National Cancer Screening Register – transition arrangements

This measure provides for the continued operation of the current National Cervical Screening Program (NCSP) and National Bowel Cancer Screening Program (NBCSP), as a result of the delayed implementation of the National Cancer Screening Register and the renewal of the NCSP, which begins operating from 1 December 2017.

Why is this important?

The NCSP and the NBCSP are life-saving screening programs and it is critical that their services continue. These measures will ensure that the safety and quality of these programs is maintained.

To support continuation of the current cervical screening program, and pathology providers to continue performing Pap tests (which will be replaced with a new test under the new screening arrangements), the Government is providing the sector with a one-off $3 million assistance package to help it maintain its workforce until the new arrangements are in place.

This measure also includes interim changes to existing Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) cervical screening items through an increase in the fee for the Pap test from $19.45 to $28, and introduction of a new MBS item, liquid based cytology (LBC), at a cost of $36. It also provides funding to the Department of Human Services to continue providing register services for the NBCSP, including the implementation of a new screening kit.

Who will benefit?

Australian women will have ongoing access to cervical screening using Pap tests and the NBCSP will continue to be available to Australians until the new national register is in place.

The pathology sector will have certainty around its workforce which enables existing Pap tests, or the alternative LBC test, to be performed until the introduction of the new cervical screening test.

How much will this cost?

This measure will cost $40.8 million from 2016–17 to 2020–21, with additional funding of $3 million for the one-off assistance package to be funded from existing health resources.