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Australians aged 45 to 49 to benefit from life-saving bowel screening test

Cancer Council welcomes new changes to the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program that will mean from today Australians aged 45 to 49 can request their first free bowel cancer screening kit.

The change comes off the back of the 2023 guidelines, developed by Cancer Council Australia, with evidence review and modelling by the Daffodil Centre (a joint venture of Cancer Council NSW and the University of Sydney) and endorsed by the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC). The revised guidelines recommend a population screening start age of 45 years instead of 50 years.

The program provides people aged 45 to 74 years with free bowel screening tests every two years. Australians aged 45 to 49 can now opt in to receive their first bowel screening kit through the [National Cancer Screening Register](#). Australians aged 50 to 74 will continue to receive a bowel screening kit in the mail every two years.

Professor Karen Canfell AC, Chair of Cancer Council's Cancer Screening and Immunisation Committee and Director of the Daffodil Centre said these changes reflect the evidence and build on the success of the program.

"Population screening is offered to a target population group to pick up early signs of disease. It is offered to healthy people, without symptoms, and it must provide more benefit than harm, as informed by the evidence,"

"The evidence shows that offering Australians aged 45 to 49 the chance to take part in bowel screening, would help detect more cancers earlier, and save more lives."

"We're delighted to see the Australian Government act on the evidence and invest in cancer screening now to prevent more Australians from being diagnosed with bowel cancer in the future."

Bowel cancer is Australia's second biggest cancer killer, and risk increases with age. However, 90% of bowel cancers can be successfully treated if caught early.

Professor Canfell said that the changes will go a long way to reducing the impact of bowel cancer but notes that improving participation among all eligible Australians will be critical.

"We want to encourage every Australian to use the bowel cancer screening opportunities available to them. If you have a test kit at home, now is the time to get to it. You can give yourself peace of mind, by doing the free, simple test today."

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Contact details

For all media enquiries and interview opportunities, please contact:
Cancer Council Australia, media@cancer.org.au
02 8256 4109 (redirects to mobile outside of business hours)

About Cancer Council Australia

Cancer Council Australia is Australia's leading cancer charity, working to reduce the impact of cancer for all Australians. Cancer Council Australia works with its members, the eight state and territory Cancer Councils to:

- Undertake and fund cancer research
- Prevent and control cancer
- Provide information and support for people affected by cancer
- Shape and influence policy and practice

Find out more at cancer.org.au, or visit our [Facebook](#), [Instagram](#), [Twitter](#) or [LinkedIn](#).