

National Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry Annual Report 2024

22 August 2024

Overview

This report summarises information notified to the National Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry (National Registry) for the first three months of its operation. This is consistent with the reporting requirements set out in the *National Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry Act 2023* (the Act).

The National Registry collects data on occupational respiratory diseases to help reduce, eliminate, and improve our understanding of preventable workplace illnesses like silicosis.

Since commencing operation on 22 May 2024, the National Registry has received notifications on both prescribed and non-prescribed occupational respiratory diseases from a range of physicians across Australia.

The number of notifications during this initial three months of operation limits what new information can be gained from the data at this time. The notification of diseases which are not required under Act demonstrates the willingness of physicians and patients to support the operation of the National Registry.

The National Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry

The National Registry collects and shares data on occupational respiratory diseases and exposure to workplace hazards. Over time this information will help eliminate preventable occupational respiratory diseases by supporting earlier detection, intervention, and prevention activities.

The establishment of the National Registry was a recommendation of the National Dust Disease Taskforce. It aims to capture and share data on occupational respiratory diseases and exposures to occupational respiratory hazards in Australia. This will help us to:

- detect new and emerging threats to the health of workers
- understand the nature and extent of occupational respiratory diseases in Australia and their trends over time
- identify the industries, occupations, job tasks and workplaces at risk

- use targeted early intervention and prevention activities to reduce worker exposure and disease
- enhance preventative policy development, programs and decision making
- plan, deliver and promote health care and related services for occupational respiratory diseases.

Operation of the National Registry

From 22 May 2024, it is mandatory for some specialists in Australia to notify diagnoses of silicosis to the National Registry. They can also choose to report other occupational respiratory diseases to the National Registry, with patient consent.

The National Registry was established by the *National Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry Act 2023* (Act). Under the Act, prescribed medical practitioners must notify the National Registry when they diagnose a patient with a prescribed occupational respiratory disease after the commencement date. Notifications must be made within 30 days of diagnosis.

Prescribed occupational respiratory diseases and prescribed medical practitioners are defined in the *National Occupation Respiratory Disease Registry Rules 2024*. These definitions have remained unchanged from the commencement of the National Registry through until 22 August 2024.

A prescribed medical practitioner is a medical practitioner registered under the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law in the specialities of:

- occupational and environmental medicine
- respiratory and sleep medicine.

Silicosis is currently the only nationally prescribed occupational respiratory disease.

In Queensland, prescribed medical practitioners must also notify diagnoses of the following diseases to the National Registry where they are caused by occupational exposure to inorganic dusts:

- Cancer
- Chronic obstructive pulmonary disease
- Pneumoconiosis.

Prescribed practitioners can also choose to notify non-prescribed occupational diseases to the National Registry where the patient consents. A non-prescribed occupational respiratory disease is any respiratory disease that is caused or exacerbated by exposure to a workplace hazard or hazards, but is not mandatory to notify under the Act. This includes cases of silicosis diagnosed prior to the commencement date.

The type of information prescribed medical practitioners must notify to the National Registry is defined in the *National Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry Determination 2024*. It includes details about the patient, the occupational respiratory disease they have been diagnosed with, and their exposure history. Prescribed medical practitioners can also choose to notify additional information, with patient consent. Additional notification information includes more demographic and lifestyle information and medical test results.

Information in the National Registry is shared with state and territory health and work health and safety agencies. They can use this data to understand how widespread occupational respiratory diseases are in their state or territory and determine how to reduce worker exposure to respiratory hazards.

Reporting of notifications to the National Registry

Subsection 26(1) of the Act requires a report to be published each year covering notifications made to the National Registry in the 12 months prior to 30 June. The Act states the report must include:

- the number of notifications of each prescribed occupational respiratory disease
- the number of notifications of each non prescribed occupational respiratory disease
- aggregate information and statistics about the occupation, main job task, industry and state of residence of diagnosed individuals at the time they were exposed to respiratory disease-causing agents.

This report expands the legislated reporting period to include all notifications received by the National Registry from 22 May to 22 August 2024.

In releasing information from the National Registry, the Act requires reasonable steps be taken to ensure the information is deidentified.

Notifications to National Registry

As at 22 August 2024, 22 new cases of silicosis and 6 new cases of other occupational respiratory diseases were notified to the National Registry during its first three months of operation. Of these, 8 cases of silicosis and <5 cases of other occupational respiratory diseases were notified on or before 30 June 2024. These notifications included non-prescribed occupational respiratory diseases.

