

**BreastScreen Australia**  
**Monitoring Report**  
**2001–2002**

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# **BreastScreen Australia**

## **Monitoring Report**

### **2001–2002**

**The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare  
and the  
Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing  
for the  
BreastScreen Australia Program**

**February 2005**

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# Contents

- List of tables..... vi
- List of figures.....x
- Acknowledgments..... xii
- Summary..... xiii
- Indicator 1: Participation.....1**
  - Participation rate.....1
  - The participation indicator.....1
- Indicator 2: Detection of small invasive cancers .....10**
  - Small invasive cancer detection rate .....10
  - The small invasive cancer detection indicator.....10
- Indicator 3: Sensitivity.....17**
  - The sensitivity indicator .....17
- Indicator 4: Detection of ductal carcinoma in situ .....26**
  - Ductal carcinoma in situ detection rate .....26
  - The DCIS detection indicator .....26
- Indicator 5: Recall to assessment .....28**
  - Recall to assessment rate .....28
  - The recall to assessment indicator.....28
- Indicator 6: Rescreening.....31**
  - Rescreen rate.....31
  - The rescreen indicator .....31
- Indicator 7: Incidence.....35**
  - The incidence indicator .....35
- Indicator 8: Mortality .....41**
  - Mortality rate.....41
  - The mortality indicator .....41
- Tables.....47**
- Appendix A: Data and statistical issues.....105**
- Abbreviations.....111**
- Glossary.....112**
- Bibliography.....115**

## List of tables

Table 1: Number of women participating in BreastScreen Australia by age, states and territories, 2001–2002.....	48
Table 2: Percentage of women participating in BreastScreen Australia, states and territories, 2001–2002.....	49
Table 3: Participation in BreastScreen Australia by age and region, 2001–2002 .....	50
Table 4: Participation in BreastScreen Australia by age and socioeconomic status, 2001–2002.....	51
Table 5: Participation in BreastScreen Australia by age and Indigenous status, 2001–2002.....	52
Table 6: Participation in BreastScreen Australia by age and main language spoken at home, 2001–2002.....	53
Table 7: Numbers of women screened and cases of small diameter ( $\leq 15$ mm) invasive cancers detected in these women, first screening round, by age, states and territories, 2002.....	54
Table 8: Age-specific rates of small diameter ( $\leq 15$ mm) invasive cancers detected in women screened, first screening round, states and territories, 2002 .....	55
Table 9: Numbers of women screened and cases of small diameter ( $\leq 15$ mm) invasive cancers detected in these women, subsequent screening rounds, by age, states and territories, 2002.....	56
Table 10: Age-specific rates of small diameter ( $\leq 15$ mm) invasive cancers detected in women screened, subsequent screening rounds, states and territories, 2002.....	57
Table 11: Numbers of women screened and cases of small diameter ( $\leq 15$ mm) invasive cancers detected in these women, all screening rounds, by age, states and territories, 2002.....	58
Table 12: Age-specific rates of small diameter ( $\leq 15$ mm) invasive cancers detected in women screened, all screening rounds, states and territories, 2002 .....	59
Table 13: Numbers of women screened and cases of invasive cancer detected in these women, first screening round, by age, states and territories, 2002 .....	60
Table 14: Age-specific rates of invasive breast cancers per 10,000 women screened, first screening round, states and territories, 2002 .....	61
Table 15: Numbers of women screened and cases of invasive cancer detected in these women, subsequent screening rounds, by age, states and territories, 2002.....	62
Table 16: Age-specific rates of invasive breast cancers per 10,000 women screened, subsequent screening rounds, by age, states and territories, 2002.....	63
Table 17: Numbers and age-specific rates of interval cancers in women screened during 1998, 1999 and 2000, first screening round, 0–12 months, states and territories .....	64
Table 18: Numbers and age-specific rates of interval cancers in women screened during 1998, 1999 and 2000, first screening round, 13–24 months, states and territories ....	65
Table 19: Numbers and age-specific rates of interval cancers in women screened during 1998, 1999 and 2000, first screening round, 0–24 months, states and territories .....	66

