



Media Release

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Bowel Cancer NZ calls for action on World Cancer Day

This year, on World Cancer Day, Bowel Cancer NZ calls on the government to prioritise bowel cancer detection and act on their election promise to lower the screening age to 45.

Professor Frank Frizelle, a Bowel Cancer NZ medical advisor, says, "It is disappointing to see no mention in National's 100-day plan to lower the bowel screening age. This is concerning as the incidence in bowel cancer is dramatically increasing in the young population, and lowering the screening age will save lives."

Bowel cancer is the second highest cause of cancer death in our country and is usually curable if caught early. Screening is an effective way of doing this. The rising incidence of this disease in younger people makes it an action that should have been included in the government's 100-day plan. Their manifesto promised, "*National will immediately commission work on a business case for progressively lowering the bowel cancer screening age to 50.*"

Professor Frizelle says, "At the very least, Bowel Cancer NZ expects to see the bowel screening rollout accelerated for all Māori and Pasifika from age 50 to avoid further inequities. In the meantime, a clear fiscal and workforce plan must be developed urgently to lower the age to 45 years for all Kiwis."

When Doug White was first diagnosed with stage 3 bowel cancer at age 54, he thought, "Why me? How can this happen? I am fit and healthy. There were no real symptoms and nothing in the family.

"My tumour was quite a big one, and it had been sitting there for a couple of years. That's why I want to see the screening age lowered because it would've picked my cancer up earlier, and I may not have needed treatment."

Doug is currently undergoing chemotherapy and radiation and says, "It affected (my family) greatly, but we try to live a normal life as much as possible, take it day by day and not let the big C word become the main topic in the house."

This World Cancer Day, we want to ensure our political leaders understand that the New Zealand public wants to see them prioritise cancer and stand by their election promise to lower the bowel screening age.

END

Bowel cancer symptoms include:

- Bleeding from the bottom or seeing blood in the toilet after a bowel motion
- Change of bowel motions over several weeks without returning to normal
- Persistent or periodic severe pain in the abdomen
- A lump or mass in the abdomen
- Tiredness and loss of weight for no particular reason
- Anaemia.

More information on bowel cancer and Bowel Cancer New Zealand can be found at <http://www.bowelcancernz.org.nz>

For further information:

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About Bowel Cancer New Zealand

- Bowel Cancer New Zealand is a patient-focused charity organisation.
- The registered charity was founded in 2010 by a group of people affected by bowel cancer, committed to improving bowel cancer awareness and outcomes for people with the disease.
- Bowel Cancer New Zealand aims to provide clear and up-to-date information about the disease, symptoms, what to do if diagnosed and supports patients and whānau affected by bowel cancer.
- Bowel Cancer New Zealand aims to prevent lives from being lost to this disease and promote the national screening program rollout in New Zealand.