

*Framing cervical cancer screening  
messaging – challenges and future  
solutions, experiences from Australia*

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# Background

- Australia's National Cervical Screening Program commenced in 1991, 2 yearly Pap test
- Renewed program commenced in Dec 2017, 5 yearly HPV test taken by a doctor or nurse; option of self collected tests initially restricted
- Universal access to self collected tests commenced July 2022, uptake steadily increasing
- Preliminary national cervical screening participation rate is 68.3% (2018-2022)\*
- Some groups participate less in cervical screening:
  - Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander populations
  - People living in rural and remote areas
  - People living in areas of greater socio-economic disadvantage
  - Some culturally and linguistically diverse groups
  - People living with a disability
  - LGBTIQ+ communities
  - Older age group (65-74 years)
- The challenge: ensuring increased and equitable participation

\*Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (2023). Cancer screening programs: quarterly data. AIHW. Accessed 21<sup>st</sup> May 2023, <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/cancer-screening/national-cancer-screening-programs-participation/contents/national-cervical-screening-program>



**So what are the challenges and solutions in framing cervical cancer screening messaging?**

**CHALLENGE 1:**  
**Communicating the option of self-**  
**collected Cervical Screening Tests**

# Insights from a Population Survey

## Methods

- Cross-sectional survey January – March 2022
- 725 Victorians eligible for screening (36% = under screened)
- Investigated awareness, knowledge, attitudes, and preferences for clinician-collected and self-collected Cervical Screening Tests

## Results

Low awareness of self-collection, 9.7% of respondents

Barriers to self-collection:

- low confidence in ability to self-collect
- concerns about testing accuracy
- needing more information before testing with this option

Enablers to self-collection:

- private
- easy to do
- removes barriers associated with a speculum exam



# Example: Victorian self-collection campaigns

## What we did

- Paid advertising campaigns targeting women and people with a cervix, including Arabic and Punjabi-speaking audiences
- Created campaign web page
- Self-collection instructions postcard/wallet card
- Health professional communications

## Learnings

- Important to address knowledge gaps
- *Quick, easy, reliable, private* important messages to include
- Emphasis on *choice* in message framing
- Self-collection not a stand alone term, needs to be used alongside cervical screening for context
- Results (young person's campaign) – increased knowledge, number of screens increased slightly

**Self-collection is:**

- ✓ Quick
- ✓ Easy
- ✓ Reliable
- ✓ Private

**If you're due for a Cervical Screening Test, you can now choose self-collection.**

**Self-collection is now an option for cervical screening.**


Protect yourself from cervical cancer.  
*It's easy to do!*



**Finding HPV early protects you from cervical cancer.**



**One test every five years could protect you from cervical cancer.**



**Take your health into your own hands.**



**Choose the self-collection method to screen for cervical cancer**

Protect yourself from cervical cancer. It's easy to do yourself. Speak to your doctor or nurse if you are unsure how.

How to do the test in four simple steps:



**Step 1**

- Twist the red cap and pull out the swab.

**Step 2**

- Get in a comfortable position.

**Step 3**

- Insert the swab into your vagina, aiming to insert to the red mark.

**Step 4**

- Remove the swab gently and push back in the tube.

Nov 2021

*Self collection instructions, postcard and wallet card*

[www.cancervic.org.au/selfcollection](http://www.cancervic.org.au/selfcollection)



# Insights from community responses to campaigns

But can it give false results?

How do you know you are getting the right spot? I was under the impression that part of the cervical screen was locating the cervix and swabbing that. This is coming from someone who had a cervical lesion and consequently a total hysterectomy. Had symptoms for a long time, even saw a gynaecologist, but Pap smears were OK. Finally, got the positive one, grade IV.

I'd hate to do this wrong and miss a diagnosis. I'm overdue but this has made me think about booking so that's good

It can be pretty difficult to reach the cervix especially on your own, so as much as I love that traumatised people can do this on their own instead of completely missing out on this important assessment, I don't think it should be normalised for just anyone to do it. The accuracy and room for error seems very large

My GP is very anti this. Most concerned that most women would not get a good enough sample for a diagnostic tool.

