

## Research says Australia bowel cancer to jump 50%

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Australia faces a huge rise in bowel cancer cases, with new research on Tuesday saying incidence of the disease will jump by 50 percent over the next decade.

Cancer Council Australia data said there would be 21,000 cases annually, putting pressure on health services.

Chief executive Professor Ian Olver said the numbers underscored the urgency of introducing a full screening programme to catch the disease before it develops.

Australia's national screening programme currently targets people turning 50, 55 and 65, despite expert recommendations that everyone over 50 should be screened.

"Our analysis also shows that almost one in five bowel cancers in Australia are being diagnosed at stage four -- the most advanced stage -- when the cancer has spread and is much more difficult to treat," he said.

Visiting expert Dr. Heather Bryant, head of Canada's bowel cancer screening partnership, said health experts globally agreed that screening was one of the best investments any government could make in reducing the cancer burden.

"Early work in Australia on bowel cancer screening has helped to inform the rest of the world," said Bryant.

"Programs are now in place in many parts of Europe and in Canada, and all are carefully monitoring quality and impact to ensure we build on past evidence to reduce incidence and mortality from this all-too-common disease."

Melbourne man Peter Caissa was diagnosed with [bowel cancer](#) in December, aged 54, having fallen through one of the gaps in the screening programme which targets only people turning 50, 55 and 65, instead of everyone over 50.

"Had my cancer been picked up at an earlier stage before symptoms developed, it probably would have been easy to treat with a straightforward surgical procedure," Caissa said.

"Instead, I face a costly, arduous treatment program and an uncertain future."

[Colon cancer](#) is a major killer with some 655,000 deaths each year worldwide.

The risk of contracting the disease increases with age, and it is the third leading cause of cancer-related death in the Western world.

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