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# Government takes bowel cancer programme nationwide

**HON ANDREW LITTLE**(/MINISTER/HON-ANDREW-LITTLE)[Health \(/portfolio/labour-2020-2023/health\)](/portfolio/labour-2020-2023/health)

The Government's lifesaving bowel-screening programme is now available across the whole country, Health Minister Andrew Little said today.

The programme has been successfully rolled out across the country over five years. In that time, cancers have been detected in 1400 people as a result of screening. Thirty-five per cent of these cancers were in the early stages and highly treatable.

"New Zealand has one of the highest rates of bowel cancer in the developed world, so it's critical we have a nationwide screening programme to help address it," Andrew Little said at the official launch of the Bay of Plenty branch of the service at Tauranga Hospital today.

"Bowel cancer is the second-most common cause of cancer death in this country, claiming more than 1200 lives a year, which is why in Budget 2022 we announced extra funding to extend the programme.

"This programme can be a game-changer. People who are diagnosed with early-stage bowel cancer have a 90 per cent chance of long-term survival if they get timely treatment.

"Currently, free screening is available to the estimated 835,000 New Zealanders aged 60 to 74. But because a higher proportion of Māori and Pacific people get bowel cancer before the age of 60, we're bringing the aged of eligibility for them down to 50."

5<sup>th</sup>

ational Bowel Screening Programme started in 2017 and is the first cancer-screening programme to both men and women. In that time, more than a million home-test kits have been sent out.

As well as the 1400 cancers detected, thousands of pre-cancerous polyps (growths in the bowel) have been found as a result of the programme. If left untreated these could become cancerous.

‘I urge anyone who gets a bowel screening home test in the mail to complete it and send it back without delay,’ Andrew Little said.

“It could literally save your life, as many people have already discovered.”

Screening is for people who don’t have symptoms of bowel cancer. Anyone with symptoms, such as a change to normal bowel habit that continues for several weeks or blood in their bowel motion, should see their doctor without delay.

A national multimedia campaign to raise awareness about bowel screening and encourage participation is expected to be launched next month.

More about the National Bowel Screening Programme can be found here (<https://www.timetoscreen.nz/bowel-screening/about-the-national-bowel-screening-programme/>).



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