Table 20: Numbers and age-specific rates of interval cancers in women screened during 1998, 1999 and 2000, subsequent screening rounds, 0–12 months, states and territories.....	67
Table 21: Numbers and age-specific rates of interval cancers in women screened during 1998, 1999 and 2000, subsequent screening rounds, 13–24 months, states and territories.....	68
Table 22: Numbers and age-specific rates of interval cancers in women screened during 1998, 1999 and 2000, subsequent screening rounds, 0–24 months, states and territories.....	69
Table 23: Program sensitivity rates for women screened during 1998, 1999 and 2000, first screening round, 0–12 months, states and territories.....	70
Table 24: Program sensitivity rates for women screened during years 1998, 1999 and 2000, first screening round, 0–24 months, states and territories.....	71
Table 25: Program sensitivity rates for women screened during 1998, 1999 and 2000, subsequent screening rounds, 0–12 months, states and territories .....	72
Table 26: Program sensitivity rates for women screened during 1998, 1999 and 2000, subsequent screening rounds, 0–24 months, states and territories .....	73
Table 27: Number of women screened and cases of DCIS detected in these women by age, states and territories, 2002.....	74
Table 28: Age-specific rate of DCIS detected in women screened, states and territories, 2002.....	75
Table 29: Numbers of women screened and women recalled for assessment by age, mammographic reasons, first screening round, states and territories, 2002.....	76
Table 30: Age-specific and age-standardised recall to assessment rates, mammographic reasons, first screening round, states and territories, 2002.....	77
Table 31: Numbers of women screened and women recalled for assessment by age, mammographic reasons, subsequent screening rounds, states and territories, 2002.....	78
Table 32: Age-specific and age-standardised recall to assessment rates, mammographic reasons, subsequent screening rounds, states and territories, 2002.....	79
Table 33: Numbers of women screened and women recalled for assessment by age, other reasons only, first screening round, states and territories, 2002.....	80
Table 34: Age-specific and age-standardised recall to assessment rates, first screening round, other reasons only, states and territories, 2002 .....	81
Table 35: Numbers of women screened and women recalled for assessment by age, other reasons only, subsequent screening rounds, states and territories, 2002 .....	82
Table 36: Age-specific and age-standardised recall to assessment rates, other reasons only, subsequent screening rounds, states and territories, 2002 .....	83
Table 37: Number of women screened during 2000 and number of those women who returned for screening within 27 months by age, first screening round, states and territories.....	84

Table 38: Age-specific and age-standardised rescreen rates for women screened during 2000, first screening round, states and territories .....	85
Table 39: Number of women screened during 2000 and number of those women who returned for screening within 27 months by age, second screening round, states and territories .....	86
Table 40: Age-specific and age-standardised rescreen rates in women screened during 2000, second screening round, states and territories .....	87
Table 41: Number of women screened during 2000 and number of those women who returned for screening within 27 months by age, third and subsequent screening rounds, states and territories .....	88
Table 42: Age-specific and age-standardised rescreen rates in women screened during 2000, third and subsequent screening rounds, states and territories .....	89
Table 43: Number of new cases of breast cancer in women by age, Australia, 1987–2001 .....	90
Table 44: Age-specific and age-standardised incidence rates for breast cancer in women, Australia, 1987–2001 .....	91
Table 45: Number of new cases of breast cancer in women by age, states and territories, 1998–2001 .....	92
Table 46: Age-specific and age-standardised incidence rates for breast cancer in women, states and territories, 1998–2001 .....	93
Table 47: Number of new cases of breast cancer in women, by age and region, 1997–2001 .....	94
Table 48: Age-specific and age-standardised incidence rates for breast cancer in women by region, 1997–2001 .....	95
Table 49: Number of new cases of ductal carcinoma in situ by age, states and territories, 1996–2001 .....	96
Table 50: Age-specific and age-standardised rates of ductal carcinoma in situ, states and territories, 1996–2001 .....	96
Table 51: Number of deaths from breast cancer in women, Australia, 1988–2002 .....	97
Table 52: Age-specific and age-standardised mortality rates for breast cancer in women, Australia, 1988–2002 .....	98
Table 53: Number of deaths from breast cancer in women by age, states and territories, 1999–2002 .....	99
Table 54: Age-specific and age-standardised mortality rates for breast cancer in women, states and territories, 1999–2002 .....	100
Table 55: Number of deaths from breast cancer in women by age and region, 1998–2002 .....	101
Table 56: Age-specific and age-standardised mortality rates for breast cancer in women by region, 1998–2002 .....	102
Table 57: Number of deaths from breast cancer in women by age and Indigenous status, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, Northern Territory, 1998–2002 .....	103
Table 58: Age-standardised and age-specific mortality rates for breast cancer in women by Indigenous status, Queensland, Western Australia, South Australia, Northern Territory, 1998–2002 .....	104



