

## Update on BreastScreen Aotearoa age extension rollout

<b>Due to MO:</b>	4 September 2025	<b>Reference</b>	HNZ00095304
<b>To:</b>	Hon Simeon Brown, Minister of Health		
<b>From:</b>	Dr Nick Chamberlain, National Director, National Public Health Service		
<b>Copy to:</b>	n/a		
<b>Security level:</b>	In Confidence	<b>Priority</b>	Routine
<b>Consulted</b>	Public Health Agency		
<b>Proactive Release:</b>	This title is proposed by Health NZ for proactive release		

Contact for further discussion (if required)			
Name	Position	Phone	1st contact
Dr Nick Chamberlain	National Director, National Public Health Service		x
Alana Ewe-Snow	Director Prevention, National Public Health Service		

## Purpose

1. You requested advice on the BreastScreen Aotearoa age extension rollout, specifically:
  - a) a table for the Nelson Marlborough district and nationally, setting out eligibility for breast screening for each year from 1 October 2024 until the rollout concludes in 2029.
  - b) in relation to the Nelson Marlborough district, an overview of the eligible population and up-take of breast screening from 1 October 2024, broken down by age group.
  - c) an overview of the process for rolling out the pilot and any intended changes in approach.
  - d) an overview of any outsourcing opportunities for breast screening.
  - e) an overview of the invitation approach via Te Puna.

## Summary

2. The Nelson Marlborough pilot to include women aged 70 and 74 years in the national breast cancer screening programme, BreastScreen Aotearoa, began in October 2024.

3. The age extension programme progressively extends the age of eligibility by one year each year, beginning with women aged 70. In addition, during each year of the rollout, the approach offers women aged 74 one additional screen. From October 2025, this approach will be rolled out across New Zealand.
4. The market for outsourcing breast cancer screening services needs careful shaping. Capacity and capability vary by lead provider and region. The future introduction of AI solutions, and its impact on the breast screening landscape needs to be a consideration for future capacity and capability planning.
5. From October 2025, as part of the national rollout, women who are eligible for screening will be sent an invitation to enrol and/or book an appointment for a breast screen on Te Puna, the new breast screening system.

## BreastScreen Aotearoa

6. BreastScreen Aotearoa is extending the age for publicly funded breast cancer screening, which will start to be applied from October 2025 across New Zealand, except in Nelson Marlborough which started as the pilot district in October 2024.
7. On 31 October 2024, the then Minister of Health, Hon Dr Shane Reti, requested that all women who would otherwise miss out on the age extension, as they turned 70 before the 1 October 2024, be offered at least one additional screen at the age of 74.
8. The age extension programme progressively extends the age of eligibility by one year

each year, beginning with women aged 70. In addition, during each year of the rollout, the approach offers women aged 74 one additional screen. The inclusion of women aged 74 in each year of the rollout effectively shortens the implementation period by one year. However, this does increase screening, assessment, and treatment volumes from year one, with a resulting significant impact on capacity.

9. From October 2025, as part of the national rollout, women who are eligible for screening will be sent an invitation to enrol and/or book an appointment for a breast screen on Te Puna.

## Nelson Marlborough rollout

### Eligibility age for breast cancer screening for Nelson Marlborough and nationally

10. The following table sets out age criteria for breast cancer screening broken down by year from 1 October 2024 until 2029.

**Table 1: Age of eligibility for breast screening**

	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029
<b>Nelson</b>	45-70 & 74	45-71 & 74	45-72 & 74	45-73 & 74	45-74	45-74
<b>Rest of NZ</b>	45-69	45-70 & 74	45-71 & 74	45-72 & 74	45-73 & 74	45-74

11. Note the roll-out is phased over five years and will occur in one year age extension increments (starting in October of each year).

### Overview of the eligible population in Nelson Marlborough

12. Statistics New Zealand population projections have been used to estimate the population eligible for the BreastScreen Aotearoa age extension. Based on these projections, 5,120 women aged 70 and 74 years were resident in the Nelson Marlborough district as of October 2024.
13. Eligibility for breast cancer screening is based on the age of a woman as at their last screen, adjusted for the two-yearly screening interval and any clinical exclusions. It is estimated that 2,119 women, for the 11 months ending August 2025, were eligible for the age extension in the Nelson Marlborough region.
14. From 31 October 2024 to 20 August 2025, a total of 721 women were screened as part of the age extension in the Nelson Marlborough district. This constitutes approximately 34% of the estimated eligible population.
15. This slow uptake in screening was due to a number of factors, including the late change to eligibility directed by the then Minister of Health and subsequent delays in developing, and funding, an alternative implementation approach to cover 5 years. The planned rollout of Te Puna was also several months after the age extension commenced. This made identifying and inviting women to screen a manual and time-consuming process.

