

**Media Release**

23 June 2021

**Battle of the poos: which regions lead the bowel screening battle?**

*More Australians than ever participating in life saving bowel cancer screening, spurred on by Australian Government funded Cancer Council campaign*

Talking about poo might sometimes be taboo but Cancer Council is continuing its mission to beat the stigma by celebrating the Australian regions with the largest National Bowel Cancer Screening Program participation.

New data released today by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare showed that the regions of Yorke Peninsular (SA), Fleurieu – Kangaroo Island (SA), Surf Coast – Bellarine Peninsula (Vic), Holdfast Bay (SA) and Mitcham (SA) had the highest participation rates across Australia in the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program.

In the battle of the states, South Australia led the nation having four of the top 10 regions having the highest participation rate. The rest of the top ten consisted of regions in Victoria, Western Australia, and Tasmania.

When it comes to most improved, the regions of St Marys (NSW) (6.5%), Gascoyne (WA) (6.4%) and Melbourne City (Vic) (5.4%) led the charge, each increasing their participation rate by over five percentage points from 2016-17 to 2018-19.

Tanya Buchanan, CEO of Cancer Council Australia explained “Bowel cancer is Australia’s second biggest cancer killer claiming the lives of around 100 Australians each week. Thankfully however, we have a screening test that can detect these cancers early, often before symptoms arise.

The promising participation rates across the nation comes as new Cancer Council data today shows that the 2019 Australian Government funded Cancer Council National Bowel Screening Campaign was responsible for a whopping 93,000 people doing these tests.

“The extra 93,000 tests completed equates to 860 cancers being prevented and 470 lives saved over the next 50 years,” said Ms Buchanan.

“Australians who have completed their bowel screening test deserve a pat on the back and we would encourage everyone to talk to their friends and family who are aged 50 to 74 and ask them if they’ve done their test – talking about poo isn’t taboo when it could save your life.

“Across the nation we see significant disparities in participation rates. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare data shows that while participation has increased it still equates to only 4 in 10 completing their bowel screening test when it was sent to them in the mail,” Ms Buchanan said.

“Cancer Council’s goal is to see all regions across Australia have these high participation rates because we know that if we can increase participation across the country from 4 in 10 to 6 in 10, we could save 84,000 lives over the next 20 years.

“If you have the screening test at home and you’re yet to complete it, please do the test now,” Ms Buchanan added.

Today’s announcement comes alongside new Australian Government funding for an ongoing campaign to get more people participating in bowel screening.

Ms Buchanan added, “Cancer Council is very pleased to be working with the Australian Government to get more people participating in the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program and we hope the continued awareness from another campaign will help us in our mutual goal to achieve a cancer free future.”

The National Bowel Cancer Screening Program delivers screening kits to the homes of eligible Australians aged 50-74 every two years. The test is free, quick and hygienic and can be completed at home and returned in the post.

#### **Top 10 regions with the highest participation rates (2018-19)**

1. Yorke Peninsula (SA) 57%
2. Fleurieu – Kangaroo Island (SA) 55.9%
3. Surf Coast – Bellarine Peninsula (VIC) 55.1%
4. Holdfast Bay (SA) 55.1%
5. Mitcham (SA) 53.8%
6. Augusta – Margaret River – Busselton (WA) 53.7%
7. Gippsland – East (VIC) 53.7%
8. Hobart – South and West (TAS) 53.2%
9. Gippsland – South West (VIC) 52.7%
10. Joondalup (WA) 52.6%

#### **Regions with the greatest improvements in screening participation:**

SA3 name	Participation 2016-17 (%)	Participation 2018-19 (%)	Participation increase (%)
St Marys (NSW)	31.3	37.8	6.5
Gascoyne (WA)	33.7	40.1	6.4
Melbourne City (VIC)	34.9	40.3	5.4
Swan (WA)	38.2	43.2	5.0
Stonnington – West (VIC)	38.0	42.9	4.9
Brunswick – Coburg (VIC)	38.4	43.0	4.6
Palmerston (NT)	25.7	30.2	4.5
Kimberley (WA)	22.6	27.1	4.5
Yorke Peninsula (SA)	52.5	57.0	4.5
Gosford (NSW)	39.2	43.6	4.4

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