 Year Anniversary - February 2026 - Chris Moyle

In February 1998 three couples, each with a partner living with COPD (emphysema), were pivotal in forming a support group for individuals with lung conditions and their carers.

They were:

- **Esther** Fitton, as carer of husband **Ray**.
- **Laurelle** Ellis, carer of husband **Clive**.
- And **Shirley** Dillon, carer of husband **Ron** (*pictured right*).

Ron had just had lung reduction surgery, where a diseased part of lung was removed, and was enjoying a new lease of life. The first thing he wanted to do after surgery was dance with his wife. They had formerly been champion ballroom dancers.

Another ballroom dancer, struck down with emphysema, was **Cecelia** Kent (*pictured on the right with Esther on the left*). Esther and Cecelia ran the monthly meetings held at the Raiders Club, Weston (which Clive had been instrumental in organising).

Gordon Forrest (*pictured with Santa*) was the meetings' chairman. By April 1998 the Group had linked in with The Australian Lung Foundation, now LFA (Lung Foundation Australia).

Later **Laurelle** Ellis was the coordinator of the Group for three years, before handing over to **Caroline** Polak Scowcroft and then **Helen** Cotter.



Laurelle and Caroline, and Helen is on page 4

The Group was expanding its reach and liaised with other Groups such as HCCA (Health Care Consumers Association) and SHOUT (now defunct).

Other committees were joined such as DORSS (Domiciliary Oxygen and Respiratory Support Scheme) and CPAG (COPD Patient Advisory Group).

Every year members acted as guinea pigs for medical students and physiotherapy students, and the students were very appreciative of interacting with real patients suffering real illnesses. **Pam Harris** was the organiser of these visits. (*Editor's note:* Each year your editor speaks to the ANU Medical students online to give them an insight to his transplant journey.)

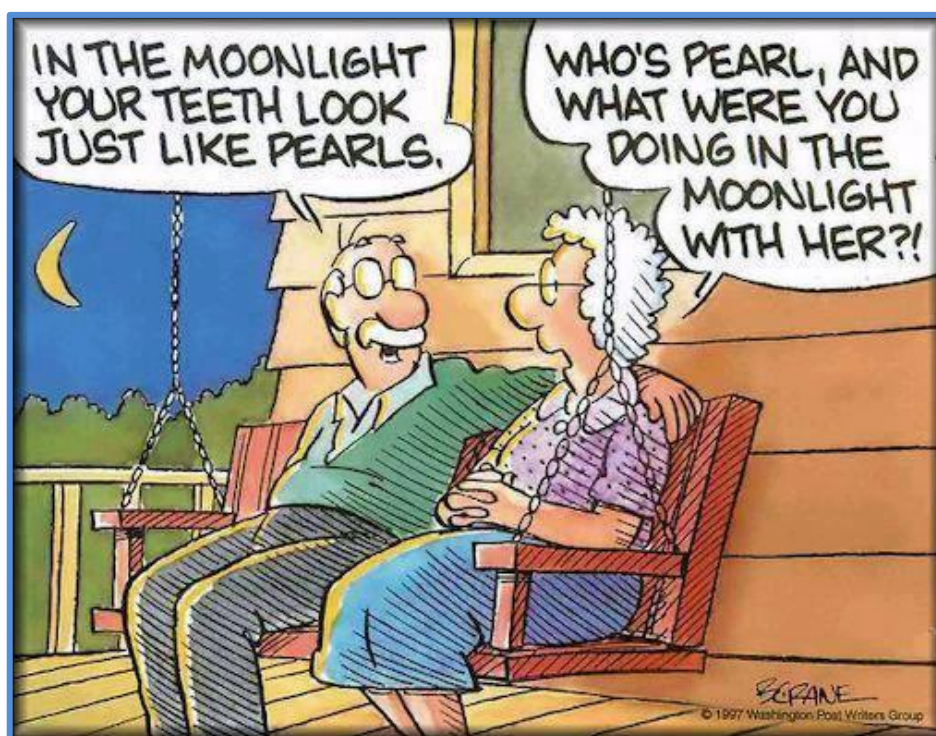
Helen Cotter started a monthly newsletter and still acts as an occasional editor today. **Helen Reynolds** also edited our newsletter for a number of years, until **Geoff Cox** took over in 2020. Geoff has had a double lung transplant after being diagnosed with alpha 1 anti-trypsin deficiency. This genetic condition was passed on to him by his parents who were unwitting carriers of the gene.



