

Cervical screening yarns with Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and people with a cervix

Conducted by ORIMA Research on behalf of the Victorian Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisation (VACCHO)

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We pay respect to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples past and present, their cultures and traditions and acknowledge their continuing connection to Land, Sea and Community.
In particular, we would like to pay our respects to the peoples of the Eastern Kulin Nations and the Yorta Yorta peoples, on who's Country this project was conducted.

About the yarns

WHO WE SPOKE TO

42 Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and people with a cervix participated in the yarning groups **across Victoria** between February and March 2023.

THE PURPOSE OF THE PROJECT

Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and people with a cervix's **communication and messaging needs about cervical screening** were explored in the yarning groups.

The current situation

There were many things that helped Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and people with a cervix to do a cervical screening test. These included:



Having **good understanding** of cervical cancer and why it is important to regularly test



Feeling that cervical screening is **important and relevant**



Communities **talking openly about cervical screening**



Having **culturally safe** health services where people felt comfortable, and were regularly reminded to screen



Having **easily accessible health care, with regular reminders** to get tested



Receiving support and encouragement from others to get tested

There were things that made cervical screening difficult:



Not having enough information about cervical cancer and cervical screening



Not openly talking about cervical screening with family and friends



Feelings of **fear, anxiety, shame and embarrassment**



Having **past negative experiences** with cervical screening or healthcare



Not having easy access to health services (e.g. due to long wait times)



Lack of **female healthcare workers** and those who use **trauma informed approaches**

What can be done?

There are ways to encourage more Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander women and people with a cervix to get tested regularly. These include:



Advertising to raise awareness of the **importance of cervical screening**



Making **screening more accessible** (e.g. availability of female healthcare workers, mobile cervical screening buses and information about the option to self collect)



School-based education to increase understanding of cervical cancer, cervical screening and the HPV vaccine



Education and training for healthcare professionals about cultural safety and trauma informed practice

COMMUNITIES CAN HELP

Many healthcare professionals and Communities were actively helping by:



Holding **yarning circles** and **women's health days** to provide information and start conversations about screening



Talking to others and **sharing information** about cervical screening.



Elders encouraging others in the community to screen

YOU CAN HELP

Here are some things **you can do** to help yourself and the women and people with a cervix around you:



Talk to your doctor, nurse or Aboriginal Health Worker about cervical screening next time you go to a health centre



Book an appointment to talk about having a cervical screen



Talk to women and people with a cervix you know and encourage them to go for cervical screening – talk to your mother, daughters, sisters, Elders and close friends



We would like to thank everyone who contributed to this important project. In particular we would like to thank all the women and people with a cervix who participated in the yarns – we are very grateful for your trust, honesty, courage and resilience when sharing your ideas, knowledge and experiences. The information you shared with us has been very helpful.