**Table 2: Women screened as part of age extension programme**

Age at Screen	Screens	Estimated Population*
70	200	322
74	492	1797**
75	29	
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>721</b>	<b>2119</b>

\* Based on 11 months only

\*\* All were aged 74 at time of booking and part of the estimated eligible population 70 and 74

**Table 3: Number of women screened by month from October 2024 to 20 August 2025**

YEAR	MONTH	SCREENS
2024	November	*
2024	December	*
2025	January	63
2025	February	56
2025	March	39
2025	April	33
2025	May	70
2025	June	95
2025	July	193
2025	20 August**	158

\* Counts less than six are withheld

\*\* Latest available figures

### Overview of the Nelson Marlborough rollout

16. To allow time to develop and build new screening facilities and address additional capability needs the implementation of the breast screening age extension:
  - commenced in the first district from October 2024,
  - is a phased rollout over five years, and
  - increases the age of eligibility by one year every year.
17. Planning for the extension of the age range in Nelson Marlborough began in early 2024. This district was selected for the pilot as the lead provider had sufficient capacity to manage the expected increase in breast screening volume without adversely impacting on screening of the existing eligible population.
18. An implementation date of October 2024 for women aged 70 years on or after 1 October, combined with a phased rollout over five years, with the age of eligibility increasing by one year every year, was anticipated to allow time to develop and build new screening facilities and address additional capability needs.
19. As the new breast screening system, Te Puna, was not in place until 2025, BreastScreen Aotearoa undertook extensive readiness planning with the lead provider to ensure systems and processes were in place to use existing IT systems and

processes for inviting the identified population. This approach was supported by communications and campaign resources, noted below.

### **Communications to support the age extension in Nelson Marlborough**

20. In October 2024, BreastScreen South sent letters to all enrolled women aged 70 in Nelson Marlborough informing them of their eligibility to screen, and that they would receive an invitation to make an appointment.
21. A marketing company was contracted to provide awareness-raising campaigns for BreastScreen Aotearoa from May 2023 to October 2025. In November 2024, this work was largely refocused to support the launch of age extension in Nelson Marlborough.
22. In May 2025, a further \$190,000 was allocated to support campaign activities for Nelson Marlborough. This funding was also used to support the regional and national rollout of the new online breast screening system, Te Puna as well as promotional posters, social media resources and video.
23. In August 2025, a further \$100,000 was allocated for paid media activity supporting the BreastScreen Aotearoa national age extension campaign, and to allow for related media, monitoring and reporting activities to continue through to 30 June 2026.

### **Overview of outsourcing opportunities for breast screening**

24. The potential out-sourced market for screening services is limited, with the availability of the skilled and specialised workforce required needing careful shaping. The use of AI technology to mitigate the demand for radiologist time is being actively explored. If not managed, it will be a significant constraint for delivering breast cancer screening services in either a public, or private setting.
25. The market has been tested in recent years with changes to service providers in the South Island and Auckland region. This process confirmed the limited options for delivery of this specialised service, but we will keep reviewing this.
26. Lead providers currently outsource some radiology services where local staffing and capacity is limited. Lead provider funding is configured to support outsourcing, as and when required.

### **Overview of the invitation approach via Te Puna**

27. Te Puna was launched in February 2025 in the Midland region, and as of 23 June 2025, is live across New Zealand. Eligible women are now automatically identified and can be invited to book their breast screening appointment rather than proactively 'opting in' to the programme as previously, which was a significant barrier for some women.
28. From October 2025, as part of the national rollout of the age extension programme, women who are eligible for screening will be sent an invitation to enrol and/or book an appointment when they are due to screen via Te Puna, if they are either:
  - Aged 70 – those with a birth date of 1 October 1955 to 30 September 1956, or
  - Aged 74 – those with a birth date of 2 October 1950 to 30 September 1951 – if they book their screening appointment before they turn 75 years old.
29. Invitations will be managed by the lead provider in the region in which the woman lives.

30. When women are eligible and due for a screening mammogram, lead providers send an invitation via email, text, or letter. Women can then enrol and book online using the link in the invitation or by phoning. Lead providers have processes in place to follow up with participants who do not respond to invitations and can refer women to Screening Support Services if they are unable to reach the participant.
31. To support the invitation approach, tailored communications and paid media campaigns have been developed and were rolled out regionally as the new system was implemented.
32. The first to go live for the media campaigns was the Nelson Marlborough district in March 2025. Once all regions went live on 23 June 2025 with Te Puna, the campaign activity became national and will run until mid-September 2025. The promotional material is aligned to the main national campaigns that have been running since mid-March 2025, with a continued focus on priority screening audiences.
33. A campaign focused on the age extension will run from October 2025 through to May 2026.

### Next steps

34. BreastScreen Aotearoa will continue to work on increasing participation and coverage in the age extension programme in Nelson Marlborough, and nationally as the programme is rolled out.
35. Health New Zealand will keep you updated through the Weekly Report on progress with the national age extension rollout.