

# **Greens show national leadership on bowel cancer screening**

## **Critical cancer issue finally on election agenda**

Australia's unacceptable bowel cancer burden would be reduced under the Australian Greens' proposal for expanding the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program, Cancer Council Australia said today.

Chief Executive Officer, Professor Ian Olver, welcomed the announcement today by Greens Senator Rachel Siewart for a plan to maintain the current program, add 60 and 70-year-olds and prepare for a move from one-off testing to rescreening every two years by 2012-13.

"As Senator Siewart said today, expanding the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program is the best and most cost-effective investment the next Australian government can make to immediately reduce cancer mortality and morbidity in Australia," Professor Olver said.

"If the current investment is not expanded by the next government, we will in effect be going backwards in bowel cancer control, with a piecemeal one-off screening test dragging on as increasing numbers of Australians develop bowel cancer.

"The Greens are showing leadership on bowel cancer screening, by announcing a plan that would maintain the momentum of a vital cancer control program that both the Labor and Coalition parties committed to introducing in the 2004 election.

"We call on all parties to support the expansion of the program, which would save up to 30 lives each week if available to all Australians aged 50 and over."

Professor Olver said that an independent evaluation of the program as proposed by the Greens would build on published analyses that have shown overwhelmingly that bowel cancer screening through faecal occult blood testing saves lives and is cost-effective.

"The key to a screening program is repeat testing over appropriate intervals," Professor Olver said.

"The Greens' proposal to begin screening program participants every two years rather than on a one-off basis from 2012-13 would be a shift to proper screening, as defined by the World Health Organisation.

"The Greens should be commended for showing national leadership on this critical cancer control initiative, particularly in an election campaign which so far has featured no specific new commitments to reducing Australia's increasing cancer toll."

Cancer Council Australia's election priorities are online at: [www.cancer.org.au/election2010](http://www.cancer.org.au/election2010)

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