Lyn Morley, with help from husband **John**, ran the monthly meetings before our present-day incumbent, **Marina Siemionow**, with husband, **Val**, took over and very capably 'kept on keeping on', and is guiding us into the future.

Thank you! And wishing our gratitude to all the members and helpers who have supported the Group over the last 28 years.

Editor's Note: It is 28 years since those first members walked through the door of the Raiders Club and in all that time the Canberra Raiders, despite their valiant efforts, have not won the premiership!



Strategies for Detecting and Managing Age-Related Lung Decline

It is always necessary for your specialist to establish your baseline lung function to enable an assessment of the progress of your condition. Aside from smoking and pollution, there could be genetic reasons for decline

in lung capacity and function. One such inherited factor is a deficiency in an enzyme produced in the liver that protects the lungs from damage caused by inflammation.

There are however difficulties in achieving a diagnosis during the earliest signs of lung function decline but there are actions your doctor can take to improve the diagnosis. For instance, when there's shortness of breath, your doctor needs to make sure that this is caused by something beyond a general lack of exercise or deconditioning.

There may be mechanical issues with the diaphragm or intercostal muscles which lead to less air being brought into the lungs and this can contribute to earlier decline. As we get older, our muscles naturally get weaker, and our muscles don't function as well as they can. Our goal should be to maintain muscle tone and to exercise those muscles with cardio and light resistance training. This allows the muscles to grow and stay in shape. Typically, that will improve lung function and endurance in the best way possible as we age. To help strengthen muscles into older age, we need to be active and, most importantly, not allow muscles to decondition and atrophy (waste away) over time.

*Joe Darrah - adapted by Brian Chauncy from online medical journal, **Medscape**, November 2025*

New Year Resolutions – Information provided by Chris Moyle

'Expect to fail,' is sport and exercise psychologist Dr Richard Keegan's advice to anyone setting New Year's resolutions, but failure shouldn't be final.

'Failure is not final and catastrophic. It is much healthier to say I failed at my goal today, but I've got another chance tomorrow and I can be better, and more informed in my pursuit,' he says.

The most frequent mistake people make when setting their resolutions is becoming too ambitious, which is what makes New Year's resolutions famous for failing after only a couple of days.

'Usually the weightiness of New Year's resolutions is that people go for something really big, which is all good, but any psychologist would say you need to come down to what is achievable right now, build up from where you're at and then work your way up to the goal.'

The rule of thumb guide is that new habits can take up to three months to stick.

'You get to the point where you're not doing it for some external reason but doing it because that's who you are and what you do now,' says Keegan.

'Make small, incremental, tolerable changes to activity levels, sleep patterns or nutrition,' he says.

'Sleep is undervalued, we don't know that it's a problem until it's broken. On average we sleep eight hours a night because that's about enough time for our brain – in terms of learning, consolidating memories, shifting neurotransmitters – to recharge almost like a battery.'

'People already have a well-grooved life, we're doing what we do because of circumstances, our job or school, so to go and carve out a new groove for ourselves takes some time,' says Keegan.

'That is what you're up against, you're juggling your whole lifestyle and it usually takes a lot of trial and error, and patience, to achieve that big shift most people are pursuing with New Year's resolutions.'

And, he says, goal setting itself is a skill.

‘People need to understand that setting goals once a year for ourselves might not reflect that skilled habit of adjusting, tweaking, adapting and setting more appropriate goals, and changing them in response to sickness or circumstance.

‘You might say you’re going to get good at setting little short goals, and that is what is going to steer you towards this bigger journey. Not only are you pursuing that bigger goal but you’re learning to navigate towards it through setting and monitoring these little, microscopic goals, day to day and week to week.’

Excerpt from article - City News, December 22, 2022-January 4, 2023



Christmas Lunch - Marina Siemionow

The Christmas Lunch at the end of 2025 was held at the Cafe Sosta in Acton on Black Mountain Peninsula. We were lucky to be given the large function room all to ourselves which had wonderful views over Lake Burley Griffin. Twenty-four people took part in the shared meal of spaghetti and risotto with salads and chips. Six amazing hampers overflowing with bubbles, puddings, biscuits and chocolates etc, prepared by Marilyn Allen, despite going through the ordeal of a full knee replacement, were raffled. Everyone bought many tickets, generously contributing to the CLLSG Fund.