



A national strategy for indoor air quality

2026–27 pre-budget submission

Poor indoor air quality negatively impacts the health, wellbeing and productivity of Australians. Clean indoor air would safeguard public health, promote equity, enhance productivity, strengthen workplace safety and reduce the burden on the health system from pollution-related illnesses, including from airborne pathogens.

Despite this, Australia does not monitor indoor air quality in public spaces to evidence-informed standards. As a result, we cannot safeguard indoor air quality, nor capture the health, productivity and wellbeing benefits from doing so.

At present, when measured, indoor air quality is frequently found to be of poor quality in many public places including schools, hospitals and transport. This stands in sharp contrast to Australia's excellent record of leadership in public health and occupational health and safety.

This lack of action is not due to a lack of knowledge or technology.

We have the scientific evidence, technological capacity and policy tools to act now, with two comprehensive reports published in 2025 setting out the [current state of indoor air quality](#) and [policy options](#) in Australia.

What Australia lacks is a coordinating mechanism to address this multi-portfolio, multi-jurisdictional challenge.

In the 2026-27 budget, we call on the Australian Government to commit to a strategic policy platform to achieve healthy indoor air and **invest \$3.5 million over 2 years** to:

- Develop a **national indoor air quality strategy**
- Establish a **multidisciplinary advisory council** on indoor air quality.



The advisory council would oversee the development and implementation of a national strategy to achieve the following priorities:

- **Establish enforceable indoor air quality performance standards in public buildings.** We recommend a three-phase approach, leveraging Australia's successful workplace health and safety framework that enables Commonwealth leadership and state and territory alignment. The first phase would require indoor air quality monitoring in all workplaces. The second phase introduces a workplace reporting standard, mandating specific parameters to be measured and reported. The final phase would legislate standards for all public buildings, requiring selected parameters to be monitored and controlled within designated safe levels. The final phase would require building operators to implement solutions to improve indoor air quality when it does not meet the standards.
- **Launch a national public awareness and education campaign for indoor air quality.** This campaign should uplift awareness of indoor air pollutants, including airborne pathogens (viruses, mould and bacteria) and bushfire smoke, and the benefits of improving indoor air quality. Education is a vital complement to the implementation of standards to ensure that required measures are effectively adopted by building owners, operators and occupants, and understood and supported by the Australian community at large.

Action on indoor air quality is urgently needed. We know what to do and we already have the tools to start right away. Establishing the multidisciplinary advisory council and development of the strategy should commence in 2026.

The \$3.5 million investment proposed would fund the establishment of the advisory council and development of the strategy. Additional funding will be needed for implementation and specific initiatives such as the national public awareness campaign.



A growing coalition of support

The vision to achieve clean indoor air has united researchers and advocates in organisations spanning universities, medical research institutes, unions, peak bodies, hospitals, patient advocacy groups, health foundations, health practitioner colleges, and industry.

It is with a united voice that we call on the Australian Government to invest in a coordinated, evidence-based platform to deliver cleaner indoor air for all, building on the [Global Pledge for Healthy Indoor Air](#), which asks leaders to recognise healthy indoor air as a fundamental human right.



Achieving healthy indoor air – where Australians spend 90% of their time – is a mechanism to safeguard health, enhance pandemic preparedness, uplift resilience of the built environment to climate change, ensure workplace health and safety and improve accessibility and care for all Australians.

This is a joint submission by the following Australian organisations who support the recommendations:

- Australian Academy of Science
- Air Club
- The Australasian Faculty of Occupational and Environmental Medicine and the Australasian Faculty of Public Health Medicine, of the Royal Australasian College of Physicians
- Australian Academy of Health and Medical Sciences
- Burnet Institute
- Centre for Safe Air
- Heart Foundation
- Lung Foundation Australia
- Research Australia
- The Safer Air Project
- Thrive

Further information

[Indoor air: the science of indoor air and pathways to improve indoor air quality in Australia](#)

[State of indoor air in Australia 2025](#)

[Safer shared air - a critical accessibility and inclusion issue](#)



Contact

To discuss or clarify any aspect of this submission, please contact Lauren Sullivan, Science Policy and Advice Manager at science.policy@science.org.au.