TableA1: Sources for data presented in this report .....	105
Table A2: The Remoteness Areas for the ASGC Remoteness Classification .....	108

# List of figures

- Participation of women aged 50–69 years in BreastScreen Australia, 2001–2002 .....3
- Participation of women aged 50–69 years in BreastScreen Australia, 2000–2001 and 2001–2002 .....4
- Participation of women aged 50–69 years in BreastScreen Australia by region, 2001–2002 .....5
- Participation of women aged 50–69 years in BreastScreen Australia by socioeconomic status, 2001–2002.....6
- Participation of women aged 50–69 years in BreastScreen Australia by Indigenous status, 2001–2002 .....7
- Participation of women aged 50–69 years in BreastScreen Australia by language spoken at home, 2001–2002 .....8
- Age distribution of women aged 40 years and over screened by BreastScreen Australia, 2001–2002 .....9
- Small ( $\leq 15\text{mm}$ ) invasive breast cancer detection in women aged 50–69, first screening round, 2002 .....11
- Small ( $\leq 15\text{mm}$ ) invasive breast cancer detection in women aged 50–69, subsequent screening rounds, 2002.....12
- Small ( $\leq 15\text{mm}$ ) invasive breast cancer detection in women aged 50–69, all screening rounds, 2001 and 2002.....13
- Small ( $\leq 15\text{mm}$ ) invasive breast cancer detection by age, 2002 .....14
- All-size invasive breast cancer detection in women aged 50–69 years, first screening round, 2002 .....15
- All-size invasive breast cancer detection in women aged 50–69 years, subsequent screening rounds, 2002.....16
- Interval cancer rate for women aged 50–69 years, screened during years 1998, 1999 and 2000, first screening round, 0–12 months follow-up.....18
- Interval cancer rate for women aged 50–69 years, screened during years 1998, 1999 and 2000, first screening round, 0–24 months follow-up.....19
- Interval cancer rate for women aged 50–69 years, screened during years 1998, 1999 and 2000, subsequent screening round, 0–12 months follow-up.....20
- Interval cancer rate for women aged 50–69 years, screened during years 1998, 1999 and 2000, subsequent screening round, 0–24 months follow-up.....21
- Program sensitivity for women aged 50–69 years, screened during years 1998, 1999 and 2000, first screening round, 0–12 months follow-up.....22
- Program sensitivity for women aged 50–69 years, screened during years 1998, 1999 and 2000, first screening round, 0–24 months follow-up.....23

Program sensitivity for women aged 50–69 years, screened during years 1998, 1999 and 2000, subsequent screening round, 0–12 months follow-up.....	24
Program sensitivity for women aged 50–69 years, screened during years 1998, 1999 and 2000, subsequent screening round, 0–24 months follow-up.....	25
Ductal carcinoma in situ detection in women aged 50–69 years, 2002.....	27
Recall to assessment rate for women aged 50–69 years, mammographic reasons, first screening round, 2002 .....	29
Recall to assessment rate for women aged 50–69 years, mammographic reasons, subsequent screening round, 2002 .....	30
Rescreen rate for women aged 50–67 years, screened during 2000, first screening round.....	32
Rescreen rate for women aged 50–67 years, screened during 2000, second screening round .....	33
Rescreen rate for women aged 50–67 years, screened during 2000, third and subsequent screening rounds.....	34
Incidence of breast cancer in women, Australia, 1987–2001 .....	36
Incidence of breast cancer in women, aged 50–69 years, 1998–2001 .....	37
Age specific incidence rates for breast cancer in women, Australia 2001 .....	38
Incidence of breast cancer in women by region, 1997–2001 .....	39
Incidence of ductal carcinoma in situ in women, aged 50–69 years, 1996–2001 .....	40
Mortality from breast cancer, females, Australia, 1988–2002.....	42
Mortality from breast cancer in women aged 50–69, 1999–2002 .....	43
Age-specific mortality rates for breast cancer, females, Australia, 2002.....	44
Mortality from breast cancer by region, females, 1998–2002 .....	45
Mortality from breast cancer by Indigenous status, females, 1998–2002 .....	46

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### TASMANIA

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Mr Damian Davidson

### QUEENSLAND

Ms Jennifer Muller

Mr Stephen Heim

Mr Nathan Dunn

### AUSTRALIAN CAPITAL TERRITORY

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# Summary

This is the sixth national monitoring report for the BreastScreen Australia Program. The report presents statistics on BreastScreen Australia screening activity and outcomes for 2001–2002. A reporting interval of two years is used because it corresponds with the recommended interval between screens for asymptomatic women in the target age group of 50–69 years.

