Respiratory (Thoracic) Medicine Physicians – Practise in Australia

Able Medico · Information for overseas-trained respiratory physicians · November 2026

Overview

Respiratory (thoracic) medicine physicians are assessed by the Royal Australasian College of Physicians (RACP). Thoracic medicine is on the acute-shortage list, so a section 19AB exemption can allow you to bill Medicare in any location.

Since the RACP introduced its Accelerated Specialist Pathway, specialists from the UK, Ireland, Hong Kong and India (and Sri Lanka for adult medicine) can be assessed on paper, with no interview, and complete about 6 to 12 months' peer review.

Respiratory medicine in Australia

Respiratory physicians diagnose and manage diseases of the lungs and airways, from asthma and COPD to lung cancer, interstitial lung disease and sleep-disordered breathing.

What Australian respiratory physicians do

- Manage asthma, COPD, cystic fibrosis and interstitial lung disease
- Perform bronchoscopy and interventional procedures
- Diagnose and manage lung cancer with multidisciplinary teams
- Run sleep studies and treat sleep apnoea
- Care for patients with respiratory failure, including in critical care

Where they work

Public and private hospitals, respiratory and sleep laboratories, private rooms and regional outreach.

Your pathways

There are three routes for respiratory physicians. Our Due Diligence report tells you which fits your training and experience.

Pathway	Who it is for	Possible outcomes	What follows	Leads to
RACP Accelerated Specialist Pathway	Specialists with a UK CCT/CCST, Irish CSCST, Hong Kong FHKAM plus FHKCP, Indian MD plus DM, or Sri Lankan MD plus PGIM board certification	Comparability decided on paper, usually about 6 weeks after a complete application	Peer review: about 6 months (UK, Ireland) or about 12 months (Hong Kong, India, Sri Lanka)	Specialist registration and FRACP
RACP Standard Specialist Assessment	All other overseas-trained specialists with at least 3 years' specialist training	Substantially / partially / not comparable, after a video interview	Substantially comparable: 6 to 12 months FTE peer review. Partially comparable: up to 24 months FTE supervised practice, usually 6 to 12 months' top-up training at an accredited site, then peer review	Specialist registration and FRACP

Pathway	Who it is for	Possible outcomes	What follows	Leads to
Area of Need	Specialists selected by an employer for a position the state or territory has declared an Area of Need	RACP supports the appointment only with suitable supervision and a substantially comparable outcome	Practise in that position under supervision	Registration tied to that position, while you complete specialist recognition

Points to know

- The RACP pathways have no written or clinical exams. Requirements are supervised practice, workplace-based assessment, online courses and CPD.
- You complete the RACP orientation course within 3 months and the cultural safety course within 6 months of starting.
- Your position must be at least 0.5 FTE and approved by the RACP before you start.
- A comparability decision is valid for 2 years, during which you need to secure a position and begin your requirements.
- Not comparable applicants may reapply after 2 years with further training or consultant experience.

Medical licencing process

1. **Due Diligence.** Our opinion on which RACP pathway applies to you, your most likely outcome, and your registration and visa options.
2. **Primary source verification.** Verify your medical and specialist qualifications through the Australian Medical Council.
3. **RACP assessment.** Accelerated: a paper assessment, usually about 6 weeks. Standard: a one-hour video interview, with a decision on average within 6 months of a complete application.
4. **Find your position.** We introduce you to employers. The RACP must approve your position and peer review or supervision arrangements before you start.
5. **Ahpra registration.** Limited (or provisional) registration while you complete supervised practice.
6. **Visa.** Skills in Demand visa (subclass 482) or a permanent residence visa.
7. **Medicare.** Provider number and section 19AB exemption for your location.
8. **Commence practice.** Peer review or top-up training, the RACP orientation and cultural safety courses, and CPD.
9. **Fellowship and specialist registration.** Once your requirements are signed off, apply for FRACP and full specialist registration.

Workforce, demand and remuneration

Workforce. The Medical Board of Australia reported 923 respiratory and thoracic medicine physicians in Australia in 2023.

Demand. Respiratory medicine is on the acute-shortage list for section 19AB (as published May 2026). This means a section 19AB exemption can allow you to bill Medicare in any location. College assessment and Ahpra registration still apply.

Remuneration. Earnings depend on public or private practice, location and your supervision level before specialist registration. We discuss remuneration for specific opportunities with you directly.

How Able Medico helps

Medical licencing and migration is our forte. We tell you which RACP pathway suits you, prepare your application and interview, secure an approved position, and manage Ahpra, visa and Medicare steps. Through our employer contacts we can introduce you to hospitals, sleep services and private respiratory practices.

Next steps

- **Start with Due Diligence:** ablemedico.com.au/able-medico-for-doctors
- **Contact us:** ablemedico.com.au/contact-us

Sources

- Accelerated Specialist Pathway — RACP
- Standard Specialist Assessment Pathway — RACP
- Specialist pathway – specialist recognition — Medical Board of Australia
- Section 19AB – access to Medicare provider numbers for overseas trained doctors — Department of Health