



Speech by

# Hon. Stephen Robertson

MEMBER FOR STRETTON

Hansard Thursday, 7 June 2007

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## MINISTERIAL STATEMENT

### National Bowel Cancer Awareness Week

**Hon. S ROBERTSON** (Stretton—ALP) (Minister for Health) (10.02 am): National Bowel Cancer Awareness Week presents Queenslanders with the opportunity to learn how to minimise their risk of contracting this disease. Bowel cancer is the most common cancer in Australia to affect both men and women and our second biggest cancer killer after lung cancer. Some 12,800 new cases are diagnosed each year, including 2,500 in Queensland. On average, 4,700 Australians die of bowel cancer each year, including about 860 Queenslanders. The saddest fact of all is that bowel cancer is one of our most curable cancers if detected early. That is why all Queenslanders over 50 should keep watch for the early signs of bowel cancer.

The Beattie government is doing its bit to help screen Queenslanders and reduce their risk. We were the first state to participate in the National Bowel Cancer Screening Program and we are investing \$10.4 million over two years to roll it out across the state. We have also funded specialist gastroenterology nurse coordinators at hospitals to arrange follow-up colonoscopies for patients who return a positive result to the tests. Under the program, Queensland men and women turning either 55 or 65 between 1 May 2006 and 30 June 2008 are being sent a kit to test for the signs of bowel cancer. It is a simple test that people can undertake in the privacy of their own home. People who return a positive test result will be advised to see a GP for referral for further investigations, such as a colonoscopy.

The National Bowel Cancer Screening Program Register based in Tasmania is responsible for processing all data forms returned to the register and is the first point of contact nationally for the program. The register reports that as at 30 April 2007 over 102,000 FOBT kits had been completed and returned, giving a national participation rate of just over 30 per cent. The Queensland participation rate reflects the national rate and I am concerned that only one in three Queenslanders receiving the test kit appear to be responding.

I stress again that bowel cancer is very curable if detected early. That is why I am urging all Queenslanders who receive a testing kit to take it seriously and participate in this very important screening program.