



Media release

For immediate issue

## **Self-collect option gets cervical screening off the ‘to-do’ list**

Family Planning Victoria (FPV) is hoping that a new Federal Government initiative will take cervical screening (previously pap) off the ‘to-do’ list for millions of people, ultimately saving lives.

As of 1<sup>st</sup> July 2022, eligible Australians will gain access to a self-collected cervical screening test through their chosen health care provider which can be quickly and painlessly be conducted in complete privacy.

FPV Medical Director Dr Kathleen McNamee says this is a positive step forward for the sexual healthcare industry and for anyone with a cervix.

“This new healthcare technology will encourage and support eligible Australians from all walks of life to access the test; this includes those who may face barriers to traditional screening due to cultural practices, concerns about discomfort or pain, or members of the LGBTQIA+ community,” Dr Kathleen said.

“The tests are simple to do and are just as effective as the current test at detecting potentially worrying strains of Human papillomavirus (HPV).”

HPV is the most common viral infection of the reproductive tract. Most sexually active people will be infected at some point in their lives and some may be repeatedly infected. Most types of HPV are harmless, occur without causing symptoms and will go away without treatment.

“Unlike the current tests, the self-collect test can be done by a patient in private using a swab without the need to use speculum,” Dr Kathleen commented.

“We often hear clients say that they feel anxious or embarrassed about the traditional screening process, and that this causes delays in them making an appointment to get it done.

“We hope that this new way of screening will provide those that need to get tested with the confidence to do so.”

A cervical screening test is recommended every five years for those aged 25 to 74 with a cervix.

If a sample shows the presence of a worrying strain of HPV, then a healthcare professional, such as FPV, can conduct a traditional Cervical Screening Test and discuss further management plans. FPV provides dedicated training to healthcare staff to ensure they provide exceptional support and care for patients who require further investigation or treatment.



“The self-collect testing will be available via the Medical Benefits Scheme, meaning there will be no test charge for those with a Medicare card,” Dr Kathleen said.

-ENDS-

**About Family Planning Victoria:**

Family Planning Victoria is a leading provider of reproductive and sexual health care, education and advocacy. Governed by a voluntary board of directors, Family Planning Victoria has provided services to the Victorian community for over 50 years and remains an independent, not-for-profit, all-choice organisation. Our vision is to improve reproductive and sexual health and wellbeing for everyone in Victoria and beyond.

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Research conducted by the AIHW can be found here:

<https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/cancer-screening/national-cancer-screening-programs-participation/contents/national-cervical-screening-program/participation>