

Facilitating prompt biomarker testing for women diagnosed with invasive breast cancer through BreastScreen Australia services

BreastScreen Australia aims to reduce illness and death from breast cancer by actively inviting women in the target age group of 50-74 years of age to attend free two yearly screening mammograms, to identify early stage breast cancer. Women aged 40 to 49 years and 75 years and older are also eligible to receive free screening mammograms but do not receive an invitation to attend.

BreastScreen Australia is supported and funded jointly by the Commonwealth and the state and territory governments. The Commonwealth provides overall policy coordination, while the Program is implemented at a local level by state and territory governments.

Commonwealth and state and territory funding for BreastScreen Australia services support the provision of free screening mammograms every two years to BreastScreen participants and the clinical activities associated with the additional assessment of screen-detected lesions. This includes any needle biopsies required to establish a cancer diagnosis. Women diagnosed with breast cancer through BreastScreen Australia are referred to doctors outside of the BreastScreen Australia program to organise their treatment. Funding for breast cancer treatment is outside of the existing BreastScreen Australia arrangements.

Treatment planning for invasive breast cancer requires information about oestrogen and progesterone hormone receptor (ER/PR) and human epidermal growth factor receptor 2 (HER2) status on the cells of the woman's breast cancer. Pathologists evaluate breast cancer biopsies to determine the status of these important biomarkers. In order to facilitate prompt treatment planning for women diagnosed with invasive breast cancer through BreastScreen Australia services, the Commonwealth has clarified the eligibility criteria to access Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) rebates. This addresses funding for biomarker testing of invasive breast cancers diagnosed on needle core biopsies performed at BreastScreen Australia services.