

Media Release

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Australia on track to become the first country in the world to eliminate cervical cancer, but Cancer Council urges that community engagement is key

New data reveals lack of awareness about cervical screening and vaccination among Australians despite widespread support for the elimination of cervical cancer

As the world marks International Women's Day, Cancer Council is calling on the Federal Government to commit to delivering targeted, community-led strategies to support self-collection for cervical screening and uptake of the HPV vaccination, to help eliminate cervical cancer as a public health issue in Australia.

Dr Tanya Buchanan, Cancer Council Australia CEO, urged that while Australia is close to its goal of elimination, more is needed to be done to prevent cervical cancer.

"Australia is fortunate to have some of the best programs in the world to prevent and detect cervical cancer early, however we know that there are obstacles to utilising these programs for many people, particularly those living in disadvantaged areas or with diverse cultural backgrounds.

"We need funding for community-led programs and campaigns to ensure that people eligible for cervical screening by self-collection know this option is available to them, and to promote uptake of the HPV vaccine among adolescents. Because the more people we can vaccinate and encourage to screen regularly, the more lives we can save.

"What an incredible national achievement it would be for Australia to become the first country in the world to eliminate cervical cancer as a public health issue. We are close, but need that final push from government, to save the lives of thousands of Australians in the future," she said.

The call comes as new research from YouGov reveals that whilst nearly nine in 10 (86%) Australians are aware of cervical screening, over one third (31%) know very little about it. In addition, around a quarter (24%) of Australians aren't familiar with what the HPV vaccine is or who is eligible, despite all children aged 12 – 13 being eligible to receive the vaccine.

Data shows that around 70% of cervical cancers are detected in those who are under-screened¹, yet YouGov's data indicates that just two in five (39%) Australians are actually aware of who is eligible for cervical screening.

Professor Karen Canfell, Chair of Cancer Council's National Cancer Screening and Immunisation Committee, noted the importance of ensuring that no one is left behind when it comes to cervical screening.

"Sadly, less than half of those living in areas with the highest disadvantage, and who are eligible, get screened. By implementing strategies that support uptake of the HPV vaccine and ensure that those who are eligible to screen do so, we can eliminate cervical cancer as a public health issue within the next decade and keep HPV rates low into the future.

"Many Australians don't realise how close we are to the elimination of this disease and that it's through steps like regular screening and vaccination that we'll be able to reach this goal," added Professor Canfell.

Despite varied awareness among adults around eligibility for cervical screening and vaccination, YouGov's findings shows that nearly nine in 10 (85%) Australians support the elimination of cervical cancer in Australia as a public health issue.

Cancer Council is asking Australians to show their support for the elimination of cervical cancer in Australia by taking the cancer-free pledge. To take the pledge or find out more visit www.cancer.org.au/take-the-pledge.

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For media enquiries please contact:

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See Cancer Council's [website](http://www.cancer.org.au), [Facebook](https://www.facebook.com/cancer.org.au), [Twitter](https://twitter.com/cancerorgau) and [Instagram](https://www.instagram.com/cancerorgau).

About research:

This study was conducted by YouGov in January 2022. The sample for the study was comprised of 1,010 Australians aged 18+ and was weighted by age, gender and location, to be representative of the Australian adult population aged 18+ or older.

The questionnaire was designed by YouGov, in consultation with Cancer Council Australia.

¹AIHW 2019a. Analysis of cervical cancer and abnormality outcomes in an era of cervical screening and HPV vaccination in Australia. Cancer series no. 126. Cat. no. CAN 129. Canberra: AIHW.

www.aihw.gov.au/reports/cancer-screening/analysis-of-cervical-cancer-and-abnormality/summary