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World Cancer Day: New research reveals nearly all Australians diagnosed with cancer face out-of-pocket costs, prompting calls for stronger financial support

As today marks World Cancer Day, Cancer Council and the McCabe Centre for Law and Cancer are calling for government action to reduce the financial impact of cancer. It comes as new research reveals 98.8% of Australians diagnosed with cancer who were surveyed incur out-of-pocket expenses, even when accessing care in Australia's public healthcare system.

The findings from Cancer Council Australia's national survey conducted in 2025 show that financial burden arises from both direct medical costs and indirect expenses, with costs occurring at every stage of the cancer journey, from diagnosis and treatment through to end-of-life or survivorship care.

Cancer Council's analysis found that:

- Loss of income or disruption to employment is the most common financial cost, affecting more than a third (38.2%) of Australians diagnosed with cancer.
- Surgical expenses (23.7%) and insurance gap payments (23.6%) represented the largest out-of-pocket cost for nearly a quarter (23.7%) of respondents.

All Australians undergoing cancer treatment should be connected to financial support early, enabling people to receive best cancer care without fear of the financial impact to them and their family.

To achieve this, Cancer Council is calling for increased access to financial counselling services for Australians affected by cancer through a mandatory industry-funded model, alongside greater investment from Federal, state and territory governments.

Dr Peter Diamond, Chair of Cancer Council's Supportive Care Committee, said the research highlights the significant financial impact of cancer and the need for government action to better support people affected.

"Each person's experience of cancer is unique, shaped not only by their diagnosis and treatment, but by their family, work, income, where they live and access care, life circumstances, and many other factors."

"However, our new research shows an unfortunate commonality; that nearly all Australians diagnosed with cancer – almost 99% of those surveyed – face out-of-pocket expenses," said Dr. Diamond. "In fact, more than a third experience income loss or disruption to employment throughout their cancer journey."



Every Australian should be able to access high-quality cancer care, based on what best meets their needs, not what they can afford. Financial wellbeing is an important part of overall wellbeing, and nobody should face poverty due to cancer.”

“Financial burdens related to cancer care place significant pressure on people affected by cancer and their families at an already difficult time and are felt at every step. It’s important that conversations about the financial impact of cancer begin early, and there is government action so more families are connected to financial assistance and support as soon as possible,” Dr. Diamond said.

Hayley Jones, Director of the McCabe Centre, said “No one should be forced to navigate complex legal or financial hurdles on top of a cancer diagnosis. In addition to out-of-pocket costs of treatment, too many people affected by cancer face costs and challenges related to their employment, insurance, social security supports or travel and childcare.

“By properly addressing the legal and financial burdens people face during cancer, we can build a fairer system – one that gives every Australian the stability and support they need at a critical time in their lives.”

“Support is available for anyone currently affected by the costs of cancer via Cancer Council’s free and confidential information and support service on 13 11 20,” Dr. Diamond added. “However, with government action, more Australians will have the support they need to face cancer.”

-ENDS-

Additional Data

Other common indirect expenses experienced by Australians diagnosed by cancer include:

- Transport costs, affecting more than a third (38.1%), with additional burdens on those living in rural and regional areas
- Parking, affecting more than a quarter (28.4%)
- Accommodation requirements, affecting one in seven (15.3%)
- Travel, affecting one in seven (14.7%)
- Childcare, affecting one in eight (12.6%)

Additionally, common direct medical expenses experienced by Australians diagnosed by cancer include:

- Diagnostic testing, affecting nearly one in five (19.3%)



- Medication expenses, affecting nearly one in five (18.2%)
- Lymphoedema management, affecting nearly one in five (14.5%)
- Radiotherapy affecting one in nine (11.5%)
- Psychological support services affecting one in ten (10.3%)
- Medications affecting one in ten (9.6%)

Contact details

For all media enquiries and interview opportunities, please contact:

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02 8256 4109 (redirects to mobile outside of business hours)

About Cancer Council Australia

Cancer Council Australia is Australia's leading cancer charity, working to reduce the impact of cancer for all Australians. Cancer Council Australia works with its members, the eight state and territory Cancer Councils to:

- Undertake and fund cancer research
- Prevent and control cancer
- Provide information and support for people affected by cancer
- Shape and influence policy and practice

Find out more at cancer.org.au, or visit our [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#)

About McCabe Centre for Law & Cancer

The McCabe Centre for Law & Cancer is the only centre of its kind in the world dedicated to advancing law in cancer control. Our heritage is deeply connected to an Australian woman, Rolah McCabe, whose courage in standing up to the tobacco industry before her death continues to inspire our fight for justice, cancer prevention, and the rights of people affected by cancer.

We are a joint initiative of: Cancer Council Victoria, the Union for International Cancer Control (UICC) and Cancer Council Australia.

We maintain a [Knowledge Hub](#) on legal challenges to World Health Organization Framework Convention on Tobacco Control (WHO FCTC), and are the designated WHO Collaborating Centre on Law and Noncommunicable Disease equipping countries to take action.

Find out more: McCabeCentre.org, or visit [LinkedIn](#).

