

## **Interim report on delivering quality care more efficiently**

To the Productivity Commission team,

The Australian Institute of Refrigeration, Air Conditioning and Heating (AIRAH) thanks the Productivity Commission (PC) for the opportunity to respond to the interim report on delivering quality care more efficiently. Our response focuses on the third reform area: prevention.

AIRAH applauds the PC's recommendation to establish a National Prevention Investment Framework to proactively address some of Australia's most important health, wellbeing and productivity issues at their source. As events such as the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted, prevention is by far the most effective way to safeguard health, wellbeing and productivity at a population level. We strongly support better structure and funding for prevention programs.

We note that there is no mention of terms such as "indoor air quality", "airborne pathogens", "infectious diseases" or "mould" in the interim report. Having a stronger understanding of the impact of poor management of indoor air quality on health, wellbeing and productivity is a vital aspect of any approach to prevention investment. While we understand that this report focuses on high-level recommendations rather than details, we urge the PC to acknowledge indoor air quality as an intrinsic part of prevention.

As noted in our submission to the previous round of consultations held by the PC, poor indoor air quality puts a huge burden on our care systems. In 1998, the CSIRO estimated the cost of poor indoor air quality in Australia at \$12 billion per year – equivalent to \$24 billion in today's money. When accounting for the impact of emerging and recent diseases such as COVID-19 and fungal pathogens, this figure is significantly higher.

Indoor air quality affects Australians in all settings, but it is particularly important in the care sector, which provides support to those most vulnerable to airborne pathogens, including children, older Australians and immunocompromised people. In our previous submission, we referenced multiple studies highlighting the impact of poor indoor air quality on the care sector.

AIRAH advocates for the establishment of an interdisciplinary taskforce to determine the most effective ways to improve air quality and occupant health in Australian buildings, including hospitals, schools, and other care facilities. One of the central aims of the taskforce would be to establish minimum standards for indoor air quality metrics and develop practical measures to improve indoor air. It would also support the implementation of these standards and measures.



AIRAH's membership includes a wide range of industries, and we support several highly active special technical groups committed to the health, wellbeing and productivity of building occupants. An effective taskforce should include representatives from the heating, ventilation and air conditioning (HVAC) industry, as well as specialists in science, medicine and public health. People with lived experience of poor indoor air quality – people whose health, productivity and access to normal activities have been affected – should also be included, as should government. We see the proposed National Prevention Investment Framework as the ideal mechanism for funding this taskforce and would be eager to support it through our broad and expert membership base.

If you would like to discuss any of the above points in more detail, we would be very happy to arrange a meeting.

Best regards,

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