



## **MEDIA RELEASE**

**Tuesday, 23 May 2017**

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### **Free South West events to encourage regular Pap smears**

South West women are beating their fears of the Pap smear, as part of a month-long cervical cancer awareness campaign being held this month.

Hosted by the South West Aboriginal Medical Service (SWAMS), a series of Women's Wellness events are being held in Collie, Manjimup, Busselton, Brunswick Junction, Harvey and Bunbury.

The free clinic and information sessions aimed to raise the importance of regular Pap smears in a relaxing and supportive environment. Women are also able to take advantage of a free on-the-spot Pap smear test in the Clinic On Wheels.

Those who have attended the events so far have enjoyed a healthy lunch and were treated to a relaxing day of pampering while children were kept entertained with colouring-in activities.

SWAMS' Nurse Practitioner Jemima Higgins said the feedback from women attending the events so far indicated that they felt comfortable with the environment, and supported to have a Pap smear in the Clinic On Wheels.

"By taking the service to different towns we are hoping to increase access to cervical screening," Jemima said.

"A Pap smear is a quick and simple test used to check the health of the cells on your cervix and it's your best protection against cervical cancer for all women aged between 18 and 70."

According to the Department of Health's statistics, in 2013-14 the South West region had a cervical screening participation rate of 56.4%, which is greater than the State rate of 55.5%.

This rate is thought to be lower among the Indigenous population.

'While these statistics are encouraging, it shows there is still a large number of women who do not screen regularly and are therefore at risk of developing cervical cancer, which is preventable with early detection and treatment.'

"We want to encourage women to come along to one of our events, have a health check, enjoy some lunch and activities. We'll also have prizes and giveaways at each event," Jemima said.

For more information about the free Women's Wellness events contact the SWAMS Clinic on (08) 9726 6000, or the toll free number on 1800 779 000 or Jemima Higgins on 0408 912 779.

**Event details:**

**25 May:** Harvey, 10am – 2pm, Harvey Recreation Centre (Function Room, Tom Latch Drive).

**29 May:** Bunbury, 10am-2pm, Hudson Road Family Centre (95 Hudson Road).

**PHOTO (SWAMS Women's Wellness Event 110517a):** South West Aboriginal Medical Service's Nurse Practitioner Jemima Higgins raising awareness of cervical cancer with women at the Collie Women's Wellness event. **SWAMS Women's Wellness Event 110517b):** South West Aboriginal Medical Service employees Nicole Bowser and Jemima Higgins congratulate the recipient of a pamper pack at the Manjimup Women's Wellness event. **(SWAMS Women's Wellness Event 180517a):** South West Aboriginal Medical Service's employee Nicole Bowser (left) pampers participants at the Busselton Women's Wellness event. **(SWAMS Women's Wellness Event 180517b):** SWAMS' mobile Clinic On Wheels takes the hassle out of Pap smear tests for women living in regional areas.

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For media enquiries please contact SWAMS Public Relations Officer Jo Mills on (08) 9791 1166.