130,000 reasons for the next government to back Cancer Council’s three-year plan

- New numbers crunched show potential lives saved
- $3 billion return on renewed health system investments

Innovative modelling released today (2/6) shows that the next Australian Government could save more than 130,000 Australian lives over 25 years by investing an additional 0.8 per cent of Australia’s annual cancer medical bill into under-funded health programs.[1]

Cancer Council’s Election priorities 2016 shows that improvements in early detection, public education, priority-driven research and drug access would begin saving Australian lives immediately and also deliver net health system savings.

Priorities include increased bowel cancer screening and renewed skin cancer awareness and hard-hitting anti-smoking campaigns. There are also calls for prioritised cancer research funding and a review of drug subsidy arrangements.

Cancer Council Australia CEO, Professor Sanchia Aranda, said whoever formed government in July would be at a crossroads on cancer. “The next Government can either maintain the status quo or commit to a new plan that will convert existing cancer investments into unprecedented benefits in lives saved.”

She said that Cancer Council’s recommendations for bowel cancer screening alone would prevent almost 84,000 premature deaths by 2040, by increasing program participation.

“Tens of thousands of Australians in apparent good health have a bowel cancer or precancerous polyp growing inside them,” she said. “Many will have their lives saved if they participate in the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program – yet awareness is very low. Raising awareness saves lives. All that’s needed is a modest top-up in program funds to turn the existing investment into a windfall in lives saved – and a net economic return.”

Professor Aranda said the same logic applied to all of Cancer Council’s election priorities, with the human and economic returns increasing in step with the level of investment.

Hundreds of thousands of Australians could benefit from the recommendations during the next parliamentary term alone. “For example, investing in skin cancer awareness reduces the number of people diagnosed in the long term and could immediately prompt people with suspicious spots or moles to get them checked out.

“In addition, people who can’t afford potentially life-saving medicines would benefit from a review of drug access, while a priority-driven research agenda would help us understand poor-survival cancers.”

Professor Aranda said the three-year plan would improve health outcomes beyond cancer, with joint risk factors addressed and drug approval and research reforms benefitting thousands of Australians with other diseases as well.

“Australia has done well in a number of areas, but we’ve never reached benchmarks or coordinated our efforts into a coherent three-year cancer plan. With an ageing population, an increasing number of people being diagnosed with cancer and an escalating healthcare bill, now is the time for all candidates to declare their support for a new national cancer plan.”

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[1] See summary analysis/background