

# Local government bowel cancer awareness opportunities.

## Our purpose

Cancer Council WA aims to work with our community to reduce the incidence and the impact of cancer. In line with this, our Bowel Cancer Screening Team is working with local governments across Western Australia to increase awareness of bowel cancer and the national screening program, through a multi-faceted approach. This includes education opportunities and placement of reminders and prompts in a range of contexts in the community.

## Background

Bowel cancer is cancer in any part of the large intestine, which usually develops over a number of years. Australia has one of the highest rates of bowel cancer in the world, with **more than 16,000 Australians diagnosed each year**. Around one in 13 Australians are diagnosed with bowel cancer in their lifetime.

The National Bowel Cancer Screening Program (NBCSP) sends free home test kits to Australians aged 50–74, every two years. Australians are eligible if they have a mailing address associated with a Medicare or DVA card (although conditional migrants and temporary residents are ineligible). The kit looks for tiny amounts of invisible blood in your poo, is done at home, and only takes a few minutes. Two samples need to be taken – each from a different poo, with the first sample stored in a secure container in the fridge until the second is done. Both are then securely sent in the mail to a laboratory for review. Participants are contacted with the results, including whether they need any follow-up tests. Unfortunately, current participation in WA is just 46.1 per cent. Research has found that we could **prevent 84,000 bowel cancer deaths by 2040** if participation rates were sustained at 60 per cent.

The NBCSP is important because bowel cancer often develops with no symptoms. The kits are designed to detect bowel cancer in its very early stages, and fortunately, **more than 90 per cent of bowel cancers can be treated when detected early**.



## Benefits

**Collaboration between Cancer Council WA and local government offers the following advantages to local communities:**

- Meeting requirements in line with the State Public Health Plan for Western Australia 2019–2024. Objective 1 outlines the importance of empowering and enabling people to live healthy lives, particularly with relation to the total health loss in Western Australia that is attributable to cancer. The Plan encourages local governments to promote and support the state's Health Promotion Strategic Framework 2017–2021, which in turn focuses on the importance of "seeking and seizing opportunities for cancer prevention".
- Offering opportunities for local governments to build healthier communities through education and awareness of both risk factors for bowel cancer and the free screening program.
- Building a healthier workforce through implementing strategies aimed at local government employees, to educate and promote participation in screening.

## How we can work together

Table 1 presents some of the opportunities that may be incorporated into local government (LG) practice, with the aim of raising awareness of bowel cancer and screening amongst 50-74-year-olds to improve health outcomes.

| Group                 | Target population                                    | Format  | LG activity   | Cancer Council WA involvement                                  | Example   |
|-----------------------|--|---|---|--|---|
| <b>Community</b>      | All LG constituents                                  | LG social media                                     | LG to post social tiles to promote participation in the NBCSP   | Provide social media assets                                    | Social tile on LG's Facebook/ Instagram page  |
|                       | All LG constituents                                  | Content in LG newsletter                            | LG to include article or graphics promoting NBCSP   | Provide content and graphics                                   | Champion story or article   |
|                       | All LG constituents                                  | Promotion in LG facilities                          | LG to display NBCSP promotional resources in LG facilities  | Provide materials  | Posters in LG bathrooms, libraries, public noticeboards   |
|                       | Community groups, such as classes at local libraries | Promote community education presentations/ sessions | LG to host bowel cancer education session at LG facilities or promote to education sessions to community groups | Provide promotional materials and deliver presentations        | Flyers delivered to community groups<br>Emails to group organisers<br>Posters in communal areas   |
|                       | Specific groups, including priority populations      | Promotion at relevant events                        | LG to invite Cancer Council WA to events, or facilitate dissemination of resources                              | Attend events; provide educational materials such as pamphlets | Events held for:<br>Seniors' week<br>Multicultural occasions<br>NAIDOC<br>Women's health week<br>Men's Sheds<br>Activity groups, such as walking groups     |
| <b>Internal staff</b> | Council employees aged over 45                       | Education presentation                              | LG to host bowel cancer education session at LG facilities  | Deliver presentations  | Lunchtime or toolbox learning session<br>Webinar  |
|                       | Council employees aged over 45                       | NBCSP promotion in office setting                   | LG to use resources from the campaign kit   | Provide bowel cancer campaign kit to promote NBCSP             | Campaign kit includes:<br>Posters for lunchroom/ bathrooms<br>Desktop wallpaper<br>Email signatures/ payslip prompts<br>Social/ intranet tiles<br>Pamphlets |