

Participant Follow Up Function (PFUF)

National Bowel Cancer Screening Program



The National Bowel Cancer Screening Program is an Australian Government initiative that invites Australians aged 50–74 years to screen for bowel cancer using a free, simple test at home. The Cancer Institute NSW promotes the program in NSW and provides the Participant Follow Up Function.

Australia has one of the highest rates of bowel cancer in the world. Around one in 14 Australians will develop bowel cancer during their lifetime. However, if detected early, bowel cancer can be successfully treated in over 90% of cases.

The National Bowel Cancer Screening Program (NBCSP) aims to reduce deaths from bowel cancer through early detection of the disease.

The Cancer Institute NSW, a pillar of NSW Health, is responsible for the promotion of the NBCSP in NSW. The Institute is also responsible for delivering the Participant Follow Up Function (PFUF), which provides a safety net service for participants who have positive screening results.

What is the Participant Follow Up Function (PFUF)?

The PFUF complements the reminder letters and usual care provided for participants via the NBCSP. The aim of the PFUF service is to encourage people to follow the screening pathway following a positive immunochemical faecal occult blood test (iFOBT) result. This includes follow up with their general practitioner (GP) and, if required, encouraging people to have the required further diagnostic investigations (typically a colonoscopy).

As a result, the PFUF assists to minimise undue delays in bowel cancer diagnoses, helps minimise participant uncertainty and ultimately contributes to better cancer outcomes.

What do PFUF Officers do?

- ✓ Routinely contact local health districts, healthcare providers (including GPs and practice nurses), and participants to ensure they are progressing along the screening pathway.
- ✓ Request or clarify information about:
 - the date of completed/scheduled colonoscopy, name of facility and proceduralist
 - whether a colonoscopy was completed as scheduled
 - a person's waitlist status/category
 - receipt of a Recommendation for Admission (RFA) form.
- ✓ Liaise with healthcare teams regarding referrals, RFA forms and waitlist status/categorisation to enable participants to progress to colonoscopy.
- ✓ Follow up participants at multiple time points following a positive iFOBT.

PFUF Officers follow up 15,000–20,000 NSW program participants per year.

Participant consent

Participants give written and signed consent to the sharing of information related to FOBT follow up and colonoscopy when submitting an FOBT sample and participant details form.

The National Cancer Screening Register

The National Cancer Screening Register enables a single electronic record for each person in Australia participating in cervical and bowel screening.

Colonoscopy status is entered into the National Cancer Screening Register. This information is analysed by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare to monitor and evaluate the effectiveness of the program and inform future screening program delivery.

What to do?

- For further information about the program, visit health.gov.au/nbcsp or call 1800 627 701.
- For information regarding the NSW PFUF service, email the PFUF Manager at CINSW-bowelscreening@health.nsw.gov.au.