



## Case Study 1 Orange Aboriginal Medical Service (OAMS)

### *Own it in Orange: Women choosing screening their way*

On Wiradjuri Country, the team at Orange Aboriginal Medical Service (OAMS) has rewritten what cervical screening looks and feels like for women. The service's approach is grounded in listening first and in understanding the personal, cultural, and emotional factors that shape each woman's decision to screen. Screening has shifted from something avoided to something embraced, because the process now starts with respect.

Self-collection has been a turning point. For many women, it removes the discomfort and loss of privacy that once kept them away. At OAMS, Aboriginal Health Workers and nurses introduce the option gently, in everyday health conversations about family, wellbeing, and chronic-disease prevention and care. The emphasis is not on ticking a box but on ensuring every woman feels safe, informed, and in control.

"When women feel safe and supported to take that step, it's not just about prevention, it's about confidence and caring for families over the long term," said **Anne-Marie Mepham**, Chronic Disease Coordinator.

The results show how effective this model has become. Around **three-quarters** of eligible women now choose to self-collect at OAMS. Women appreciate being able to take the test privately, in a space they trust, while knowing help is nearby if they need it. When a recent abnormal screen was detected, the follow-up was immediate: the woman was supported from result to colposcopy and treatment within **three months**; a textbook example of a functioning care pathway that combines cultural safety with clinical precision.

Across the national ACCHO network, cervical-screening coverage has climbed from **38.9 per cent in December 2021 to 49.4 per cent in December 2024**. The number of women recorded with HPV screening up to date increased from 30,000 to 45,000 during these years - which means an extra 15,000 women have been screened, at a time when patient numbers have also grown.<sup>1</sup> OAMS exemplifies the local ingenuity driving that surge: a blend of clinical systems, cultural insight, and consistent follow-up that keeps women connected to care.

**Chrystal Norberry**, Primary Healthcare Manager, explained: "Cervical health is about choice and confidence. When we take the fear and uncertainty away, women feel stronger, and that strength ripples through community."

Behind the scenes, OAMS has streamlined recalls and record-keeping, linked screening to chronic-care reviews, and built partnerships with regional hospitals to ensure swift specialist access. The service has also embedded training, so every clinician understands how self-collection works and how to support women who choose it.

OAMS demonstrates that cervical cancer elimination is not achieved by policy alone; it happens in real places, through trust, planning, and respect. By giving women genuine control and following through at every step, OAMS is proving that culturally responsive care delivers measurable change, one conversation at a time.