

# BreastScreen Australia Achievement Report 1997 and 1998

**BreastScreen Australia, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare  
and the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care**

Australian Institute of Health and Welfare  
Canberra



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# Foreword

The 1997–1998 BreastScreen Australia Achievement Report is a joint production by the BreastScreen Australia Program, the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care and sets out the performance of the Program using several key indicators. This publication will add substantially to the information available on breast cancer screening in Australia.

This report has been produced under the guidance of the National Advisory Committee to BreastScreen Australia which advises on specific policy, quality, data management, clinical and administrative issues arising out of the management of the Program. In recent years major progress has been made in these areas. This is largely attributable to the expertise and advice of the Committee's diverse membership and the hard work of the members of the five working groups of the Committee. In the following pages the major achievements of BreastScreen Australia are outlined, including the progress made to date and the major challenges that remain.

The impact of BreastScreen Australia depends upon the skills and dedication of the many staff and clinicians who work in the Program. This report is a tribute to their skills and commitment to improving outcomes for women with breast cancer.

**Professor Sally Redman**  
Chair  
National Advisory Committee to  
BreastScreen Australia

**Dr Richard Madden**  
Director  
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The members of the National Advisory Committee to BreastScreen Australia at its meeting on 11 November 1999.





# BreastScreen Australia achievements: 1997 to 1998

- This is the second joint report of BreastScreen Australia, AIHW, and the Department of Health and Aged Care. It provides information about a selection of Program activities and performance indicators for the 1997 and 1998 calendar years.
- In 1997 and 1998, over one and a quarter million Australian women were screened by BreastScreen Australia. These women were screened across Australia, including the most remote areas of the country.
- More than half of all women aged 50–69 participated in the Program. BreastScreen Australia aims to screen 70% of women in this age range.
- The National Accreditation Requirements for BreastScreen Australia require that the number of women screened in the target age group, women aged 50–69 years, be more than 60% of the total number screened. During the 1997–1998 period all States and Territories achieved this target.
- There has been an increase in the number of new cases of breast cancer in women aged 50–69 since the early 1990s, coinciding with the introduction of BreastScreen Australia. This is likely to be due, at least partly, to cancers being detected earlier than they would be if women were not being screened.
- The crude small cancer detection rate ( $\leq 10\text{mm}$ ) in 1998 was far greater than the National Accreditation Requirements standard (more than 8 per 10,000 women screened), ranging across States/Territories from 13 to 19 cancers detected per 10,000 women screened (all ages).
- The crude national cancer detection rate (all sizes) for women attending the Program for the first time in 1998 was 48 cancers detected per 10,000 women screened (all ages). For women screened in 1998 who had previously attended the Program, this rate was 37 cancers detected per 10,000 women screened.
- Interval cancer (cancers detected between screens) rates are included in this report for the first time for women screened in 1996.
- New policies are being developed to address key issues for the Program, including clinical pathways for symptomatic women, screening intervals for women with a family history of breast cancer, and the impact of emerging technologies.
- A comprehensive, evidence-based review of the National Accreditation Requirements for the Program is under way.
- Research into why some women do not attend BreastScreen Australia services is being undertaken. This will influence future recruitment and education strategies to ensure the Program reaches the desired levels of participation.
- Work on defining workforce requirements has commenced. This will ensure that the Program can maintain screening capacity in line with target population (50–69 years) increases.
- A comprehensive evaluation plan for the Program has been developed. Key projects include the completion of the data dictionary to ensure consistency in the collection of performance data, and investigation of the feasibility of assessing the impact of the Program on breast cancer mortality.