Like Reply 3w



Except my doctor surgery said they aren't doing it

Amazing ! But the last time I tried to do this the path lab said " you can't do that" and had no idea what I was talking about and said I should be getting them done by a dr 🙄 even though there was information posters all over the GP wall and I clearly knew you could self collect as it's also on their website

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The screenshot shows the Cancer Council Victoria website. At the top right, there is a search bar, a 'Donate' button, and a 'Shop' button. Below the navigation bar, there is a sidebar menu with categories like 'Prevention', 'Get checked', 'Find a cervical screening provider', etc. The main content area is titled 'Find a cervical screening test provider'. It includes a description of the directory, a note about the scope of the directory, and a form to search for providers. The form includes fields for Postcode, distance (within 10km), Suburb or town, Practitioner (with checkboxes for Female GP, Male GP, Male Gynaecologist, Nurse Cervical, Female Gynaecologist, Screening Provider), Sexual assault sensitive provider, Traditional cutting informed nurses, Health Service Type, Languages, Disability Access (with checkboxes for Ramp, Wide door, Accessible toilets, Adjustable bed, Hoist, Accessible parking), and Sort by (Postcode). A 'Submit' button is at the bottom of the form.

**Does your practice offer self-collection?**  
Patients who are eligible for cervical screening now have the choice to use self-collection.  
Make sure your practice is ready.

The graphic features a blue background with a yellow flower icon. At the bottom, there is an image of a self-collection kit and the Cancer Council logo.





**CHALLENGE 2:**  
**Communication needs and message  
framing for priority audiences**

# Insights from CALD qualitative research

## Methods

- In-language focus groups (n=14)
- 106 under-screened women and people with a cervix
  - Arabic (n=21) Cantonese (n=23) Mandarin (n=23) Indian (n=39)
- Investigated awareness, knowledge, attitudes, barriers and enablers to cervical screening

## Results

Limited awareness of cervical cancer and cervical screening

Common barriers to self collection:

- Self-efficacy
- Test accuracy
- Low knowledge and awareness of cervical screening in general
- Stigma

Enablers to self-collection:

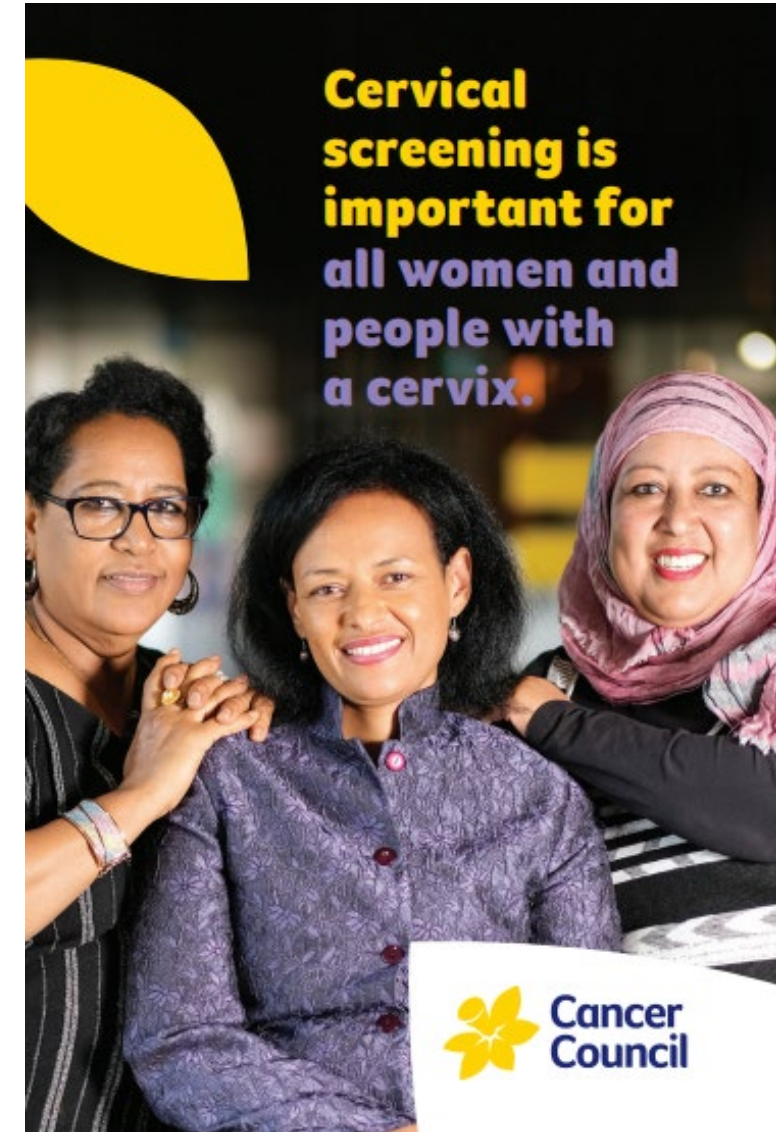
- Trusted relationship with their doctor (particularly bilingual doctors)
- Private and less embarrassing



