

## MEDIA RELEASE

For Immediate release  
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### Vaccine no replacement for Pap test, says Cancer Council

Responding to news that the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) has approved Australia's first cervical cancer vaccine, The Cancer Council Australia cautioned today that the vaccine was not a substitute for the Pap screen and that all women aged 18-69 should continue regular two year screening.

The Cancer Council Australia's CEO, Ian Olver, said: "While the vaccine is an exciting prospect for future generations, in Australia the Pap test is currently the best protection against cervical cancer for women who have ever had sex.

"Even for girls who are vaccinated, Pap tests will still be important. This is because the vaccine is effective against two specific strains of human papilloma virus (HPV), and whilst these strains cause up to 70 per cent of cervical cancers, the vaccine does **not** protect against all types of cancer-causing HPV."

Pioneered by Australian of the Year Ian Frazer, the first cervical cancer vaccine— Gardasil, manufactured by CSL Limited— has now been approved by the TGA and will be available in Australia later this year. A second vaccine, produced by GSK Limited, is also expected on the market later this year.

Recommended for girls before they become sexually active, the vaccine protects against specific strains of HPV that cause around 70 per cent of cervical cancers.

Kate Broun, manager of PapScreen Victoria, also moved to reassure parents who may be concerned about the cost of the vaccine, which is estimated to be several hundred dollars.

"Given the vaccine is not currently listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme, parents will need to pay for the full cost of the vaccine out of their own pockets. Parents can be reassured, however, that Pap tests are still an effective preventative measure against cervical cancer.

"Australia has the lowest cervical cancer mortality in the world. This reflects the success of our national cervical screening program. Our message to parents is that there are now two preventative measures for cervical cancer, which complement each other," she added.

### **The benefits of Pap tests**

- Regular two-yearly Pap tests reduce the incidence of cervical cancer by up to 90%.
- The Pap test can detect cervical abnormalities caused by genital HPV.
- Regular Pap tests allow any changes to the cells of the cervix to be identified and managed well before they may become cancerous.

### **Key information for women about HPV**

- Four out of five women will have HPV at some time in their life.
- Many women have HPV and never know it, as the body's immune system usually clears the virus in around one to two years.
- HPV often has no symptoms, but can sometimes cause genital warts or cervical cell changes.
- Genital HPV is spread by genital skin contact during sexual activity - condoms offer limited protection as they do not cover all of the genital skin.
- Most women with genital HPV will not develop cervical cancer.

*Women who have questions about the cervical cancer vaccine or HPV can call The Cancer Council Helpline on 13 11 20 or visit [www.papscreen.org.au](http://www.papscreen.org.au).*

PapScreen Victoria is a joint Commonwealth-State funded program coordinated by the Department of Human Services in partnership with The Cancer Council Victoria and other major Victorian health agencies.

***ENDS***

**For further media information, or to arrange an interview with Ian Olver or Kate Broun please contact:**

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