

MEDIA RELEASE

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Go blue for bowel cancer

Queen's Park will become a sea of blue this Saturday 20 June as part of Bowel Cancer Awareness Month.

Bowel Cancer Awareness Month is held in June each year across the country.

Darling Downs Hospital and Health Service Health Promotion Officer Claire Condon said the colour blue is used around the world to promote awareness of bowel and colon cancer.

"That's why we're asking all runners to turn out in their brightest blue clothes to raise awareness of this often undiscussed disease.

"Bowel cancer is Australia's second biggest cancer killer after lung cancer but is one of the most curable types of cancer if found early.

"However, only 35 per cent of residents in the Toowoomba region are taking advantage of the free screening available through the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program (NBCSP).

"The NBCSP is now free for Australia men and women aged 50, 55, 60, 65, 70 and 74 years, the last two ages having only been added to the program this year.

"That means that there are around 5,000 more people in the Toowoomba area who are able eligible for the program this year.

"But sadly, less than half of those who are eligible choose to take up the option of the free screening test which can help with the early detection of bowel cancer.

"So when you've finished your run and had your coffee, go home and have a chat to your family and friends about whether they've received and completed a bowel cancer screening test.

"Men and women who are eligible for screening automatically receive an invitation letter, test kit and information leaflet explaining the program in the mail.

"You can complete the test quickly and easily in the privacy of your own home and return it by post. It will be processed and the results sent back to you.

"People who are not yet eligible for the NBCSP can obtain screening kits from some pharmacies or through the Bowel Cancer Australia website," Ms Condon said.

"However, anyone with symptoms such as bleeding from the bowel, ongoing changes in their normal bowel habits, a feeling of incomplete emptying of the bowel, persistent cramping or abdominal pain, unexplained weight loss or lack of appetite should see their doctor without delay," she said.

Toowoomba parkrun is a five kilometre course around Queen's Park and starts at 7.00am every Saturday. For further information visit <http://www.parkrun.com.au/toowoomba>

Residents are also invited to attend a free videoconference information session on preventing and detecting bowel cancer. The information session will be held on Thursday 25 June from 11.15am to 12.30pm in Suite 1, Freshney House, Toowoomba Hospital and will include an opportunity to ask questions about the risks and myths of bowel cancer.

Ms Condon is also available to speak to community groups or do workplace presentations. For more information on any of these events contact Claire on 4616 6848 or email claire.condon@health.qld.gov.au

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Photo caption: DDHHS Health Promotion Officer Claire Condon is encouraging parkrun participants to dress in blue this Saturday for Bowel Cancer Awareness Month.

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