



9 January 2014

Mr Thomas O'Neill  
Meetings Administrator  
Corporate Services Department  
South Dublin County Council  
County Hall  
Tallaght  
Dublin 24



Dear Mr O'Neill,

The Minister for Health, Dr. James Reilly, T.D., has asked me to thank you for your letter concerning the introduction of a screening programme for prostate cancer.

The National Cancer Screening Service (NCSS) was established by the Minister for Health and Children in January 2007 to develop and provide quality cancer screening programmes for people in Ireland. Cancer screening aims to detect both cancerous and pre-cancerous conditions and over time will reduce mortality.

The NCSS encompasses three cancer screening programmes: BreastCheck, the National Breast Screening Programme; CervicalCheck, the National Cervical Screening Programme; and BowelScreen, the National Bowel Screening Programme. Evidence shows that screening programmes for breast, cervical and bowel save lives as cancers are detected at an early stage.

In relation to prostate cancer, the Board of the NCSS undertook a review of currently available evidence in relation to the potential effectiveness of introducing a national, population based prostate cancer screening programme. It found that current evidence is insufficient to recommend a population based screening programme because of concerns that it may not improve survival or quality of life and may ultimately cause more harm than good. The NCSS will continue to assess new evidence as it becomes available.

It is important that all men are aware of the signs and symptoms of prostate cancer. Any man who has immediate concerns or symptoms should contact his GP who is in the best position to advise him. Information about cancer, signs and symptoms and treatments available are provided on the Irish Cancer Society website at [www.cancer.ie/cancer-information](http://www.cancer.ie/cancer-information).

I trust that this clarifies the matter for you.

Yours sincerely

PP *Mary Laffrey*  
Dave O'Connor  
Private Secretary