# Insights from CALD qualitative research

## Messages that increased likelihood of self-collection

- Self-collection allows more privacy and is less embarrassing (Arabic, Cantonese and Mandarin)
- Self-collection is just as accurate as a cervical sample collected by a doctor (Cantonese and Mandarin)
- Self-collection is quick, convenient and easy to do (Mandarin)
- Self-collection can help to detect cervical cancer early and keep you healthy (Arabic)
- Self-collection can help you to stay healthy for you and your family (Arabic)
- ***Highlighting choice - important across all language groups***



# Insights from CALD qualitative research

## Effective ways to communicate messages

### What and where ...

- Animated videos illustrating how self-collection is performed
- Social media (WeChat, Facebook, YouTube, Instagram)
- Material at doctor's practices / clinics (posters, videos, brochures)
- Advertising (TV, radio, print, digital)
- Government health websites
- Local community women's groups, health centres, schools and child care centres
- Religious centres / places of worship

### How ...

- In language
- Presented by women from their own community (female GP, trusted community leader, cancer survivor story)
- Important role of trusted doctors, bilingual doctors



# Example: Victorian LGBTIQ+ campaign

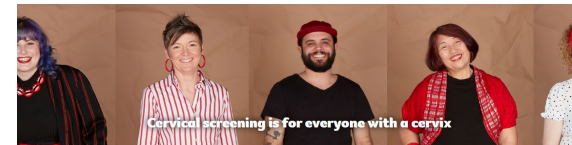
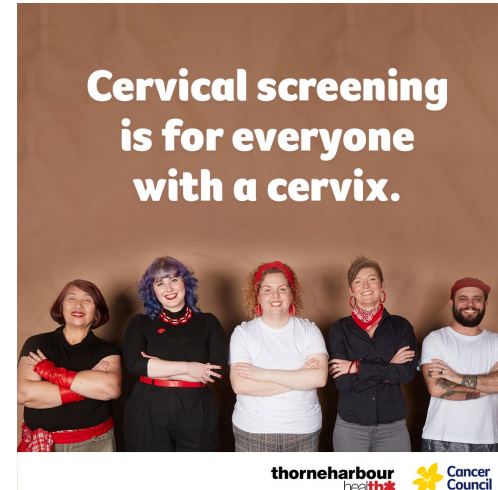
## What we know ...

- Low participation rate for LGBTIQ+ Australians – 58% in 2018-2019\*
- Even lower for transgender men, 38.9%
- Literature review found significant barriers:
  - **Sexual minorities:** fear of discrimination, misconception around need to screen
  - **Gender minorities:** Previous negative experiences, difficulty finding HCP, psychological and physical barriers

## Includes ...

- Paid social media advertising targeting women and people with a cervix aged 25-74
- Suite of videos and images with real stories from the LGBTIQ+ community
- Campaign web page
- Promotional postcard and clinic poster






Kerr, Lucille; Bourne, Adam; Hill, Adam; McNair, Ruth; Wyatt, Kerryann; Lyons, Anthony; et al. (2023): THE IMPORTANCE OF LGBTQ AFFIRMING SCREENING SERVICES FOR ACHIEVING CERVICAL CANCER ELIMINATION IN AUSTRALIA. La Trobe. Report. <https://doi.org/10.26181/22642852.v1>



Cervical screening is for everyone with a cervix. Yet, we know that LGBTIQ+ people with a cervix often face greater barriers to cervical screening and are less likely to participate than the rest of the community.

### Stories from the community

Hear from five LGBTIQ+ Victorians about their experience with cervical screening and what self-collection means to them.

 <p><b>Eloise, 30</b> "We need to look after our cervixes, ourselves and our sense of community!" <a href="#">Read more</a></p>	 <p><b>Gabe, 39</b> "Self-collection is an incredible opportunity for myself, and my community!" <a href="#">Read more</a></p>	 <p><b>Jen, 47</b> "I want everyone with a cervix to know that cervical screening is so important!" <a href="#">Read more</a></p>
 <p><b>Chuping, 69</b> "Having a choice empowers you to look after yourself and your health." <a href="#">Read more</a></p>	 <p><b>Tarsh, 26</b> "If you have a cervix, then cervical screening needs to be on your list." <a href="#">Read more</a></p>	

### Attention everyone with a cervix!

Cervical screening just got easier

If you're a woman or person with a cervix, aged 25-74, and have had sexual contact with a person of any gender, you need a Cervical Screening Test every five years.

You have a choice for your next Cervical Screening Test. You can now self-collect your test, with a small swab and without a speculum.

Self-collected tests can be done in private at the doctor's or another health setting, usually behind a curtain or in the bathrooms. It's quick, comfortable, safe and easy to do.