## Participation

- A total of 1,611,262 women participated in BreastScreen Australia screening in 2001–2002. Of these women, 1,102,227 (68%) were in the screening program target age group of 50–69 years.
- The proportion of women in the target population participating in the BreastScreen Australia Program has been steadily increasing, from 52.3% in 1996–1997 to 57.1% in 2001–2002.
- Although there was some variation in participation rates among different socioeconomic groups in the target population, the difference between the most and the least disadvantaged groups was only marginally significant, and all groups had participation rates above 55%.
- The participation rates for Indigenous women and women from a non-English speaking background in the target population, 34.8% and 47.4% respectively, were significantly lower than the national rate of 57.1%.

## Detection of cancer

- In order to reduce morbidity and mortality resulting from breast cancer, BreastScreen Australia aims to maximise the early detection of small-diameter (15 mm or less) invasive breast cancers. In 2002, 63% of all invasive breast cancers detected by BreastScreen Australia were small-diameter cancers. This proportion reduced to 54.0% for women who were attending for their first screen and increased to 65.8% for women who had previously been screened.
- For women in the target age group, the age-standardised rate of small-diameter invasive cancer detection was 29.1 per 10,000 women screened in 2002. This was not significantly different from the 2001 rate of 29.0 per 10,000 women screened.
- Data on interval cancers (that is, an invasive cancer detected between two screening rounds) were not available for New South Wales for 24-month follow-up. For other jurisdictions, the age-standardised rates of interval cancer for women in the target age group in the 24 months after their first screen ranged from 7.0 per 10,000 women-years in the Northern Territory to 15.6 per 10,000 women-years in Tasmania.
- ‘Program sensitivity’ is the proportion of invasive breast cancers that are detected within the BreastScreen Australia Program out of all invasive breast cancers (interval cancers plus screen-detected cancers) diagnosed in Program-screened women in the screening interval. The Program sensitivity rate for women in the target age group in the 24 months after their first screen ranged from 69.1% in Tasmania to 85.1% in Western Australia.
- In 2002, 849 cases of ductal carcinoma in situ (see page 26) were detected in women participating in the BreastScreen Australia Program. The age-standardised detection rate

for this condition was 10.5 per 10,000 women screened for women in the target age group and 10.0 per 10,000 women screened for all women aged 40 and over.

### **Recall for assessment**

- In 2002, the proportion of women recalled for assessment because of an abnormal mammogram result was significantly higher for women being screened for the first time compared with women who had previously been screened. While 8.7% of women attending their first round of screening were recalled for further testing, only 4.2% of women attending for a subsequent round of screening were recalled.

### **Rescreening**

- The proportion of women attending a BreastScreen Australia service in 2000 and returning for rescreening within the recommended 27-month interval increased with the number of previous screens. The age-standardised national rescreen rate for women attending a BreastScreen Australia service in 2000 for the first time was 61.8%. The rescreen rate increased to 72.0% for women attending for their second screen and 80.6% for women attending for a third or subsequent screen.

### **Breast cancer incidence**

- With some fluctuations, there was a notable increase between 1987 and 2001 in the age-standardised breast cancer incidence rates for women in the target age group. Incidence increased in the target age group from 196.9 new cancers per 100,000 women in 1987 to 305.4 per 100,000 women in 2001.
- Of the 11,791 new cases of breast cancer in 2001, 5,802 (49%) occurred in women in the target age group. Only 6% of cases were women aged under 40 years. Age-specific incidence rates in 2001 ranged from 123.1 new cancers per 100,000 women in the 40–44 age group to 352.7 new cases per 100,000 women in the 60–64 age group.
- Between 1996 and 2001, the national age-standardised incidence rate of ductal carcinoma in situ for women aged 50–69 years was 37.5 per 100,000 women. Across states and territories, the rate ranged from 17.4 cases per 100,000 women in the Northern Territory to 50.0 cases per 100,000 women in Western Australia.

### **Breast cancer mortality**

- From 1993 onwards, a steady decline is evident in the age-standardised mortality rates for women in the target age group. The mortality rate for these women was 68.3 deaths per 100,000 women in 1988; in 2002, the corresponding figure was 56.7. A similar pattern of decline in mortality rates can be observed in women aged 70 and over. Mortality rates for women aged under 50 years remained the lowest and most consistent, staying below 8 deaths per 100,000 women for the period 1987 to 2002.