

**Closing the gap in Australia's second biggest cancer killer**

*Cancer Council encourages Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to take a simple test that saves lives*

Cancer Council has launched a new campaign to encourage more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people to take part in Australia's free national bowel screening program.

A report from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare released last year suggests that 4 out of 5 eligible Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians may be missing out on a simple test that could save their life.

The National Bowel Cancer Screening Program sends a free home screening test to people aged 50-74 every two years. The estimated screening rate of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is less than half that of other Australians.

Bowel cancer is Australia's second biggest cancer killer. It can develop with no clear signs or symptoms. By the time symptoms appear, the chances of survival may be low. But if found early, 90 per cent of bowel cancers can be successfully treated.

The new Cancer Council campaign launching this week has been funded by the Federal Government and will include tailored messages across radio and in newspapers, as well as in posters in community centres and venues.

Professor Gail Garvey of Menzies School of Health Research said it was important to make sure everyone aged 50 – 74 understood the importance of doing their free bowel screening test every two years.

"Over 80 Australians die from bowel cancer each week. Yet if it's picked up early, bowel cancer is usually easy to treat."

Professor Garvey is a Kamillaroi woman and leads Menzies' research effort on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people and cancer.

"At the moment too few of us are doing the free home screening test. That's likely to be one of the reasons bowel cancer survival rates in our community are lower.

"You can do the test at home, it's not difficult – I've done it myself

'The test picks up tiny amounts of blood in the poo, which can be a sign that a cancer is developing in the bowel. So if you get the test in the mail, do it, even if you feel well. If you throw it out, you might miss out on getting an early warning that could save your life.

"You want to be around for your family for a long time. Bowel screening is a part of staying healthy. So please do the test, don't put it off."

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people can find tailored materials about screening at [www.indigenousbowelscreen.com.au](http://www.indigenousbowelscreen.com.au)

The tailored campaign for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples launching this week is part of Australia's first major national campaign to promote bowel cancer screening. Funded by a \$10 million grant from Federal Government, Cancer Council's mass media campaign includes advertising across radio, television, online and outdoor.

**ENDS**

For media interviews, please contact Hollie Harwood in the Cancer Council Australia media team on (02) 8063 4109 (our media line diverts to mobile outside of business hours) or email [media@cancer.org.au](mailto:media@cancer.org.au)