

# Frank Sartor MP

Minister for Climate Change and the Environment  
Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Cancer)



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## **\$2.5 Million Invested to Fight Ovarian Cancer**

Minister Assisting the Minister for Health (Cancer), Frank Sartor, today marked Teal Ribbon Day by urging women to educate themselves about the symptoms of ovarian cancer which claims over 250 lives in NSW each year.

“Ovarian cancer is one of the most serious forms of cancer affecting women because it has often spread by the time of diagnosis,” Mr Sartor said.

“The NSW Government has invested \$2.5 million over the past 5 years into research and clinical trials to improve women’s chances of surviving ovarian cancer.

“Mortality rates have improved due to research over the past 30 years resulting in better treatment.

“The NSW Government invested \$783,000 in research in the last year alone to improve survival rates.

“The number of clinical trials has doubled since 2004, with 22 currently underway in NSW.

“These funds and trials are designed to help doctors better understand the causes of ovarian cancer, leading to better early detection programs,” Mr Sartor said.

Evidence shows that a family history of ovarian, breast or colon cancer is a well-established risk factor for the disease. Dietary and reproductive factors may also increase risk.

Symptoms of ovarian cancer are often vague and can mimic those of other disorders, which can make it difficult to diagnose in its early stages.

Contrary to public opinion, a Pap smear cannot be used to detect ovarian cancer.

Women should be aware of the symptoms that may indicate ovarian cancer and see their GP if they experience any unusual and persistent changes. The most common symptoms that may indicate ovarian cancer are:

- abdominal bloating/feeling full
- appetite loss
- unexplained weight gain
- constipation
- heartburn
- back pain
- frequent urination
- abdominal/pelvic pain
- fatigue

Statistics suggest that 42% of NSW women with ovarian cancer survive beyond five years.

**Key facts about ovarian cancer in NSW:**

- In 2007 there were:
  - 447 new cases
  - 259 related deaths
  - Ovarian cancer ranked 10th for incidence and 6th for mortality
- One in 76 females develop this cancer in their lifetime
- A modest increase from 447 to 451 new cases is expected to be reflected in 2008/2009 figures, with a stable death rate remaining at 2007 levels
- The NSW State Plan aims to reduce the number of potentially avoidable deaths for people under 75 to 150 per 100,000 people by 2016