



MEDIA RELEASE

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Aussies urged to take a half-time toilet break for bowel cancer this State of Origin series

With the NRL State of Origin set to kick off in Sydney, Australians are being encouraged to take a half-time toilet break during the 2022 series and do a test to help save lives from bowel cancer.

The Australian Government, Cancer Council and the National Rugby League (NRL) have teamed up to encourage eligible Australians to participate in the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program. The program provides people aged 50-74 years with free bowel screening tests every two years.

Putting their competitive spirits aside, former Rugby League and Origin greats Petero Civoniceva (QLD) and Geoff Toovey (NSW) joined Minister for Health, Mark Butler, and Cancer Council CEO, Professor Tanya Buchanan, in urging Australians to #Get2It on bowel cancer screening.

In the spirit of healthy competition, the latest statistics show while Queensland scored an early victory over its NSW neighbours by returning more bowel screening tests (QLD 41.6% vs. NSW 40.5%), both states trail behind the national participation rate of 43.5%.

Petero Civoniceva said: “When it comes to Origin time, it’s not often the blue and maroon states see eye to eye, but in the case of bowel cancer, we’re happy to work together to encourage more Aussies to take the test.”

Geoff Toovey said: “The National Bowel Cancer Screening test is simple and takes less than a couple of minutes – much quicker than Petero can run the length of a footy field these days.

“There’s no rivalry when it comes to bowel cancer, Australia’s second biggest cancer killer – we all want to beat it. So why wouldn’t you want to give yourself peace of mind by taking a test that is simple, easy and free?”

Professor Buchanan said: “Every year, around 15,000 new cases of bowel cancer are diagnosed in Australia, and we know that 90% of those could be successfully treated if caught early.

“Currently, only 43.5% of eligible Australians do their free bowel cancer screening test and for men it is even lower at 41.3%. That’s why we’re launching a national campaign with the Australian Government calling for Australians to Get2It and do the test,” Professor Buchanan said.

Minister Butler agreed it was vital more Australians do their free test.

“If we can increase screening participation rates and help to detect bowel cancer early, we can save lives,” he said.

“We know if participation reaches 60%, 84,000 lives could be saved by 2040 – that’s around as many people as will be in Accor Stadium on Wednesday night.



“We have partnered with Cancer Council and the NRL to help us reach people who screen at lower rates, including men in regional and remote areas.

“Nothing captures attention of NRL fans quite like State of Origin. That’s why the Australian Government is excited to work with the experts in cancer prevention and the experts in footy to promote bowel cancer screening and ultimately save lives through Aussies love for sport,” Minister Butler said.

For more information on Bowel Cancer or the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program campaign, go to bowelcancer.org.au.

ENDS

Notes to editors

1. NBCSP Participation Rates (Source: Australian Institute of Health and Welfare)

STATE	Participation (%)	Participated (#)	Invited (#)
AUS WIDE	43.5%	2,497,317	5,744,244
NSW	40.5%	751,564	1,854,482
QLD	41.6%	486,750	1,169,918
VIC	46%	650,355	1,415,020
WA	45.9%	274,614	598,835
SA	48.9%	210,716	431,266
TAS	48.9%	67,913	138,765
ACT	45.7%	41,786	91,438
NT	30.6%	13,619	44,520

During 2018-19, participation was higher among women (45.6%) than men (41.3%). Residents in South Australia and Tasmania had the highest participation rate of all states and territories at 48.9%, while people in the Northern Territory recorded the lowest participation rate at 30.6%.