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Media Release: Steps towards Stopping Silicosis – Thoracic Society welcomes *National Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry Bill 2023*

The Thoracic Society of Australia and New Zealand (TSANZ) welcomes the actions from the Assistant Minister for Health and Aged Care, the Hon Ged Kearney MP, and the Australian Government with the announcement of *National Occupational Respiratory Disease Bill 2023*; an important step forward in tackling the issue of dust diseases in Australia. The establishment of the National Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry will aid with supporting early detection and prevention of workplace risks, and was a key recommendation made by the National Dust Disease Taskforce.

TSANZ CEO, Mr. Vincent So, commended the Bill “This is an important step to protect Australian workers who have been left unprotected for too long. The establishment of the National Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry is a much-needed starting point which we can utilise and build-on to avert emerging preventable occupational lung diseases.”

For seven years, TSANZ has been advocating for legislative measures to protect lung health from hazardous occupational dust exposure. TSANZ CEO, Mr. Vincent So said, “TSANZ members first identified silicosis in engineered stone workers as early as 2016 and have given countless hours to ensure that Australian workers are afforded protection from preventable and incurable occupational diseases, and do not become future patients.”

The registry will provide a platform from which to capture and share occupational lung disease data. TSANZ President Professor Anne Holland says, “We need to ensure that the registry is fully utilised as an early detection system to warn of emerging occupational health issues.”

TSANZ President Professor Anne Holland adds, “The data collected through the registry will provide a growing evidence-base which will allow us to learn more about the hazards of occupational exposure. This information provided by clinicians and patients can provide important insights into the disease life course.”

A total of \$5.1 million has been set aside to combat occupational dust diseases in Australia, with \$1.6 million of this going towards the development of the registry, and a further 2.4 million for the operational costs until 2024-2025.

The TSANZ will continue to offer evidence-based guidance to the Department of Health to assist with the establishment of the National Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry. There is more work to be done to ensure workers are protected, that patient data is fully utilised, and that people affected by silicosis receive the care and support they deserve. The implementation phase must include ongoing targeted engagement with respiratory and occupational physicians to support delivery of education programs to workers, industry, and health practitioners. TSANZ looks forward to working with the Department of Health to provide a safer workplace with optimal health protection and care. The TSANZ is committed to continuing to provide a trusted, evidence-based voice and advice on best-practice clinical care.

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