

16 December 2022

Tēnā koe Minister Verrall,

Re: The failures of the proposed HPV cervical screening programme to equitably reduce preventable death from cervical cancer.

The target of the national cervical screening programme is to “to **eliminate equity gaps** for Māori, Pacific and Asian women and reach 80 percent coverage for all”.¹

On behalf of the National Cervical Screening Programme Advisory and Action Group we are writing to inform you that **the proposed programme in its present form will fail to achieve equity**. Unless **urgent action** is taken by the government to change this, women in Aoteara New Zealand will suffer preventable deaths from cervical cancer.

There are multiple barriers for women, including costs for screening and follow up tests and the need for mana-enhancing services. The cervical screening programme is the only national screening programme not funded.

Commitment and investment are needed.

To urgently address these failures we recommend the following:

1. Instigating and promoting a fully publicly-funded, equitable screening programme based on universal HPV self-testing. This includes free screening, follow up, diagnosis, and treatment
2. Developing a transitional five-year plan to immediately address the WHO global call for action to eliminate cervical cancer.² Targets will apply equally across ethnicities.
3. Embedding equity design and analysis, with appropriate modelling and monitoring, throughout the entire screening pathway.
4. Concurrently increasing investment in HPV vaccination is essential.
5. **An estimated additional \$20 million per year is needed for the five-year transitional plan, with lower costs thereafter.**

This is a Call to Action. A call for an equitable cervical screening programme. A call to save women's lives. With HPV self-testing, the opportunity and equity tools are now available and highly acceptable. Let's use them, invest and get everybody over the finish line together, to eliminate cervical cancer in our lifetime.. Whānau need their kuia, māmā, tamāhine and teina to flourish. No wāhine and whānau should die of this preventable cancer.

Ngā mihi maioha



Tira Albert

Chair for National Cervical Screening Advisory and Action Group

1. <https://www.who.int/initiatives/cervical-cancer-elimination-initiative> accessed 8/12/22

2 <https://www.who.int/initiatives/cervical-cancer-elimination-initiative> accessed 8/12/22