The tables below show a breakdown of notifications received to the National Registry at 22 August 2024 by the:

- state or territory,
- industry,
- occupation, and
- job task where workers were mainly exposed to relevant disease-causing agents.

For privacy reasons, the symbol <5 must be shown where the sum of notifications is less than 5.

Table 1: Notifications of occupational respiratory diseases by State or territory of main exposure to 22 August 2024.

State or territory	Silicosis	Other occupational respiratory diseases
New South Wales	9	0
South Australia	5	0
Queensland	<5	<5
Victoria	<5	<5
Western Australia	<5	0
Australian Capital Territory	<5	<5
Tasmania	<5	0
Northern Territory	0	0

Table 2: Notifications of occupational respiratory diseases by Industry of main exposure to 22 August 2024.

Industry of main exposure (ANZSIC)	Silicosis	Other occupational respiratory diseases
Construction	10	<5
<i>Concrete, masonry or stone work</i>	6	0
Manufacturing	10	0
<i>Engineered stone products</i>	9	0
Mining	<5	<5
Other industry	<5	0

¹ Other industry represents the sum of workers in ANZSIC divisions not listed above.

Table 3: Notifications of occupational respiratory diseases by Occupation of main exposure to 22 August 2024.

Occupation of main exposure (ANZSCO)	Silicosis	Other occupational respiratory diseases
Machinery operators and drivers	6	<5
<i>Stone processing machine operators</i>	<5	0
Technicians and trades workers	11	0
<i>Stonemason</i>	9	0
Other occupation	<5	<5

² Other occupation represents the sum of workers in ANZSCO major groups not listed above.

Table 4: Notifications of occupational respiratory diseases by Main job task of main exposure to 22 August 2024.

Main job task	Silicosis	Other occupational respiratory diseases
Cutting/shaping/sawing	15	0
Other main job task	6	<5
Not stated	<5	<5

³ Other Main Job Task represents the sum of workers in main job tasks not listed above.

Observations

Data collected in the brief period between the commencement of the National Registry and 22 August 2024 shows that the National Registry is operating as intended.

Whilst not required under the Act, notification of non-prescribed disease is a positive which will improve the ability of the National Registry to support a greater understanding of other occupational respiratory disease. Over time this can be used to inform action by businesses and regulators to identify emerging issues, address exposure in the workplace and reduce the impact of these diseases on Australian workers.

While early figures are not large enough to draw accurate conclusions about the characteristics of people diagnosed with occupational respiratory disease or their workplaces, the industries, occupations, and main job tasks associated with exposure to silica dust were consistent with expectations.

More information will be made available in the 2024-25 annual report as notifications continue to be made to the National Registry.

Appendix

Data Considerations

Classification Codes

Code	Description
Australian and New Zealand Standard Classification of Occupations (ANZSCO) 2022	Developed for use in compilation and analysis of occupation statistics in Australia and New Zealand, ANZSCO assigns a numeric identifier to specific occupations (6-digit code) that are divided under occupational groups (4-digit code). More information about ANZSCO can be found at https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/classifications/anzsco-australian-and-new-zealand-standard-classification-occupations/2022 .
Australian and New Zealand Standard Industrial Classification (ANZSIC) 2006 (Revision 2.0)	Developed for use in compilation and analysis of industry statistics in Australia and New Zealand, ANZSIC assigns an identifier (letter or number) to a specific industry and industry activity. More information about ANZSIC can be found at https://www.abs.gov.au/statistics/classifications/australian-and-new-zealand-standard-industrial-classification-anzsic/2006-revision-2-0
Systematized Nomenclature of Medicine Clinical Terms (SNOMED CT) 2022	SNOMED CT is a systematically organized computer-processable collection of medical terms providing codes, terms, synonyms, and definitions used in clinical documentation and reporting. SNOMED CT is used to categorise diseases and exposures input into the National Registry. More information about SNOMED CT can be found at https://www.snomed.org/what-is-snomed-ct .

Privacy

The Department manages all data collected by the National Registry in line with privacy policy and legislation. Under the *Privacy Act 1988* (including the Australian Privacy Principles) and the *National Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry Act 2023*, the Department must take reasonable steps to protect personal information in the National Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry. This includes the secure storage of personal information. More information about the handling of personal information can be found at <https://www.health.gov.au/resources/publications/privacy-policy>. The National Occupational Respiratory Disease Registry patient privacy and consent notice and other personal information collection notices can be found at <https://www.health.gov.au/our-work/nordr/resources>.

Deaths

The National Registry is able to capture data on deaths. Information about deaths that occurred over the 2023-24 reference period may be updated in future reports.