Australian Government
Department of Health, Disability and Ageing

Consultation on the updated Population Based Screening Framework

You are invited to review the draft updated Population Based Screening Framework (the Framework) and provide feedback through an online survey.

Feedback is welcome from everyone. This may include consumers or members of the general public, health professionals, peak bodies, researchers, government and non-government organisations and any other interested stakeholders or individuals.

The consultation process aims to understand whether the updated Framework is clear and fit-for-purpose. Feedback received will help identify any final refinements required before the Framework progresses through government approval processes.

About the framework

The Framework is a joint Commonwealth and state and territory document that guides decisions about national screening programs. The existing Framework is available here.

The Framework:

- defines screening, and the benefits and harms that can occur due to screening and follow up care
- sets out criteria to assess whether a new screening program should be introduced
- outlines the key requirements for the implementation and ongoing management of screening programs, and
- requires that screening programs deliver more benefit than harm to the target population.

The Framework was first endorsed in 2008 and was last substantially updated in 2016.

The Department of Health, Disability and Ageing (the Department), in collaboration with state and territory governments, is currently updating the Framework.

Why is the Framework being updated?

Screening has evolved significantly over the past decade. Advances in genomics, digital technologies, risk assessment and population health research have created new opportunities for screening.

The update aims to ensure the Framework remains fit-for-purpose and can assess the full range of potential screening approaches, while maintaining a focus on evidence, safety and overall population benefit.

The updated Framework, and supporting materials, will help researchers, clinicians, advocacy organisations, governments and the community understand how decisions about screening programs are made and the evidence required to support screening proposals.

What are the main changes?

The updated Framework retains the core elements that have underpinned Australia's approach to screening to date. This includes requirements for strong evidence, consideration of benefits and harms, and a focus on improving health outcomes for the population.

Proposed updates include:

- Expanding the Framework to support targeted and risk-stratified screening approaches, in addition to population-based programs.
- Considering issues throughout the Framework relevant to the use of genomic testing in screening.[1]
- Broadening the consideration of benefits and harms to reflect contemporary screening approaches.
- Supplementing the existing World Health Organization (WHO) screening principles with additional considerations such as:
    - Informed and voluntary participation
    - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander partnership and collaboration
    - Equitable access, participation and outcomes
    - Data stewardship and governance
- Updating the assessment criteria[2] and implementation and management requirements to apply across broader screening approaches and technologies, and to include a greater focus on equity and cultural safety.
- Strengthening the implementation and management requirements around informed choice, communication of results, monitoring and data governance (including consideration of Indigenous Data Governance and Indigenous Data Sovereignty requirements).
- Introducing a proposed process for assessing new screening proposals and draft guidance for supporting changes to existing programs[2].
- Changing the title to the 'National Screening Framework,' to reflect the broader scope of the Framework.

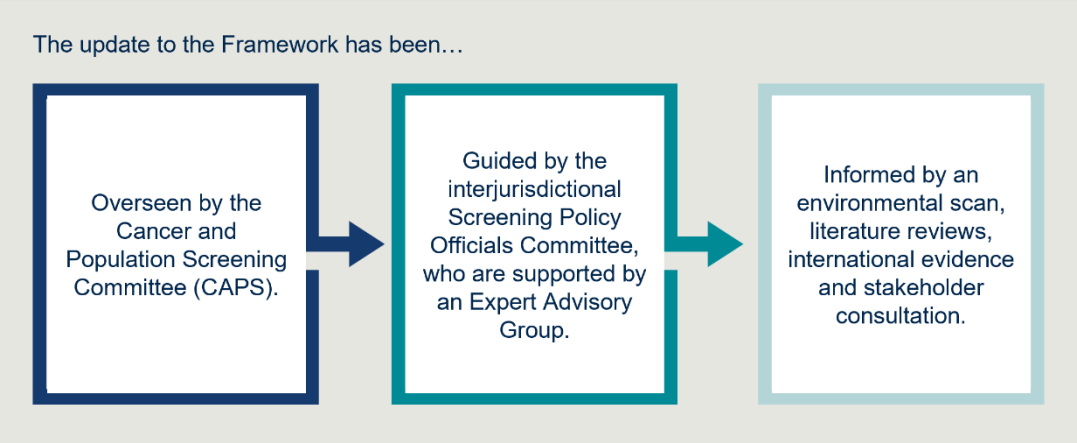
Following consultation, supplementary materials will be developed to provide guidance on the process and evidence requirements for screening proposals. These will be published on the Department's website alongside the updated Framework.

---

[1] *Relevant considerations from the Genomic Tests in Population Based Screening Programs: Statement have been incorporated, with the aim of consolidating guidance on genomic screening within the Framework. Following endorsement of the updated Framework, the position statement would be retired.*

[2] *For newborn bloodspot screening (NBS), the NBS National Policy Framework decision-making criteria and nationally agreed decision-making pathway will continue to guide decisions. The updated Framework criteria are intended to complement the NBS criteria. The NBS National Policy Framework will be reviewed in the future, as part routine policy maintenance.*

Development process to date



CAPS provides strategic policy advice for national population screening and cancer control. It includes senior officials from each health department in Australia.

The Screening Policy Officials Committee (Officials Committee) includes representation from Genomics Australia and Cancer Australia, in addition to states and territories.

The Expert Advisory Group (EAG) includes experts in epidemiology, genomics, health economics, ethics, screening programs, as well as First Nations and consumer representatives.

What happens after public consultation?

1. Following the public consultation process, all feedback will be reviewed and considered by the Department. Key outcomes from consultation and a summary of feedback will be shared with the Officials Committee, EAG, and CAPS.
2. Additionally, a public consultation summary report will be prepared and shared on the Department's website, outlining the key themes and feedback received through the consultation process.
3. The Framework will then be refined and finalised with advice from the Officials Committee and EAG.
4. The final Framework will be considered by CAPS in April 2027 before being provided to Health Chief Executives and Health Ministers for consideration through established approval processes.
5. Once endorsed, the Framework will guide the future assessment, implementation and review of national screening programs in Australia

Want further information?

For further information about the consultation process or updated Framework, please contact screeningpolicy@health.gov.au.