You can also choose to have a clinician do the test for you, using either the self-collection swab or using a speculum and a small brush.

If you are due or overdue for cervical screening, speak to your doctor or nurse about your options, including self-collection.



Find out more



# The framing of CHOICE and CONTROL

**CERVICAL SCREENING**  
**you can do it**

Self-collection is a **new** choice for your 5 yearly **cervical screening**

Talk to your GP or visit [wellbeingsa.sa.gov.au/cervicalscreening](http://wellbeingsa.sa.gov.au/cervicalscreening) for more information.



[Visit Cancer Council WA](#)

## There are now two options for your Cervical Screening Test

Talk to your GP about self-collection for cervical screening.

[Learn more](#)



NATIONAL  
**CERVICAL SCREENING PROGRAM**

A joint Australian, State and Territory Government Program

# DO IT YOURSELF

Choose to collect your own Cervical Screening Test sample

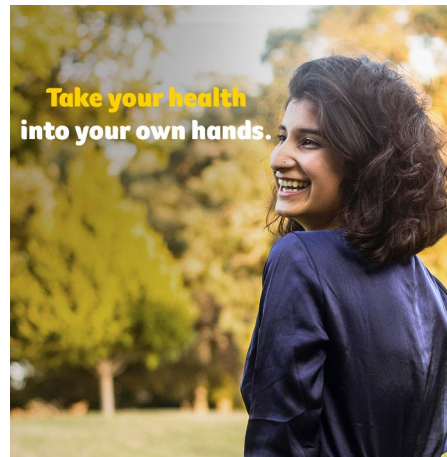
**Prevention is in your hands.**



NATIONAL  
**CERVICAL SCREENING PROGRAM**  
A joint Australian, State and Territory Government Program

### You have a choice for your next Cervical Screening Test

	Self-collected sample	Clinician-collected sample
Tool used	 Self-collection swab	 Speculum and brush
Who collects the test sample?	You do it yourself. A doctor or nurse cervical screening provider can take the test for you if you want.	A doctor or nurse cervical screening provider.
Where is the sample taken from?	The vagina.	The cervix.
What does it look for?	The presence of HPV.	The presence of HPV.
Where is the test usually done?	In a private space within a healthcare setting (e.g. behind a curtain or screen or in the bathroom).	On an examination bed in a doctor's office.



**Take your health into your own hands.**

**Self-collection is now an option for cervical screening.**

*Protect yourself from cervical cancer. It's easy to do!*



# Own it – an LGBTIQ campaign

Further information at [canwe.org.au](http://canwe.org.au)

‘I chose to educate myself about the test’



It's your Cervical Screening Test.  
Own it.

CERVICAL SCREENING PROGRAM



‘I chose to bring a friend for support’



It's your Cervical Screening Test.  
Own it.

CERVICAL SCREENING PROGRAM



‘I chose to find a doctor I could trust’



It's your Cervical Screening Test.  
Own it.

CERVICAL SCREENING PROGRAM



‘I chose to insert the speculum myself’



It's your Cervical Screening Test.  
Own it.

CERVICAL SCREENING PROGRAM



‘I chose to use a self swab at the clinic’



It's your Cervical Screening Test.  
Own it.

CERVICAL SCREENING PROGRAM





**CHALLENGE 3:**  
**Framing of gendered language, what's the  
right approach?**

# CHALLENGE 3:

## Framing of gendered language, what's the right approach?

Women

People with a cervix

Women and people with a cervix

# Key points for framing cervical cancer screening messaging...

- Communicating self-collection presents an opportunity
- Barriers and enablers differ across priority groups, tailored messaging needed
- The framing of CHOICE and CONTROL is important, particularly to reach priority groups
- Communications need to address gaps in knowledge, including rationale behind recent program changes, as well as work to increase self-efficacy of self-collected Cervical Screening Tests
- Can't rely on communications alone
  - Co-designed community-based programs are needed to reach priority populations
  - Crucial that health care providers are supported and informed so that they can provide safe and inclusive cervical screening services and communication

# Cancer Screening Resources Hub

<https://screeningresources.cancervic.org.au>



Resources


Search

Home

Plan & deliver a cancer screening project

About the national cancer screening programs

For health professionals

I work with... 

## Cancer Screening Hub

# Supporting the Workforce to Improve Cancer Screening & Early Detection in Victoria.

I work with...  
**Aboriginal or Torres Strait Islander communities**



I work with...  
**Culturally and linguistically diverse communities**



I work with...  
**LGBTIQ+ communities**



I work with...  
**People With Disabilities**





**Thank you**

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